

Remembering

The key to receiving repeated blessings from God.

Introduction

Would you like to have God's blessings in your life in a more consistent way? Would you like to be used by God to impact those around you for the Kingdom of God? Would you like to become a better witness for Jesus Christ in a more natural way? If that is your desire, then this booklet is for you.

In this booklet you will learn why God continues to bless some people again and again while others seem to only have limited answers to their prayers. We know that faith alone determines our salvation but is it faith alone that determines our blessings from above? Is there something else that may be limiting God's answer to prayers? Keep reading to find out.

The Hebrew word for "Remember" is an interesting word that encompasses much more than just recalling things from the past. At Christmas time, we all remember hearing the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. Each year we remember. This story illustrates the need for us to study the Word of God for what it really says and not just accept tradition or what it seems to say.

I will use the Christmas Story that records the birth of Jesus that we all know and remember to illustrate the need for us to study God's Word, not just read it. Then I will reveal the power of Remembering.

Chapter 1

Songbook Theology

Too many of us have what I call, "Songbook Theology" building many of our ideas about Jesus based on the songs we sing at church and Medieval artistic images rather than the Word of God. To illustrate this, we will look at the story surrounding the birth of Jesus which everyone knows because Christmas is the biggest holiday of the year.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, we are told to "Study" to show ourselves approved of God. Most people will read the word, "study" and think "read." It does not say, "Read" to show yourselves approved of God" but, "Study." Take time to study the Word of God and you will be surprised what you will find.

Jesus is Born in Bethlehem

The Christmas story will illustrate how we accept traditional stories that have things added that are just not there and how we can miss some very important truths. It's not that the things added by tradition are bad, they are just not factual and can eventually change what we believe. In that same way, we skim over verses in the Bible that have important truths that we often miss by not

studying them in depth. Let's analyze the very familiar story of Jesus' birth and see what we might have missed.

First of all, the Bible does not teach that Jesus' parents were poor. Sure, Jesus was born in a stable but not because he was from a poor family. Remember, there was no room in the inn and the stable was the only accommodation available in Bethlehem the night He was born. Later, the Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We imagine that there were only three wise men because of the three different gifts. The Bible does not say how many, only that there were three kinds of gifts. Regardless of the number of wise men, they gave enough valuable gifts for the family to escape from Herod's evil plans and travel to Egypt where they lived for a few years until Herod died. Then they returned to their hometown of Nazareth with enough wealth to establish themselves and raise their family.

It is interesting to note that Joseph and Mary waited till the time for her to be delivered that they went to Jerusalem for the taxation. History shows that they had a whole year to go to Bethlehem to be registered for taxation. Why did they wait till it was about time for Mary to give birth? I believe that they were "co-operating" with God. By that, I mean, they knew the promise of God and the Word of God that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, not Nazareth. They waited to go at that time to cooperate with God's plan and purpose. They did not know the whole plan of God, but they knew enough to obey and the willingness to cooperate with God's plan one step at a time. God usually does not show us His whole plan, step by step, at the beginning. He may show us the first step and a general idea of where we are going. If He showed us the whole plan, many of us would say, "No" to Him instead of "Yes." For me personally, if I had known at the beginning what I would have to endure to serve God I might not have said, "Yes" and taken that first step that put me on the path to my destiny. However, in retrospect, it has all been worth it to have the honor and joy of serving God.

Continuing on with the Christmas story, let's take a moment to look at the story of the Christmas Star, the shepherds and the Wise Men. According to scripture, only Shepherds came on the night of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8-20). Most of us believe that the Wise Men came on the night Jesus was born. Remember, they had seen His star and had traveled a great distance but had to stop to ask for information about the newborn king and get directions because the star that guided the shepherds was no longer showing the spot where Jesus was located.

It was only natural that The Wise Men would stop and ask at the Royal Palace where they could find a newborn king. King Herod, who lived in Jerusalem, only about 9 KM (5.6 miles) from Bethlehem, knew nothing of the star and had to inquire of the Chief Priest and Scribes as to when and where this child was to be born. That took time. If the Star had been a significant event in the night sky, why did he nor the Chief Priest and Scribes have no knowledge of it. If the Star had shown continuously, the wise men would have had no need to stop to ask Herod where to find Jesus. However, after their visit to Herod, the only additional knowledge they gained was that according to Jewish scriptures, Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, perhaps they enquired of local residents who would have known of the strange events that happened on the night the shepherds left their flocks and came to town. Someone in town could have shown them where Joseph, Mary and Jesus lived.

