

PRESSING ON IN FAITH

STUDY ONE

Looking Back, Let's Remember the Journey

Deuteronomy 8:1–5

Remember how the Lord your God led you through this year. He never once abandoned you, never once left you on your own, never once refused to hear your prayers, never once mistreated or abused you in any way. He was there with you through it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Do you remember when . . . ?” These familiar words draw out a range of emotions—from warm nostalgia to deep grief. Regardless of what someone pauses to remember, reflections on the past shed light on the present, often revealing attitudes to embrace or mistakes to avoid.

For this reason, remembrance is a distinctively Christian practice whose origin dates to the earliest days of the people of Israel. As the redeemed look back, they can see all the ways their providential Lord has brought them to where they are today and made them who they are today.

When did you last take time to reflect on all that God has done for you and how He has guided each and every one of your steps? This *Searching the Scriptures* study will look to Israel’s example to help you practice the spiritual act of remembering so that you might discern God’s leading hand in your life, even as you endure the wilderness of your most difficult days.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The practices of remembrance and thanksgiving weave together to strengthen the cord of one's faith. Offer this prayer of thanks to God as you prepare to open His Word today:

Father, as I look back on my life this past year, I know I have endured great challenges. Thank You for helping me endure them. Through my study of Your Word, enable me to see how You are working in my life, especially through the hardships. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

After God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, they spent forty years wandering in the wilderness like nomads, nursing aching muscles, sweating under the heat of the sun, and shivering through long nights.

During this four-decade experience, each Israelite wondered, “Does God really care about us? Why did He free us from slavery just to let us die in the wilderness?” (See [Exodus 16:2–3](#)).

Isn't it easy to forget how God meets the needs of His people during trials?

Despite the difficulties, God preserved and protected the Israelites in miraculous ways. He parted the Red Sea, allowing them to escape the Egyptian army. They drank water that gushed from a rock, and they ate bread that fell from the sky like snow. He guided them by pillars of cloud and fire. No one would say their lives were luxurious—or even comfortable—but they were *alive!*

At the end of those forty long years, a new generation of Israelites prepared to enter the land God had promised. Before they crossed the border of the wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey, their leader Moses offered some final words of advice. Not even Moses knew what would await them in this new land, but he did know one essential truth . . .

God will always lead you through the wilderness.



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Observation: The Israelites' Remembrance

By the time God led Israel to the end of the wilderness, Moses was close to death. The book of Deuteronomy records his final address to the people. Central to his exhortation is a single command: *remember*. Read [Deuteronomy 8:1–5](#), and observe Moses' explanation of this simple yet profound imperative.¹

According to [8:2](#), what specifically did Moses want the Israelites to remember?

Moses pointed out two things God accomplished while the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. He *humbled* them, and He *tested* them. According to [8:2](#), why did God test His people by making them endure this difficult season?

According to [8:3](#), how did God humble the Israelites? Why did He humble them?



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What evidence did Moses offer in *Deuteronomy 8:4* to show that God had not abandoned His people?

What analogy did Moses use in *8:5* to explain God's actions over the past forty years?

God doesn't operate as though He's unreasonable. He just doesn't do it our way. Because it takes a heavenly appetite to enjoy a heavenly food, He sometimes lets His own children go hungry. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Meaning of Remembrance

Moses concluded his exhortation by appealing to Israel's discipline under their loving Father. But why did they deserve the extreme punishment of wandering in the wilderness for so long?



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Four decades earlier, as the Israelites stood at the edge of the promised land, spies reported that the land teemed with ferocious giants. The people were afraid, and they wanted to abandon the plan to enter the land. According to [Numbers 14:20–25](#), why did God discipline His children for this behavior? How is this example instructive for followers of Jesus today?

The Hebrew word translated “remember” depicts more than fond reminiscence. Rather, the Old Testament authors used this term to describe God’s covenantal relationship with His chosen people Israel. Often, Israel was called to remember God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises, and an essential part of this remembrance was their response of faithful obedience.

How does this explanation of the word help you understand why remembrance is so important to God?

Remember, it was the Lord who led you all the way through the wilderness. God is faithful and will meet your needs regardless of how difficult things may be, how exposed you may be, how vulnerable you may be to danger. God faithfully remains your protector, your shield, your guide. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: The Ephesians' Remembrance

The apostle Paul was a faithful Jew before witnessing the resurrected Christ, so he knew the importance of remembrance for the people of God. In *Ephesians 2:11–13*, he called his Gentile readers to engage in remembrance in order to understand the life-changing power of the gospel.

In *2:12*, Paul clarified his command by telling his Gentile readers *what* to remember. What five aspects of their former identity did he list?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

While Paul seemed to focus on the bad news for these Gentiles, the message of Jesus Christ is *good* news. So Paul begins *2:13* with two powerful words: “But now . . .” What contrast did Paul make between the Gentiles’ former state and their present reality in Jesus Christ?

Just as Israelites living in the paradise of Canaan looked back at the season of wandering in the wilderness, so also are believers living in the light of Jesus’ sacrifice called to remember their time lost in the darkness of sin. In doing so, Christians today—like the ancient Israelites—can experience Jesus’ provision, faithfulness, and mercy.



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Application: Our Remembrance

Today, you may feel like an Israelite wandering in the wilderness—a financial, relational, or medical wilderness. Yet God uses these experiences to help His children grow. Specifically, God uses our seasons of wilderness wandering to . . .

1. *Humble us—so that we may have a clearer vision and appreciation of His power and glory.*
2. *Test our character—so that its impurities may be revealed and burned away.*
3. *Let us grow hungry—so that we may learn to depend upon His provision in all things.*
4. *Teach us new ways we need to adopt—so that we may better shine His light in the world.*

Did you go through a wilderness experience recently—one when you seemed to have no control over your circumstances? How did God bring you through to a land of milk and honey on the other side?

How can you actively respond to your remembrance of God's faithfulness to you?



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You may feel like you're lost in the wilderness right now, and that's okay! Remember, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Just as God led them into the promised land, He will welcome you into eternal bliss because of your faith in Jesus Christ. Find hope today as you remember that God is faithful and keeps His promises.



A FINAL PRAYER

Offer your own prayer of remembrance and thanksgiving to God as you conclude your study today.

Father,

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

