



Grace News

How Quickly We Forget

I possess a legendary memory - unfortunately it is legendarily short with a few exceptions. I can remember most songs and artists from the late sixties and early seventies after hearing the opening second or two, I can quote the starting lineup and many statistics of the 1969 Chicago Cubs, and thankfully God has blessed me with the ability to recall Scripture. After that you are taking your chances if you expect me to remember something.

I was shopping at Wal-Mart one afternoon and called my wife while I was in the store to see if she needed anything. She listed three items for me. I came home with one of them; not because they did not have the other two, but because I forgot what the other two were that quickly.

"This cycle repeats itself over and over again"

My lapses in memory are usually pretty harmless, but there are times when I am to blame for some less than harmless problems due to my forgetfulness.

The Book of Judges is a series of monumental lapses in memory by God's people. Time after time the people find themselves in serious trouble due to their sin. After years of oppression and hardship they remember their God, repent of their sin, and turn back to worshipping Him. After God delivers them and they experience a time of peace and prosperity they forget God and go back to worshipping idols and back to their sinful ways. This cycle repeats itself over and over again.

After forty years of peace when Gideon had defeated the Midianites, Israel

had another serious lapse in memory:

Judges 8:33 - *"Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god."*

If you recall the story, Israel had just surfaced from forty years of undisturbed peace when the old familiar refrain is recorded in **Judges 6:1**; *"Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord."* As the consequence for their sinful behavior the Lord allows Midian to conquer Israel and harshly rule over them for seven years. After these seven years of struggle they finally cry out to God and He sends an angel to visit Gideon. Gideon is told to attack the Midianites and the Lord would be with him.

After Gideon is satisfied that this truly is a charge from the Lord he assembles an army of 32,000 men to do battle with. God tells Gideon that he has too many soldiers even though Midian's army already vastly outnumbered the 32,000 in Israel's army. The Lord tells Gideon to send home any soldier who is afraid and 22,000 turn tail and run.

With 10,000 willing soldiers the Lord once again says there are too many. One more test is administered and 9,700 are told to go home, leaving Gideon with 300 men to face an army described in **Judges 7:12** as *"numerous as the sand on the seashore."*

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Remember

In a recent article I read in a Christian magazine, studies show that prisoners are quickly forgotten by their close friends and even family. Close friends stop writing or contacting their incarcerated companion immediately or within a year at the most. Extended family will also most likely discontinue contact within the first year. Close family tends to drop out no longer than five

years down the road.

What a glorious opportunity for ministry we have set before us! Jesus tells us that when we visit those in prison we are visiting Him. Most, if not all of us know someone in prison, so pick up your pen and write a letter or contact the local jails and see if there are opportunities to minister face-to-face. You will be blessed as you are a blessing to others.

How Quickly We Forget (continued)

The Lord gives Gideon a great victory that only He can accomplish, and once again Israel is at peace for forty years before their memory gets hazy and they forget the Lord their God—again!

Why are we so fickle and forgetful when it comes to the Lord's provision and activity in our lives? How many times does He have to rescue the day before we figure things out? When will we finally be obedient to His Word in a consistent manner and thus enjoy His abundant provision and blessing?

Our sinful human nature is overtly selfish. Don't let the humanistic psychologists fool you—mankind is NOT inherently good. We are inherently cursed and inherently evil. We want things our way at all times and

“God is so lucky to have us, isn't He?”

we will gladly pitch a fit and cause a commotion when we don't.

In general, most Christians are not any different from the world in this regard. We may exhibit a little more patience on the outside but below the surface we are pitching the same fit and desiring to cause the same commotion. In our mind we are holding our breath until our face turns blue and stomping our feet until someone takes notice.

When we do not consistently yield our lives to the Holy Spirit's control this selfishness will exhibit itself in many ways—some very subtle and some not so subtle. Let me give you one common example.

When things go wrong in your life, you get offended, you lose your job, you fall ill to some disease or ailment, etc., your selfish human nature will want to shout the injustice from the rooftops. Don't get me wrong on this issue, sharing your burdens with one another is the right thing to do as long as you are not sim-

ply gossiping about or disparaging others in the process. But when everything is going smoothly in your life and God is answering prayer it seems to be too easy to take things for granted and keep it to yourself.

