

Present Truth in Deuteronomy

Remember, Do Not Forget

Lesson #10 for December 4, 2021

Scriptures: Genesis 9:8-17; Deuteronomy 4:9,23,32-39; 6:7; 8:7-18; 9:7; Revelation 14:12; Ephesians 2:8-13.

1. The book of Deuteronomy is all about remembering. There are two words that appear many times in the Bible. One is *remember*, and the other is *forget*; they are opposites. God is constantly asking us to remember and not to forget.
2. Imagine Moses speaking to the children of Israel. He knew he was not going to be entering the land of Canaan; at 120 years of age, he was about to die. He thought back over the prior 40 years that he had led the children of Israel and remembered many things that he wanted the children of Israel never to forget.
3. Right through the Old Testament, the prophets repeatedly encouraged the children of Israel to remember how God had led them in the past. But, they were not only to remember how God had led them in the past, but also to remember the covenant that God had given them from the time they left Egypt.
4. Shouldn't we remember all that God has done for us in our day? Think of all the revelation of truth that God has provided through the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. Why is it so easy for us to get wrapped up in our daily activities and forget to express to God our commitment to Him and forget to remember all He has done for us? That is the "tyranny of the urgent."
5. In this lesson we will speak briefly about several major events in biblical history. The first time the word *remember* was used in the Bible was immediately after the worldwide flood. God had placed a rainbow in the sky to remind people of His promise to them.

Genesis 9:8-17: ⁸ God said to Noah and his sons, ⁹ "I am now making my covenant with you and with your descendants, ¹⁰ and with all living beings—all birds and all animals—everything that came out of the boat with you. ¹¹ With these words I make my covenant with you: I promise that never again will all living beings be destroyed by a flood; never again will a flood destroy the earth. ¹² As a sign of this everlasting covenant which I am making with you and with all living beings, ¹³ I am putting my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of my covenant with the world. ¹⁴ Whenever I cover the sky with clouds and the rainbow appears, ¹⁵ **I will remember** my promise to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. ¹⁶ When the rainbow appears in the clouds, **I will see it and remember** the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth. ¹⁷ That is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 9:8-17). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{††}

6. We recognize that God does not need to be reminded of anything. He was speaking to us in terms that we can understand. That idea is called *anthropomorphism*. His words are to form a kind of promise to us that the rainbow will always be a memorial of what happened at the flood and God's promise never again to destroy this earth with water.

7. So, why is it that so many scientists today ignore the idea that God placed a rainbow in the sky. In fact, they do not believe that God sent a worldwide flood at all. It is interesting to note that Ellen White stated this important point about the people who lived just before the flood. The antediluvian people argued that “[nature’s] laws are so firmly established that God Himself could not change them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets** 97.1.‡ Today, scientists claim that the laws of nature tell them that the flood never happened at all.
8. So, whom should we trust? The God who placed a rainbow in the sky to remind us? Or, speculative scientists who doubt that the flood even happened?
9. But, there was a memorial that God talked about that occurred even before the flood. God gave us the seventh-day Sabbath to remind us of creation and all that it means to us. What God wanted us to learn and to remember from creation is so important that He has given us a reminder that comes at the end of every week. Are we making proper use of the Sabbath hours to remember all that God has done for us?
10. **Many, many times in the Old Testament, the children of Israel were told to remember what God did for them in bringing them out of Egypt**, miraculously taking them through the Red Sea, escaping from their enemies, and then, speaking to them from Mount Sinai.
11. Do you think anyone who was present at the foot of Mount Sinai and saw the events on that incredible day could ever forget what they saw and heard?
12. God through Moses had some very clear words about what they were supposed to remember. The adults who had been over 20 at the time of Sinai were all dead.

Deuteronomy 4:32-39: ³² “Search the past, the time before you were born, all the way back to the time when God created humanity on the earth. Search the entire earth. Has anything as great as this ever happened before? Has anyone ever heard of anything like this? ³³Have any people ever lived after hearing a god speak to them from a fire, as you have? ³⁴Has any god ever dared to go and take a people from another nation and make them his own, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt? Before your very eyes he used his great power and strength; he brought plagues and war, worked miracles and wonders, and caused terrifying things to happen. ³⁵**The LORD has shown you this, to prove to you that he alone is God and that there is no other.** ³⁶He let you hear his voice from heaven so that he could instruct you; and here on earth he let you see his holy fire, and he spoke to you from it. ³⁷Because he loved your ancestors, he chose you, and by his great power he himself brought you out of Egypt. ³⁸As you advanced, he drove out nations greater and more powerful than you, so that he might bring you in and give you their land, the land which still belongs to you. ³⁹So **remember** today and **never forget**: the LORD is God in heaven and on earth. There is no other god.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

13. Moses, who wrote the first books of Scripture, was pointing the people of Israel back to the earlier events in history and telling them what they should have learned and how it should have impacted them on a day-by-day basis. He reminded them that no other group of people or nation had ever gone through an experience like what they had been through.
14. And then, Moses got to the punchline.