The Bible says that Angels appeared to some local Shepherds in the field around Bethlehem and announced the Birth of Messiah. It mentions nothing about a star. However, the shepherds were told to look in a manger, not look for the light of a star shining on the place. Where do you find a manger (animal feed trough)? In a stable. If the Wise Men came on the night Jesus was born, the star would have had to begin shining long before the birth of Jesus. It would have taken many months, maybe a couple of years for the Wise Men to research what this new star meant, consult with other wise men, then to prepare for and travel to Bethlehem. The Wise Men must have told Herod that they had seen the star about two years previously, therefore he killed all the boy babies two years and younger. It is also interesting to note that the Wise Men came to the "house" where they found Jesus, not the stable (Matthew 2:11). That Greek word, "oikia" is translated house 92 times and home once. It is never translated "stable." In fact, the word stable is not found in the New Testament. Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, which is usually only found in a stable, though the Bible does not say Jesus was born in a stable. However, I think it is safe to say that he actually was born in a stable.

How old was Jesus when the Wise Men arrived? When the shepherds arrived, the word used to describe Jesus in Luke 2:26 was, "babe." It is the Greek word, "*brephos*" which is translated, "unborn child or newborn." However, when the Wise Men arrived in Matthew 2:9, the Greek word "paidion" was used. It can be translated as "a child, little child, young child or damsel." You can see that by the use of a different word, the age of Jesus had changed from the time the shepherds arrived to see the babe (*brephos*) and the child (*paidion*) that the Wise Men visited. When the Wise Men arrived around two years after the birth of Jesus, He was already a young child. That's why the Wise Men did not meet the Shepherds in the stable to worship together. Not knowing the exact time of Jesus' birth, Herod killed all the boys in Bethlehem who were two years and under because of the time the Wise Men has first seen the star.

Another interesting fact is when Jesus was dedicated at the Temple in Jerusalem, His parent's offering was the alternative offering, not the offering of a wealthy person. Why? Because the Wise Men had not yet arrived (Leviticus 12:2, 8). However, having no new direction from God, Joseph and Mary continued to live in Bethlehem until after the Wise Men came. Then Joseph was warned in a dream by an Angel to go to Egypt. He now had the means to travel and live in Egypt until Herod was no longer a threat.

Let me note here that when we receive direction from God, we should continue in that direction until we receive new direction from HIM. Too often we get bored or distracted while waiting and take it upon ourselves to "do" something different. Patience is a real virtue that the man or woman of God must possess if they are to fulfill their destiny.

Can you see that in some ways we have misunderstood what the scriptures really say because of pre-conceived ideas from songwriters, medieval artist conceptions and other cultural teachings about the Bible. These are only minor things, but we must study the Bible to see what it really says unfiltered by our cultural traditions and hymn books. You might be surprised what you will find that will unlock your understanding and increase your faith in the Almighty God of scripture. He can and will do what He promises when we meet the conditions of faith through His Word.

Again, these things are not so important that they will change our theology but illustrates that a thorough study of God's word can reveal some interesting facts that can sometimes make a huge difference in how we can live a more victorious life. As a case in point, I want to share the following insight about the Hebrew word translated, "remember."

Chapter 2

The Importance of Remembering

In Psalm 103:7, the psalmist says, "*He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.*" Notice that two important things are mentioned in this verse, the acts and ways of God. His Acts is "what" He does and His Ways is "why" He does it. In this Psalm, David is recounting the goodness of God and in verse 2 he tells us "not to forget all His benefits." David knew the importance of not forgetting by keeping God's Acts and Ways alive in our mind through remembering.

In most languages, the word "remember" means, "*to bring to mind or think of something again.*" Therefore, it is not unusual to relegate remembering only to our thoughts of some past event. We know that thoughts can lead to words which often leads to actions. To change an action, we must first change our thoughts. What we think today could become an action tomorrow, so we must be careful what we think about today. The Bible has lots to say about our thought life. I will cover that in another publication. However, this booklet is only going to cover the importance of what we remember from our past.

Did you know that you have the power to limit God's ability to bless you? We know that God cannot bless sin in our lives but that's not what I am referring to. I am referring to the fact that God promises His blessings in every area of our lives but so many only have occasional blessings.

I am reminded of the words of a hymn, "It is no secret what God can do, what He has done for others, He'll do for you." Why is it no secret? It is not only because of what the Bible records from ancient times but because someone has given a testimony of what God has done for them and is continuing to do today.