A recent example in my life dealt with a prayer request I shared with two of our church leaders. The men prayed for this situation that morning and God intervened and took care of things before my wife and I even had to confront the offender. We praised and thanked God on the spot but I never called and shared the victory with the two men who prayed with me. I forgot.

This same selfish tendency manifests itself in much larger ways if we are not careful. Instead of forgetting to call your prayer partners with answered prayer you can begin to forget God had anything to do with it in the first place. You can begin to take the credit when things go well. You can begin to believe in your own abilities, your own intellect, your own strength, and your own devices.

Forty years of peace and prosperity will do that to the best of us.

Earlier, when I related the story of Gideon as the Lord whittled down his army to virtually nothing, you may not have recalled why God wanted the army to be so small. **Judges 7:2**, says, ***“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, My own power has delivered me.’”*** And herein lies the primary cause for spiritual forgetfulness—our pride takes charge and convinces us that we are the sole reason that things are good. God is so lucky to have us, isn't He?

So what's a person to do? How do we cure this all-to-common affliction of spiritual amnesia?

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Grace Calendar

Praise & Prayer is scheduled for Friday, April 11th at 7:00 p.m. We meet at Dick & Jean's home.

Saturday, April 19th at 9:30 a.m. will be our next monthly Ladies Meetings. Meet at Jean's home.

Monday night Bible study at Chuck & Judy's home at 6:30 p.m. each week. We are currently studying spiri-

tual warfare.

Wednesday night Bible study at Pastor Al & Connie's home at 6:30 p.m. on the Book of Isaiah.

Saturday evening worship service. 6:00 p.m. for coffee and fellowship, 6:30 p.m. for worship and testimony, and about 7:15 for adult and children's church.

Grace Church Happenings

Special Service Time on April 26th

On Saturday, April 26th, the community center will not be available during our normal meeting time. After getting as much input as we could, the elders and deacons have determined to hold our services that weekend on Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m. Coffee and fellowship will begin at 9:00 a.m.

Ladies Meeting

Ladies, you will be meeting again on Saturday, April 19th, and every third Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. unless otherwise noted. You will gather to discuss ministry issues, have a Bible study designed just for you, and enjoy a time of fellowship. Meet at the home of Jean Muehlbauer in Circle R Ranch.

Monday & Wednesday Night Bible Studies

Our Wednesday night group has been back on track for several weeks now and our Monday night group is getting back on track this month.

On Wednesday's we are continuing our study through Isaiah's prophecy (and loving every minute). On Monday's we are completing a study of Ephesians and spiritual warfare, and will soon begin a study based on A.W. Tozer's book, "Rut, Rot, or Revival."

Please join us for either or both studies. We meet at Pastor Al & Connie's on Wednesday and at Chuck & Judy Schwalier's on Monday.

A Night of Praise & Prayer

It has been quite a while since we have gathered for this monthly time of worship. Weather problems and a whole host of other issues have thwarted our efforts to come together for this important time. We will plan on meeting on Friday, April 11th at 7:00 p.m. If something once again stops us from meeting we will meet the following week (April 18th) and we will keep moving it back a week if necessary—we will not be denied this month!

We meet at Dick & Jean's home and all are invited. If you have never attended, we read Scripture and discuss the implications it has on us, we sing praises, we sing songs of worship, we pray, and we fellowship around a generous supply of snacks. The unity and presence of the Holy Spirit is so very evident at these gatherings, I trust you can make it a habit to join us.

Quarterly Church Celebration

On Sunday, April 27th we will gather together for our quarterly celebration of what God has done for Grace Church. As always we have much to discuss and to celebrate. We will enjoy one of our favorite styles of food for the fellowship time—Mexican. Bring a side dish and/or dessert; all the rest will be provided.

The celebration begins at 10:00 a.m. at Pastor Al & Connie's home in Indian Mountain. Call if you need directions (719-836-4801).

Welcome to Our Newest Members

We welcome the newest members of Grace Church—Damon & Nicki Shields, and their grandson, Caleb officially joined our ranks on March 29th. Please keep them in your prayers as they continue to serve the Lord through their ministry at Grace Church.

