

The Power of Remembering

Series: Built to Last

Joshua 4:1-7; Exodus 14:5-31; Romans 6:16-22; John 8:31-34; Deut. 7:7-9

INTRODUCTION: Did your parents ever give you the answer, ***because I said so,*** when you were growing up. Or maybe you've said it yourself as a parent.

Why can't I jump off the high dive, ***because I said so,*** [translation: you might hurt yourself].

Why can't I go play at Johnny's or Susie's house, ***because I said so,*** [translation: I don't like your friend].

Why can't I have cake for breakfast? ***Because I said so,*** [translation: It's not part of a healthy diet, and I plan on eating it for breakfast after you go to school].

Parents often find "Because I said so" to be a quicker way to establish authority, especially when time is limited. Instead of long explanations, this phrase communicates urgency, responsibility, and seriousness. It helps parents ensure obedience in moments that require immediate action. Bottom line is that parents really want what's best even when kids don't understand.

Moses is speaking to the children of Israel, explaining to them why God loves them. And the Lord's answer is basically, ***because I said so.***

This is what he says in Deuteronomy 7:7-9: 7 ***"The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."*** [NIV]

Moses is saying: The Lord loves you just because He does; it's not because we deserve it or have earned it. He loves us, as Moses says, ***"Just because."***

Look at the ones God has loved: Moses, a murderer; David, an adulterer and a murderer; Peter, a cursing traitor; Paul, a religious extremist and one who stood by and assisted in the murder of Stephen.

There is no reason why God should love us except the oldest and strongest and strangest reason of them all: ***just because***.

David Livingstone said the same when he poured himself out in Africa; and it's what William Carey said when he preached for years in India; Hudson Taylor said the same when he spent his life ministering to Chinese Christians.

Whenever you encounter someone giving themselves in some difficult service, not receiving the financial reward or the fame they might receive in some other field; whenever you find a young soldier dying in a ditch for the sake of an ungrateful country; whenever you find a child who continues to love an unloving parent; whenever you find a woman who remains faithful to a man who is unfaithful; whenever you find parents who love their children even when they disrespect them—and you ask for the reason. Sometimes there is no good answer except ***just because***.

All Scripture is the testimony of just because. More than anything, the Bible is a love story, and love stories are not arguable. ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*** Why? Just because.

We love because he first loved us; and that unleashes something powerful and God-like within us.

Transition: Take your Bibles this morning and turn to Joshua Chapter 4. We're in a series of sermons on everything 'family' called "**Built to Last**."

We've been looking into God's Word to discover what the bible says about building faith, families, and lives that last.

And it's especially fitting today - because on this July 4th weekend, we pause as a nation to do something that's deeply biblical: we remember the sacrifice of those who gave their lives for our freedom; and in doing so, we're reminded of an even

greater spiritual discipline - **remembering what God has done.**

Because here's the truth: What we remember shapes how we live. And what we forget, we're likely to repeat.

ILLUSTRATION: I heard about an older couple who started having memory problems, so their doctor suggested they write things down. That evening, the wife asked her husband, "Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?"

He said, "Sure." "Write it down," she said.

He said, "No, I can remember that."

She added, "With strawberries and whipped cream-write it down."

Again, he replied, "I've got it." Twenty minutes later, he returned with a plate of bacon and eggs. She looked at it and said, "Where's the toast?"

There are several types of memory:

1. Sensory Memory: This type holds brief impressions of sensory information, lasting only a few seconds.
2. Short-Term Memory: Also known as working memory, it retains information for seconds to minutes, typically around 20-30 seconds without rehearsal.
3. Long-Term Memory: This type can store information for extended periods, from days to a lifetime. It is further divided into:

Explicit Memory: Conscious recall of facts and events.

Implicit Memory: Unconscious retention, such as skills and conditioned responses.

God, in His perfect wisdom, so often tells His people to stop and remember.

If we're going to build lives, families, and a faith that lasts, we must learn "The Power of Remembering." Title of today's message. Let's PRAY

Let's walk through a powerful and important moment we find at the beginning of Joshua Chapter 4 and see how the power of remembering can shape your life, your family, and your future.

1. God Commands Us to Mark those Holy Moments

Joshua 4:1-3, ***When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2 "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight."* [NIV]**

God didn't want this moment, this miracle, to be forgotten. So, He gave Joshua a clear and deliberate command: ***"Pick out twelve men - one from each tribe - and have them pick out twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River."***

The end of verse 7 says that these stones would serve as memorial stones - visible reminders of God's power and provision.