The two most common needs for people today is healing for their bodies and finances. The Life of Jesus was full of healings and miracles. He tells us in John 14:16 and 26, "*And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever*" "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*"

One of the jobs of the Holy Spirit is to teach us all things that we need to know. He also does something else that is very important. He will cause us to remember not only the things Jesus said but also what He has done in our personal lives. Jesus is at work in our lives every day through the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that it would be better for them when He went away. I'm sure they were thinking, "How can it be better if He goes away?" The way that it

would be better for them is that Jesus could be with them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as long as they lived on Earth. He said, "I will be with you even until the end of the world." The only way he could be everywhere at the same time would be through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is always with us through the person of the Holy Spirit. That promise is eternal and includes us who are alive and serving Him today.

One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit is to cause us to remember what Jesus has told us. The Old Testament saints were told to write the scriptures on their doorposts and the gates to their house. We are always to have God in our thoughts. He is always with us. We are told to walk with Him daily. He is our guide and helper. We must never forget that He is with us wherever we go for he will NEVER leave us even in what seems to be our darkest hour. One way to keep that truth alive in our hearts is found in Proverbs 3:5-6 – *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."*

Acknowledge that our God is a living God and He is ALWAYS with us, working with us and for us to accomplish His will. He has a wonderful plan for us and will always be there to help us accomplish it by meeting our every need.

We can have hope and comfort for the future if we will remember what God has done in the past. Romans 15:4 tells us how to have hope. *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*

We are taught the ways of righteousness through the scriptures; what is pleasing and not pleasing to God. The Scriptures build our faith and lets us know what we can expect from God. Romans 10:17 says that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The Bible is the foundation for all that we know about God and His ways. Psalm 103:7 tells us that God revealed His acts to the Children of Israel but He revealed His ways to Moses. Keep in mind that it is more important to know why God does things than it is to only know what he does.

Let's look at an interesting passage in Psalm 78. The Psalmist is recounting God's kindness to rebellious Israel during their desert experience after leaving Egypt. In verse 40 through verse 42, he writes about how they limited His ability to do all that He wanted to do for them. Imagine that. Israel actually had the ability to limit Almighty God. They prevented Him from doing all that He would liked to have done for them in the desert.

*"How often they provoked Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and **limited** the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy."*

The Children of Israel provoked God but they also limited him. If they had the ability to limit God thousands of years ago, perhaps we unknowingly have limited God's ability to work on our behalf today. You might say, "Wait a minute. God is all powerful. He can do anything. That is

true but God has voluntarily limited Himself. Did you know that there are things that God says that He cannot and will not do? The scriptures say that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2). The Lord does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). There are some things that God cannot and will not do. He cannot sin; He will not lie; He cannot look upon sin; He will not violate His Word; He will not violate our free will. There are just some things that God cannot and will not do.

Let's look at how the Children of Israel limited the Holy One of Israel. Psalm 78 says they did so by failing to "*remember*" his power and his ability to deliver them from their enemy as He had done in the past. God makes it clear that He wants to bless His children. If the Children of Israel limited God's ability to bless them in the wilderness by not remembering, then we can also limit God's ability to bless us in our life here on earth. John 10:10 says that our enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy us. We must take note of this and be prepared.

God gives us His Holy Spirit to teach us all things and cause us to remember whatever He has said unto us. I think you can safely add that He will also cause us to remember what He has done for us. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be like Jesus and go into all the world and do what He did. You may not be called to go as a missionary to a foreign land but you are called to go into the world in which you live. Jesus told us that we would do the works that He did and even greater works because the Holy Spirit would live within us (John 14:17)

The Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us like Jesus by thinking like He thinks. He does this by revealing things to our minds. The doorway to our mind is our senses; what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell. The human mind works somewhat like a computer. It stores things from our past and keeps them filed away in what we call memories. Our senses are doorways that stimulate our thoughts primarily by reaching back into our past and pulling up things that we have experienced, seen or heard.

In 1946 a study was done by a college professor, Dr. Edgar Dale. He found how much you will remember according to the following.

1. What you Read – 10%
2. What you Hear – 20%
3. What you See – 30%
4. What you both Hear and See – 50%
5. What you Hear, See, Say or write – 70%
6. What you Hear, See, Say, Write and do something – 90%

From these statistics, we can see that when a person uses more than one of his senses that he will retain the most. Repetition is the motor of leaning. The more you repeat something, the easier it is to remember. We will forget even important things if we do not repeat them or find some other way to keep the memory alive and fresh in our mind. We read the scriptures daily to be encouraged and refreshed in our relationship with the Lord. I Corinthians 10:11 says, "*Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*" The scriptures are for our admonition which means a warning or encouragement either to do or not to do something. The Bible provides us with a

history of both their mistakes and good works of the Children of Israel and the early church. The purpose is for us to learn from them and produce hope within us.