Deuteronomy 4:40: “Obey all his laws that I have given you today, and all will go well with you and your descendants. You will continue to live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to be yours for ever.”—*Good News Bible*.*

15. **God had a definite plan in rescuing His people from Egypt. From the crossroads of three continents, they were to be a light to the world for the rest of human history.**

16. God was asking them to obey, not just to show that He was boss, but also because it was the right thing to do. It would always be for their best good even though it might not seem like it at the time it happened. And what has God said to us in the New Testament?

Revelation 14:12: This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.*

17. Notice these very clear words from Moses in Deuteronomy 4:9,23-24:

Deuteronomy 4:9,23-24: ⁹ “**Be on your guard! Make certain that you do not forget,** as long as you live, what you have seen with your own eyes. Tell your children and your grandchildren....

²³ “**Be certain that you do not forget** the covenant that the LORD your God made with you. Obey his command not to make yourselves any kind of idol,
²⁴because the LORD your God is like a flaming fire; he tolerates no rivals.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

18. Do you think that if you had been through an experience like the exodus, you would remember it and it would impact you in the way you live every day? Would you ever be inclined to forget? What did they say to each other as they discussed what had happened? The words translated “be on your guard” or “take heed” in Deuteronomy 4:9 are repeated many times in Scripture to mean “keep,” “watch,” “preserve,” or “guard.” In fact, way back in Genesis 2:15, we note that God told Adam to “keep” the garden He had given to him.

19. When Moses came down from the mountain and found a number of the children of Israel dancing drunk and naked around the golden calf—which they called *Yahweh*—do you think those people had forgotten what God had done for them? They claimed that the golden calf was what had brought them out of Egypt! So, the problem was not just that they had forgotten—how could they!—but also that they wanted to celebrate that event in their own way and not in God’s way.

20. One way in which we can remember and not forget even the details of important stories is to try to teach those details to someone else, especially to our own children. Teaching something to others is the best way to remember it. Notice this advice given by Moses.

Deuteronomy 6:7: “Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Deuteronomy 11:19: “Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working.”—*Good News Bible*.*

21. If the children of Israel had made it a habit to remind their children in detail of what happened to them, they themselves as well as their children would not have forgotten.

Not only did their children need to hear about these things, but also, perhaps even more important, by telling and retelling the stories of what God had done for them, the people would not forget what those things were. Hence, what better way to preserve knowledge of what the Lord had done for His chosen people?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, November 30.

22. So, why is it that we are so prone to forget even incredible experiences like the exodus? It is likely that almost every one of us has stopped and thought back to some incredible event in our own lives which we had just about forgotten!
23. Is it possible that God has done one or more things for us that we believe were actually miracles? Do we recount those stories to our children?
24. Moses did not stop with the story about Mount Sinai. Forty more years had followed as they wandered through the desert. They had many experiences that happened to them that needed to be remembered.

Deuteronomy 8:7-18: ⁷ “The LORD your God is bringing you into a fertile land—a land that has rivers and springs, and underground streams gushing out into the valleys and hills; ⁸a land that produces wheat and barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey. ⁹There you will never go hungry or ever be in need. Its rocks have iron in them, and from its hills you can mine copper. ¹⁰You will have all you want to eat, and you will give thanks to the LORD your God for the fertile land that he has given you.

¹¹ “Make certain that you do not forget the LORD your God; do not fail to obey any of his laws that I am giving you today. ¹²When you have all you want to eat and have built good houses to live in ¹³and when your cattle and sheep, your silver and gold, and all your other possessions have increased, ¹⁴make sure that you **do not become proud and forget the LORD your God who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.** ¹⁵**He led you through that vast and terrifying desert where there were poisonous snakes and scorpions.** In that dry and waterless land he made water flow out of solid rock for you. ¹⁶In the desert he gave you manna to eat, food that your ancestors had never eaten. He sent hardships on you to test you, so that in the end he could bless you with good things. ¹⁷So then, you must never think that you have made yourselves wealthy by your own power and strength. ¹⁸Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because he is still faithful today to the covenant that he made with your ancestors.”—*Good News Bible.*†*

25. What do you think the children of Israel thought about the land of Canaan after hearing these words from Moses? But, God knew that giving them that very wonderful land with all its benefits would bring a dangerous possibility. Why is it that wealth and physical prosperity tends to make us forget God? Who is it that gives us the power to work and earn money and get wealth?
26. Jesus reminded us of those hazards when He gave us the story of the sower and the seed.