Think about where the stones came from - the riverbed that had just been miraculously dried up by the hand of God. That detail matters. It's important.

Because these weren't stones from the shoreline or some nearby field, these stones were only accessible because of what God had done. Their very location was a testimony to the miracle they'd just experienced.

Joshua's leadership here shows his sensitivity to God's instruction. You hear it in verse 2: ***"Take for yourselves twelve men...take for yourselves twelve stones..."*** Twelve stones for twelve tribes so that every tribe would share in the story. This was to be a memory meant to be remembered and celebrated.

In Psalm 106, the Psalmist recounts Israel's history - how God is good and mighty, just and righteous, and how He'd delivered them from Egyptian bondage, but then he makes this statement: ***"They did not remember the multitude of Your mercies but rebelled by the Red Sea."*** And then he says it again: ***"They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt."***

Key Insight: Forgetfulness breeds fear but remembering fuels faith.

2. God Calls us to Share His Stories

Joshua 4:4-7a, *4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 5 and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' 7 tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. [NIV]*

The purpose of the stones wasn't just personal - it was generational. They were more than markers - they were conversation starters. God's blessings weren't just for one generation but for generations to come.

This moment in Joshua 4 was designed with legacy in mind. Future generations would walk by, see those stones, and ask questions. And the parents, the elders, the leaders would have an answer: ***"Let me tell you what God did."***

Faith is not received by genetics but is transferred through testimony. Faith flourishes when God's redemptive stories are told.

If the world understands the importance of passing down life stories, how much more should Christians be intentional in passing down stories of God's grace, provision, and power?

QUOTE: Adrian Rogers is famous for saying, ***"A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted."*** But the quote doesn't stop there. He went on to say, ***"And a faith that isn't remembered won't be repeated."***

Psalms 107:2 says, ***"Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story— those he redeemed from the hand of the foe."*** [NIV]

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy." [KJV]

Illustration: An Arab chief tells a story of a spy who was captured and then sentenced to death by a general in the Persian army. This general had the strange custom of giving condemned criminals a choice between the firing squad or the big, black door. As the moment for execution drew near, the spy was brought to the Persian general, who asked the question, "What will it be: the firing squad or the big, black door?"

The spy hesitated; it was a difficult decision. He chose the firing squad. Moments later, shots rang out confirming his execution. The general turned to his aide and said, "They always prefer the known to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the unclear. Yet, we gave him a choice."

The aide said, "What lies beyond the big door?" "Freedom," replied the general. "I've known only a few brave enough to take it."

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is unwilling to grow up, the person who does not want to carry his own weight, this is a frightening prospect." When the citizens of a country become self-centered, dependent, and apathetic, freedom is soon lost.

Independence. Liberty. Freedom. These are words that people have used to start revolutions and break free from bondage and tyranny...words that have been counted worth dying for; but **freedom is a great Christian word.**

Just so you know, Jesus is portrayed in the pages of the New Testament as the world's supreme liberator. Jesus quoting from Isaiah 61 said, he came ***"to proclaim freedom to the captives and to set at liberty the oppressed."***

The apostle Paul appealed to the Galatians in chapter 5, verse 1; ***"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."***

1 PETER 2:15-16 ***"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God."*** (ESV)

Illustration: I'm not sure who wrote the following, but this story says a lot: When my oldest son was about three years old, I was outside doing some yard work one afternoon. I took him outside to play while I trimmed the hedges. Holding his hand, I knelt beside him so that we could look at each other face to face. Slowly and carefully, I said,

- "Now, son, you can play here in our front yard.
- You can go next door and play in your friend's front yard.
- You can ride your Big Wheel up and down the driveway.
- You can go into the backyard and play with the dog or play on your swing.
- You can go back inside and watch television.
- You can stay here and watch me trim the hedges.
- These are all the things you have my permission to do.

But you cannot play in the street. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

The 3-year-old nodded his head and said "Yes, Daddy".

I let go of his hand and he ran straight to the curb, put one foot in the street, and then turned his head toward me and smiled.

After understanding all the freedoms his father had allowed him, why would he deliberately go out to the one place his dad had told him not to go?

He did it because that little boy, like all of us was born with a sin nature.

- We want to be FREE to do things "our way"
- We want to be FREE to live by our own rules
- We want to be FREE to be the ones who make the final decisions of what is right or wrong for ourselves.

God created us and loves us; and wants to supply us with all kinds of blessings. But too often, we look at the Heavenly Father's restrictions and think they are to harm us; but they are protecting us.