May Calendar

Here is an early head's up on several church events in the month of May:

- May 4th - Bowling Fellowship at 11:30 a.m.
- May 9th - A Night of Praise & Prayer
- May 10th - Mother's Day recognition
- May 17th - Ladies Fellowship
- May 17th - Grace Church 3rd Anniversary Celebration, including a pre-service cookout.
- May 24th - Flag ceremony in honor of our veterans and Memorial Day

Building & Property Update

There is nothing new to report this month. The men are following up on everything we have control over. All will happen in God's timing.

Upcoming Sermon Titles

The mission of Grace Church is "To know Jesus and to make Him known," and so we have embarked on a journey through the Gospel of Matthew to deepen our knowledge of Jesus Christ. Here is the April schedule (subject to change as the Spirit leads):

- April 5th - The Definition of Love (1:18-25)
- April 12th - Genuine Worship (2:1-12)
- April 19th - Genuine Evil (2:13-23)
- April 26th - A Bold and Unusual Preacher (3:1-12)

Please join us, or request a cassette tape of the sermon if interested.

**GRACE CHURCH OF
SOUTH PARK**

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*"To know Jesus and to make Him
known"*

"We will diligently strive to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, IN ORDER that we can help them grow spiritually, IN ORDER that we can make disciples of Jesus Christ, IN ORDER that we can fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord by reaching the world for Christ."

How Quickly We Forget (concluded)

The short and sweet answer is the same answer to just about every spiritual issue—cultivate a habit of reading, studying, meditating on, and memorizing the Bible; then follow that up with immediate obedience to what you learn. Add to that a vibrant and consistent prayer life, and you won't have a problem with forgetting God—let alone anything else in your life. True and complete Christian maturity will properly view and handle anything that comes your way.

But while each of us should be on that road to full maturity in Christ, all too often we do too much sight-seeing and find ourselves on the side roads of life; struggling to find our way. So what are some practical helps to always remember God if you aren't all that consistent with your Bible and with prayer?

Nothing will replace what I already mentioned, but the following will help you in the short run as you purposefully position yourself to become more committed to God's Word and to prayer.

First, start your day with a generous helping of praise & worship. Whether you pick up a songbook and sing a cappella, or you crank up the CD player and sing along with the band, get in the habit of letting your voice rise to heaven in songs proclaiming God's glory. The music and the feeling of awe and wonder will carry with you for most, if not all, of the day. You will be hard pressed to forget the Lord if you have developed the habit to praise and worship Him when you wake up.

Second, learn to look toward heaven and say, "Thank you Lord" every time something goes your way and every time something doesn't go your way. This isn't a psychological ploy or a admonition to trick your subconscious into having a positive attitude no matter what; instead this is a valid and biblical response to God's sovereignty and control. Absolutely nothing is going to happen to you today that God is not aware of. The Lord is not wringing His hands up in heaven con-

cerned about what "might" happen in your life and how to deal with it. All that happens will be another building block in your ultimate goal of becoming Christ-like. Trials will ultimately strengthen you, blessings will encourage you, and everything in between will reveal God's hand if you spiritual in tune. So saying "Thank you Lord" in all situations is the only reasonable response.

Finally, slow down! Stop filling your days and your weeks with non-stop activity. Take time to enjoy the scenery of God's creation when traveling from place to place. You don't have to be at every meeting. If you have children, they don't have to be in every soccer league, baseball league, basketball league, karate class, dance class, gymnastics class, cub scouts, girl scouts, etc., etc., etc. You are not only destroying your own life you are training your kids to destroy theirs too. Who has time to remember God when you don't have time to remember dinner? And just because you don't have kids in the house anymore doesn't mean you can't get just as busy. Slow down!

Each of these three suggestions should ultimately be leading you to developing a vibrant and consistent relationship with the Lord through His Word and through prayer. Apart from which you will find yourself in the pages of the Book of Judges—forgetting the Lord.

Pastor Al

Scripture Memory

This month's challenge is to memorize **Isaiah 54:17** - *"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me, declares the Lord."*