Mark 4:19: “... But the worries about this life, the love for riches, and all other kinds

of desires crowd in and choke the message, and they don't bear fruit."—*Good News Bible*.*

No matter how much money and how many material possessions we have here, we are all flesh and blood awaiting a hole in the ground. What should this tell us about the dangers that come from wealth, in that wealth can make us forget our need of the only One who can deliver us from that hole in the ground?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, December 1.

27. Does it seem possible that one could forget that s/he or their parent had once been a slave? God recognized that even that would need to be remembered; and so, He said:

Deuteronomy 5:15: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, the LORD your God, rescued you by my great power and strength. That is why I command you to observe the Sabbath.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Deuteronomy 6:12: “Make certain that you **do not forget** the LORD who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Deuteronomy 15:15: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God set you free; that is why I am now giving you this command.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Deuteronomy 16:3,12: ³ “When you eat this meal, do not eat bread prepared with yeast. For seven days you are to eat bread prepared without yeast, as you did when you had to leave Egypt in such a hurry. Eat this bread—it will be called the bread of suffering—so that as long as you live you will **remember** the day you came out of Egypt, that place of suffering....

¹² “Be sure that you obey these commands; **do not forget that you were slaves in Egypt.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Deuteronomy 24:18,22: ¹⁸ “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God set you free; that is why I have given you this command....

²² “**Never forget that you were slaves in Egypt;** that is why I have given you this command.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

28. Even to this day, Jews who are faithful to the Scriptures celebrate the Passover. It is a memorial that even we as Christians have taken over and remember. Notice what Moses told them about the Passover.

Exodus 12:25-27: ²⁵ “When you enter the land that the LORD has promised to give you, you must perform this ritual. ²⁶When your children ask you, ‘What does this ritual mean?’ ²⁷you will answer, ‘It is the sacrifice of Passover to honour the LORD, because he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. He killed the Egyptians, but spared us.’ ”

The Israelites knelt down and worshipped.—*Good News Bible*.*

29. Following the advice of Paul, we celebrate the Passover in a bit of a different way.

1 Corinthians 5:7: You must remove the old yeast of sin so that you will be entirely pure. Then you will be like a new batch of dough without any yeast, as

indeed I know you actually are. For our Passover Festival is ready, now that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.—*Good News Bible*.*

30. Paul reminded those early Christians that they had come out of paganism. That was just as remarkable as coming out of Egyptian slavery.

Ephesians 2:8-13: ⁸⁻⁹For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. ¹⁰God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.

¹¹ You Gentiles by birth—called “the uncircumcised” by the Jews, who call themselves “the circumcised” (which refers to what men do to their bodies)—remember what you were in the past. ¹²At that time you were apart from Christ. You were foreigners and did not belong to God's chosen people. You had no part in the covenants, which were based on God's promises to his people, and you lived in this world without hope and without God. ¹³But now, in union with Christ Jesus, you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood [Footnote: 2.13 *by the blood of Christ; or by the sacrificial death of Christ*] of Christ.—*Good News Bible*.*†§

31. Do we stop and remind ourselves on a regular basis that God has done so many things for us which we could never have accomplished for ourselves no matter how successful we think we are? Is there any way we could get to heaven on our own?
32. What is it that God would like us to remember so close to the final history of this world?

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 83.4.

33. So, are we remembering the great events in salvation history? Events from the creation, to the story of Noah being saved from the flood, to the story of the children of Israel being brought out of slavery in Egypt, down through the life and death of Jesus Christ?

How great the condescension of God and His compassion for His erring creatures in thus placing the beautiful rainbow in the clouds as a token of His covenant with men! The Lord declares that when He looks upon the bow, He will remember His covenant. **This does not imply that He would ever forget; but He speaks to us in our own language, that we may better understand Him.** It was God's purpose that as the children of after generations should ask the meaning of the glorious arch which spans the heavens, their parents should repeat the story of the Flood, and tell them that the Most High had bended the bow and placed it in the clouds as an assurance that the waters should never again overflow the earth. Thus from generation to generation it would testify of divine love to man and would strengthen his confidence in God.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets**

