

DON'T FORGET WHO YOU BELONG TO

I was recently reminded by one of my adult daughters of a parting exhortation that I apparently repeated every time one of my four daughters would leave home as they were growing up. I remembered saying it, but I was surprised to realize that I had said it every single time any of them left, whether for a few hours out with their friends, an overnighter, or a week-long mission trip. Apparently, my message to them was so deeply ingrained in who I am that it had become my standard parting counsel to them whenever they would leave my wife's and my protection and oversight. I continually repeated my mantra as my girls were walking out the door, "Don't forget who you belong to!"

One of my daughters recently shared with me, "For most of my life, I was oblivious to the power behind your words. It wasn't until I reached adulthood that I began to comprehend the real power behind them. There was a very good reason why you repeatedly told me not to forget who I belonged to. I could have easily turned to you and said with a good bit of irritation, 'Dad, you've already told me that. Why do you keep telling me that?' But, that is the whole point—you knew how easily I forget, and how important it was that I be constantly reminded." This is the foundational cornerstone of our time here on earth and our life in Christ." Remembering this is so critical to living a successful life of stewardship.

Don't Forget...

The word "remember" is used over 1,200 times in the Bible. The word "forget" is used over 300 times. Why are these words used so frequently? It is really pretty simple. A proclivity to forget things is not the exclusive domain of the elderly. All of us are painfully prone to forget, often even very important things like our children's names. How many times have you had to run through multiple children's names before you finally get to the right one? Husbands' ability to forget important dates like anniversaries is legendary. Our inclination to forget is the reason we all use calendars and turn on alerts on our phones and computers. We have a lot on our minds and it is very easy to forget what is important.

What is really frustrating for many people is that they can remember clearly some of the most trivial information from decades ago, like their childhood home phone number, and yet they can't remember their wife's current cell phone number to save their life. Did you hear from your parents routinely as a youth, "How many times do I have to tell you..."? Apparently, we needed to be reminded at least one more time. Young or old, we are a very forgetful people. Consequently, we need tangible reminders so that the really important things remain the really important things in our lives. That is why we erect physical monuments and memorials, establish rituals and traditions, and designate special holidays so we can remember what is just too important for us to forget.

Do you remember when Moses had the Israelites create a pile of twelve stones after they crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land? Moses tells the people in Joshua 4:6-7 (NLT), *We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord's Covenant went across.' These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.* The Jewish Passover was an annual celebration to remind Israel of their deliverance from Egypt. We need to be reminded repeatedly.

The early church, contrary to most churches today, celebrated the Lord's Supper or "communion" on a weekly basis when they gathered to worship. Communion was established to be a weekly reminder of Jesus' death on the cross just as worship was established to be a weekly reminder of His resurrection. Many pastors suggest that having communion on a weekly basis would lessen its meaningfulness. Maybe, but not doing so certainly will increase our forgetfulness.

The truth is we all love to repeat what is important to us. And the more often we do it the more meaningful it becomes. How do you think family traditions are created? Lots of meaningful repetition over long periods of time. What are your monuments, memorials, traditions, and celebrations that help you remember what is most important to you and your family? We all have them, and we all love them.

...Who You Belong To

Who do you belong to? Paul says it this way in I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV), *you are not your own; you were bought at a price.* He adds in Titus 2:13-14 (ESV), *Jesus Christ...gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* Jesus made a defining comparison in John 8:47 (NIV), *Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.*

No doubt Satan and his minions want to cloud our memory and cause us to forget this compelling truth at every turn. There is a cartoon that shows an old man standing outside Sodom and Gomorrah waving a sign, REPENT. Day after day, he stood there waving his sign. Eventually, a man approached him and said, "Silly old man. Do you really think that is going to change anyone?" The old man replied, "I am not waving this sign to change them. I am waving this sign to make sure they don't change me." What sign are you waving to make sure the world doesn't change you?

You see, if we dare forget for even a short time who we belong to, we are going to start sailing off course. Next thing we know, we'll be back to thinking, acting, and living like the rest of the world. I cannot help but remember Joseph who, by God's providence, had climbed from being a lowly slave to second-in-command in Potiphar's house. Life was as good as it could get for Joseph—except for Potiphar's wife, who wanted this "young buck" for herself. And when she pursued him, Joseph without hesitation rejected her advances with a profoundly rhetorical question in Genesis 39:9 (NASB), *How...could I do this great evil and sin against God?*

What kept Joseph from giving in to what must have been an incredible temptation? It was not because it would have been a sin against Potiphar, his wife, or even a sin against himself. What caused him to flee the temptation was his awareness of who he belonged to. And that knowledge made all the difference in how he was able to remain a man of character and honor.

How Will You Remember Who You Belong To

How will you keep from inadvertently forgetting who you belong to? Here are a few suggestions. You could start by changing your vocabulary. You could refer to your possessions as *God's car*, *God's home*, *God's children*, *God's retirement account*, *God's business* and *God's time*. You could place some key scriptures in strategic locations in your home and at work. Better yet, you could memorize some key scriptures so the Owner can use them when necessary to remind you who you belong to. Maybe you could write on the cover of your checkbook or on your credit or debit card, *God's Money*. Get the idea? We need lots of reminders. We are a very forgetful people. And of all the things in this life that are too important to forget, we most definitely must not forget who we belong to!

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E. G. “Jay” Link has a unique combination of being an ordained minister with a Master Divinity degree in Biblical Theology and a professional Stewardship planning coach who for over 40 years has been working with very affluent Christian families to enable them to optimize their Kingdom impact with all that the Lord has entrusted to them to manage. After retiring from his personal practice, he then served for five years as Director of Taylor University's Stewardship Planning Ministry, which he launched for them. Most recently, Jay founded the Stewardship Resource Group to serve Christian ministries, colleges, and churches to better minister to their highest capacity families. He has written six books, hundreds of articles and has provided extensive training curriculum for hundreds of professional financial and legal advisors in how to provide stewardship planning services for their clients.