In John 8 Jesus tells the crowd ***"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*** [vs. 8:31-32]

ILLUSTRATION: Someone once commented to a preacher: "God's a crutch" (meaning anyone who believed in God was not strong enough to stand on their own two feet). The preacher startled the skeptic by replying, "Yes God is a crutch... but who isn't limping."

True freedom is the exact opposite to what many people think it is. Most people think freedom is freedom from responsibility to God and anyone else in order that I may live for myself and be free. That isn't freedom. That's bondage to my own self-centeredness. True freedom is to be set free from myself to give myself fully to God and to others. In other words, freedom is an inside job that can only be completed by the Holy Spirit.

God commands us to mark those Holy Moments...God calls us to share His stories...and third,

3. God Challenges Us to Ponder His Power

Joshua 4:7b, ***"...tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."* [NIV]**

Do you remember what Jesus said in Luke 19:40? He said, ***"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."***

That's what these stones were doing. They were shouting, "God did this!" This miracle wasn't a coincidence or the result of clever planning. It was the hand of God, clearing and powerfully working on behalf of His people.

In Luke 9, we have the story of the transfiguration; It says that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about his departure which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. They seem to be referring to his death, except that the Greek word there is the word ***"exodus."***

In Hebrews 3 and 4, it says that Jesus is the greater Moses. Then Hebrews 11:29 says that by faith the Israelites passed through the sea on dry land. And in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul makes a mysterious statement saying that when the Israelites passed through the cloud and the sea they were baptized into Moses.

If there's one Old Testament passage that the New Testament invites us to read Christ-centrally, it's Exodus 14, verses 5–31, which talks about the Red Sea crossing.

What we learn from the Red Sea crossing about salvation and freedom through Jesus are 3 things: (1) We learn what we're getting out of; (2) we learn how we're getting out of it; and (3) we learn why we can get out of it.

1. What are we getting out of?

Salvation and freedom are all about getting out of bondage. That's what the word "redemption" means. Redemption means to be released from bondage.

The Israelites were in bondage. But bondage has layers. They got out of their slavery to the Egyptians—but as soon as the slave masters said, "We want you back," they revert to their old ways. Though they were objectively free from their bondage, the Israelites were subjectively—in their own hearts—still slaves. You can take the people out of slavery, but you can't take the slavery out of people. But the redemption of Jesus redeems us from all the layers.

In other words, in God's salvation we're freed—in past tense—from the penalty of sin; we're getting free—present tense—from the power of sin; and eventually we will be free—in the future—from the very presence of sin. That's justification, sanctification, and glorification.

2. How do we get out of bondage?

When Moses hears the Israelites crying out, he says: ***"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance, or the salvation of the Lord."***

On one side of the Red Sea, the Israelites are within reach of their old masters. They are under sentence of death. Pharaoh said, "We're going to get 'em and we're going to kill 'em." But as soon as they crossed over, they crossed over from death to life. They crossed from being under condemnation, to being free.

We're told in Romans 7 that; ***"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."***

"The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and a wall of water on their left."

I can tell you, some of these Israelites walked through saying, “The Lord is fighting for us!” They walked through with confidence. But I imagine there were others thinking, I can’t swim. I’m going to die.

Yet they were all equally saved. Why? Because **you’re not saved based of the quality of your faith; you’re saved because of the object of your faith: the Redeemer, the God who is fighting for you.**

Charles Spurgeon talks about the fact that Moses says, “Be still and let God fight for you.” That part is very important, because if you try to do something to merit God’s salvation, you are headed back into legalism and death.

How does this salvation and freedom come? It comes only by grace, and it comes by crossing over from death to life in Christ.

3. Why is it possible for us to get out of bondage?

The Egyptians went through the water and were destroyed; but when the Israelites went through, they were saved – free!

Don’t miss this: Moses is the man in the middle. He’s so identified with the people that he gets rebuked for their sin. And he’s so identified with God that he’s a vehicle for God’s saving power.

When Jonah was in the boat and the storm and waves of God’s wrath were about to sink the boat, Jonah turned to all the sailors and said, “This is a storm of God’s wrath. And the only way you’re going to be saved is for you to throw me in.” And so, the others threw him in and they were saved.

Jesus had the audacity to say, “Someone greater than Jonah is here,” talking about himself. It means that Jesus Christ on the Cross was thrown into that ocean of God’s wrath. When Jesus Christ said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” he was being put under God’s wrath. Jesus is the ultimate mediator, and that’s the reason why you and I can cross over.