34. Surely, we recognize that, at least for those of us who live in the Western world, our times are more prosperous than probably any time in the past. But, this easy living has come at a cost; it tends to make us forget. How could we do that when we consider all that God has done for us?
35. As you look around in the world, do you find that those who are “wealthy” are more spiritual? Or, less so?
36. How often do you stop and think for a few minutes about what the life and death of Jesus Christ means for you?
37. Are you fully convinced and able to explain satisfactorily why you believe that God created our world and that it was destroyed by a worldwide flood in the days of Noah?
38. Look at the Grand Canyon, and compare the layers with the geologic column! It has often been suggested that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it!
39. Are we remembering creation? The flood? The exodus? And the world from which we have escaped into Christianity?
40. Moses was very aged when he wrote the book of Deuteronomy. Is that perhaps why he repeatedly suggested that they needed to remember? Of course, in the book of Deuteronomy, it is God that we need to remember and all that He has done for us. Repeatedly, Moses reminded them of God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt: Deuteronomy 5:15; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:18,22. Notice these very interesting ideas about the first thing in human history—creation.

The verb “remember” refers, in fact, to the Creator, our Maker, without whom we would not be here. Creation is the first event to be remembered because it is the event that reports our roots. Significantly, the fourth commandment, which enjoins us to remember, parallels the fifth commandment (*Exod. 20:12*), which enjoins us to honor our parents. This parallel is not only visible in the structure of the Decalogue [the Ten Commandments]; it also appears in the grammatical structure of the verbs. **Both verbs “remember” and “honor” are used in the positive imperative. All the other commandments are written in the negative form.** Remember that the Sabbath, or where we come from, is related to remembering our parents, who are our roots. If we fail to remember our past, our roots, we will fail to blossom spiritually. Both commandments, the fourth and fifth, contain the promise of the future. Just as the Sabbath promises the future day of rest for humankind (*Ps. 95:11; compare Heb. 3:11; Heb. 4:3-7*), the commandment to honor our parents promises a long life (*compare Eph. 6:2*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 133.†‡§

41. Jesus Himself warned us that the days just before the flood will be like those days just before His second coming. (Matthew 24:36-38) Is our world like that?
42. It is very interesting to notice that just as the Sabbath was placed as a celebration at the end of seven days of creation, the story of the flood as reported in Genesis 7&8 talks repeatedly about week-long periods of seven days. Notice the chiasmic structure:

7 days of God’s waiting (*Gen. 7:4*)

7 days of God's waiting (*Gen. 7:10*)

40 days of waters increasing (*Gen. 7:17*)

150 days of waters prevailing (*Gen. 7:24*)

God remembered (*Gen. 8:1*)

150 days of waters decreasing (*Gen. 8:3*)

40 days of waters decreasing (*Gen. 8:6*)

7 days of Noah's waiting (*Gen. 8:10*)

7 days of Noah's waiting (*Gen. 8:12*).—Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis, SDA International Bible Commentary*, p, 151.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 134 including the bold type].^{‡§}

43. We have already mentioned the fact that in the Old Testament the story of the exodus is the most mentioned thing to be remembered by the children of Israel. Often, it is repeated that they needed to, "Remember!" as the first imperative; and then, in a second imperative told, "Do not forget!" God knew that those people would be very stubborn.
44. The ark of the covenant was carried by the children of Israel through the desert. It was placed in the tabernacle which was covered by the very presence of God and, later, was preserved in Solomon's Temple to remind the children of Israel of God's presence with them. The Jews were expected to go to Jerusalem three times a year, if possible, to celebrate various events in their history. But, that ark was never in Herod's Temple.
45. Let us not forget that God is calling us to remember from where we have come. In Ephesians 2:8-13 (as quoted above in Item #30), Paul reminded the Ephesians from what God had "rescued" them.
46. So, what happens on Sabbath in our experiences today? How do we celebrate? Do we remember the great events from salvation history? What could we do to remember?
47. Early in our history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was using almost exclusively the *King James Version* of the Bible. Children were encouraged, in fact, required in Adventist schools, to memorize many verses from the Bible. Some of us with gray hair can still remember many of those verses. Are we taking advantage of that? Will our children be lost because they are not memorizing Scripture so often today? One way in which Scripture can be cemented in our memory is by putting it to music. Many of us may be able to remember Scripture songs.
48. Are there things that we should go back to in the history of our church? How were things different in the early years of Adventism? Are we spiritual pygmies standing on the shoulders of spiritual giants?
49. In your church are the older people helping the younger people remember our past? Are the younger people helping the older people understand the challenges of meeting the younger generation? What are we doing to spread the gospel to the whole world?

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