I always say, “A wise man learns from the mistakes of others. A normal man learns from his own mistakes but a fool learns from no one’s mistakes.” A foolish person does not learn but makes the same mistakes again and again. As we spend time with the Lord, the Holy Spirit reminds us of what His Word has said to us and what He has done for us.

This truth came alive for me when I attended Bible School. It has been one of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned. I had always been an average student but I found something that changed all that and I became one of the top students in the school. I discovered John 14:26, “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your **remembrance** all things that I said to you.*” Every time I took an exam, I learned to pray and ask the Lord to cause me to remember all that I had heard and learned in class so that I could make a good grade on the exam and also remember it when I needed it in the future. It worked. He caused me to remember the things that I had read from the Bible and the things I had been taught.

The Power of Your Testimony

Rev. 12:11 – They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb and the **word of their testimony**

Lets look again at Psalm 78:40-42 “*How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power.*”

How did Israel limit the power of God in their midst? They did not remember.

The word “remember” in Hebrew is the word “*zakar*.” God wanted the Israelites to keep Him and what He had done for them fresh in their minds. He wanted them to remember His love and care for them. He provided holidays as tools to keep fresh in their minds what He had done for them. All of the Jewish Feasts were to help the people to remember by hearing, seeing and doing things that would reveal His loving character and make Him a part of their lives every day.

The reason for the Feasts of Israel was to get the people to act out something that related to the holiday. Keep in mind that the word *zakar* means:

1. Bring something to your mind, a memory.
2. Make mention or talk about it. God is glorified when we give testimony.
3. Make a memorial. Basically means to do something.

When the Children of Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, the Lord told them to take 12 stones representing each of the 12 tribes. They were to make two piles of stones, one on each side of the river so that when future generations would see them, they would ask, “What does that pile of stones represent?” This would give opportunity for testimony to be given of what the Lord had done for them. This was to help future generations to remember what God had done.

While all this is important to know, the primary reason for this is in the next paragraph.

While the Hebrew word, zakar, is translated remember, it is also translated “male.” When I first saw this, I thought that it was because only the males were remembered in the genealogies of Israel; Enos who was the son of Seth who was the son of Adam who was the son of God (Genesis 3:38). After some thought, I realized that there must be some other reason.

I suddenly realized that it is **the male that carries the seed of reproduction**. This means that whatever we remember, that is, bring back to our memory, talk about and make a memorial for, God will reproduce again in our life. It’s like planting a seed in your garden. Plant it and it will produce much more than just that one seed.

How do you plant the seed of something from your past? First, you think about and meditate on what God has done for you. Then, give Testimony by telling others how God has intervened in your life and answered your prayer. Then make a memorial. A memorial is anything that will remind you of what happened. It could be a note taped to your bathroom mirror that you see each morning. It could be a tree that you plant in your garden. The Bible tells the Children of Israel to write scriptures on the door posts, gates, etc. Anything that you will see regularly that reminds you of God’s blessings and keeps His goodness and provision in the forefront of your mind. The purpose of the church is to glorify God, build up the body of Christ and reach the lost. What better way than sharing testimony of your personal experience with God. The people of the world may argue about theology but they cannot argue with your personal experience.

Your Testimony in Spiritual Warfare

Revelation 12:11 says “And they overcame him (Satan) by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives to the death.” The Blood of the Lamb is the basis for our relationship with God and our salvation. Hebrews 9:22 reminds us that, “Without shedding of blood, there is no remission (forgiveness of our sin).” Revelation 12:11 also tells us of the power of our testimony to defeat Satan in our lives.

We know from John 10:10, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* Our personal enemy, Satan has come to steal our life, love, joy, peace, money, health and the things that make life worth living. However, we are told in Revelation 12:11, that “they” (the saints) also overcame Satan by the Blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, and “the word of their testimony.” As powerful as the Blood of the Lamb is, they still needed the word of their testimony to overcome and defeat the power of Satan. God has done His part in our victory by sending His only begotten son to die on the cross for our salvation. We must do our part by receiving God’s free gift of salvation and cooperate with His plan as Joseph and Mary did concerning the place and timing of the Birth of Jesus.