In Christ we have a mediator who is fully God and fully man.

Just so you know: the children of Israel go from Egypt, through the Red Sea to Sinai. God brought them out before He gave them the law. That's the gospel! The gospel isn't "Because I've been obeying God, now I'm saved." It is because I've been saved by his grace and have been set free from the law of sin and death, that I want to obey God. In Leviticus 11:45 God says, ***"I brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, be holy."***

That's another way of saying that we're saved by faith through grace; not by works. But works grow out of faith. James says, ***"Faith without works is dead."***

Back to Joshua 4. Did you catch the middle of verse 7? ***"...the ark of the covenant of the Lord..."***

The ark was central to this miracle, symbolizing God's presence. That means the waters didn't part because Joshua gave a good speech or Israel had a solid game plan. The waters parted when the priests - carrying the ark - obeyed God and stepped into the water. When the priests stepped in, the waters stopped.

- That's the miracle.
- That's the message.
- And the stones keep telling the story.

So, these memorial stones tied the miracle to the presence of God.

Spiritual memory is essential for spiritual maturity.

Why was this miracle important, and why would these stones matter? Because Israel was about to face Jericho and had even more battles to come. So, they needed confidence - not in themselves, but in their God. And remembering what He had done would give them the strength to live by faith in the future.

APPLICATION: Maybe you're standing at a decision point this morning - a new direction, a difficult conversation, a step of faith - Remember what God has done. If He brought you through it before, He can do it again.

We don't face today's battles with yesterday's fears - we face them with yesterday's faith.

Have you ever heard the phrase "Blind faith?" Well, Faith isn't blind. It's rooted in remembrance. Remembering steadies the soul and reminds you that the God who moved then is still moving.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians, ***"...all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition (or instruction) ..."*** (1 Cor. 10:11)

Just as the people of Israel stood at the edge of the Promised Land and looked back to remember God's power at the Jordan, we too stand at the edge of eternity and look back - not to a river, but to a cross.

Twelve stones were taken from the depths of the Jordan to remind God's people of His power to save. But there was one stone that was rolled away from the tomb to remind us of something even greater - that Jesus Christ has conquered sin, death, and the grave.

That's the Gospel. That's the Good News. And it's not just something to be remembered - it's something to be shared.

Jesus said in Luke 22:19, "Do this in remembrance of Me." And Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 11:26 that every time we take the bread and the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

The stones in Joshua 4 pointed to God's power to bring His people into a physical land. But the cross points to the One who saves, delivers, and enables us to live the victorious Christian life.

- The cross is our power source.
- The empty tomb is our proof.
- And our life in Jesus is our Promised Land.

Before you move forward in life - into battles, decisions, or uncertain times - look back. Remember the cross. When you remember that Jesus died for you, rose again for you, and lives in you, you can move forward in faith and victory.

CONCLUSION: Hebrews 12:1-2 becomes the Christian's Declaration of Independence or better yet – Interdependence.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NIV)

I am free from failure for "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Phil.4:13

I am free from want for "my God shall supply all my need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" Phil:4:19

I am... free from fear for "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2Tim1:7

I am ... free from doubt for "God hath given to every man the measure of faith."
Rom. 12:3

I am free from weakness, "for the Lord is the strength of my life." Ps.27:1

I am ...free from the power of Satan "for greater is He that is in me than he that is in he world." 1Jn.4:4

I am ...free from defeat "for God always caused me to triumph in Christ Jesus." 2 Cor.2:14

I am free from ignorance, "for Christ Jesus is made unto me wisdom from God."
1Cor.1:30

I am ...free from sin "for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin." Jn.1:7

I am free from worry "for I am...to cast all my cares upon Him." 1Pet.5:7

I am ...free from bondage "for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Cor.3:17

I am free from condemnation, "for there is there fore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Rom. 8:1

I am free from the tyranny of want as the Lord is my Shepherd therefore I shall not want. (Psa 23)

I am free from fruitlessness as I know that whatever a man sows that will he also reap. So let us not be weary in doing good for in due season we will reap if we faint not. As we therefore have opportunity let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:6-9)

I am free from having need of anything as "His divine power has granted to me everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who calls us by His own glory and excellence and His precious and magnificent promises." (2 Pet 1:3,4)

I am free from a shortage of blessings as I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Eph. 1:3)

I am loved by God, because God is love and the FREEDOM I have in Christ means that I can REST in what Jesus has done for me; and I can RESPOND by giving myself fully to God and live a life empowered by the Holy Spirit.