Perhaps you did not know how powerful your testimony can be. In addition to His blood, your testimony is the tool that Jesus has given you to win the victory. If you don’t have a personal testimony yet about a certain trial you may be going through, tell the testimony of someone else till you get your victory and your own personal story. Testimonies are POWERFUL. They encourage others and they plant the seed that will produce a harvest in our future.

We must remember that every time we share some experience we have had, we are planting seeds, both good and bad, that will be produced in our lives. The bad things can be seen as weeds in our lives. Weeds in a garden will take nutrients from the soil and choke the life out of the good plants. Stop talking about negative things that have happened in your life if you don't also have a testimony of How you gained the Victory over them through Jesus Christ. Begin sharing your victorious stories. They will encourage you and others. Below, I will tell how to put together a testimony.

Preparing Your Testimony

First of all, you need to understand the difference between sharing a testimony and witnessing. Many people have no problem giving a testimony in church but have difficulty in witnessing at work, school or other places.

A Testimony is sharing that you had a problem. You turned to God and called on Him to help. He provided an answer and now you are living happily ever after.

In witnessing you are sharing that you had a problem. You turned to God and called on Him to help. He provided an answer (salvation) and now you are living happily ever after.

In both a testimony and witnessing you are sharing the same story and same information. You are telling about the love and power of God to rescue and provide for you. This glorifies Him and shows that His love is real and tangible. He is only a prayer away. The only difference is the audience; a Christian or a lost person. In both instances, your story points the listener to God, who listened, answered and delivered you out of your trouble.

The purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ is threefold. First it is to Glorify God. Second, it is to build up the Body of Christ and third, it is to reach the lost. Testimonies glorify God and builds up the Body of Christ. Witnessing is directed toward reaching the lost.

When I pastored an International Church in Japan, we had time every Sunday after worship for testimonies. About two or three times a year it would happen that there were so many testimonies that it took up my sermon time. It was more important for people to share their testimonies than for me to preach. If others would ask for prayer for the same thing that a testimony had been given for, I would get the person testifying to pray for that request right then and there. The person testifying had renewed faith and could pray with confidence. It built up the body by allowing the saints to pray for each other. God responded and answered their requests. The saints grew in faith and in confidence that God was in our midst.

Everyone needs a personal testimony of your salvation experience as well as stories of God's intervention in your life that will encourage other believers. I have found that sometimes you only have three minutes or less to share your story with someone. If that is the case, you must be very clear about what you want to say. Sometimes you may have only five or six minutes, then

you can go into more detail. If you don't capture people's attention at the very beginning by sharing something that related to them, they will find some reason to turn away and leave.

Everyone also need to develop testimonies for things that God has done in your life; things like financial and material provision; physical and emotional healing, God's leading and directing your path, etc. Make a list of things that God has done in your life that you would like to see reproduced and prepare a testimony that is planting a seed that can be reproduced.

A testimony basically has three parts.

1. The problem; what was going on in your life.
2. What you did; calling on the Lord for help, a specific act of obedience, etc.
3. What God did in response to your need or problem.

People may argue about differences in theological beliefs but it is hard to argue with a personal testimony of God's powerful intervention in your life. Keep in mind that though others may not respond the way you would like, they will not forget your testimony. The Holy Spirit will keep it alive as a witness to them.

We all have challenges in our lives. Jesus said in John 16:33 – *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

Younger Christians need to be encouraged that trials are a normal experience in life but our God will provide and care for them. Older, more mature Christians should always be sharing, especially with younger Christians about their walk with the Lord and how He has cared for them over the years and provided for their needs.

In Conclusion

Let me suggest that you make memorials to help you remember your major answers to prayer. Just like people buy souvenirs when they go on holiday that will remind them of their trip, you can buy or make something that will remind you of God's power and kindness in your life.

What God has done in the past, He can and will do again as you glorify Him by bringing those special times to your mind, giving testimony of His powerful intervention in your life and making a memorial to keep that memory alive. It is like planting a seed that will produce fruit in your life as often as you plant it.

A final caution: Be careful not to remember the negative things in your life except to use it as an example of how God has blessed you. Remember, when you recall something and talk about it without also telling of God's provision for that problem, you are beginning to plant a negative seed. Always concentrate on Remembering the blessings of God rather than the times you were without them.

Pray this prayer: “Father in Heaven, please help me to concentrate on Remembering your blessings in my life rather than the times when I was without them. Please help me to Glorify you in my life by telling of your great love that will plant seeds for future blessings for myself and others.”