

# Remember, Do Not Forget



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Gen. 9:8–17; Deut. 4:32–39; Rev. 14:12; Deut. 4:9, 23; Deut. 6:7; Deut. 8:7–18; Eph. 2:8–13.*

**Memory Text:** “‘Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD’ ” (*Deuteronomy 9:7, NKJV*).

**T**wo words appear all through the Bible: “remember” and “forget.” Both refer to something human, something that happens in our minds. Both are verbs, and they are opposites: to remember is not to forget, and to forget is not to remember.

God often tells His people to remember all the things that He has done for them; to remember His grace for them and His goodness toward them. So much of the Old Testament consisted of the prophets telling the people, the Hebrew people, not to forget what the Lord had done for them. But also, most important, they were not to forget what their calling in Him was and what kind of people they were to be in response to that calling. “I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old” (*Ps. 77:11, NKJV*).

Is it any different for us today, both at a corporate level and, even more so, at a personal one? How easy it is to forget what God has done for us.

This week, as expressed in Deuteronomy, we’ll look at this important principle, that of remembering and not forgetting God’s interaction in our lives.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 4.

## Remembering the Rainbow

The first time the word “remember” appears in the Bible is in Genesis 9, when—after the worldwide flood—the Lord told Noah that He would put the rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with all earth, that He would never again destroy all the earth with a flood.

**Read** Genesis 9:8–17. How is the word “remember” used here, and what can we learn from its use for how we should remember what God has done for us?

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Of course, God doesn’t need the rainbow to remember His promise and His covenant. He just spoke in language that humans could understand. If anything, the rainbow is for us, as humans, to remember God’s promise and covenant not to destroy the world again by water. In other words, the rainbow was to help people remember this special covenant that God had made; each time the rainbow appeared, God’s people would remember not only God’s judgment upon the world for its sin but also His love for the world and His promise not to flood it again.

Hence, we see here the importance of the idea of remembering: remembering God’s promises, remembering God’s warnings, remembering God’s action in the world.

The rainbow in the sky becomes even more important today when, based on the continuity of the laws of nature, many scientists reject the idea that there ever was a worldwide flood to begin with. How fascinating that Ellen G. White wrote that before the Flood came, many people had the same idea that the continuity of the laws of nature ruled out the possibility that a worldwide flood could ever happen. She wrote that the wise men argued that nature’s “laws are so firmly established that God Himself could not change them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 97. So, before the Flood, people argued, based on the laws of nature, that it couldn’t come; after the Flood, people argue, based on the laws of nature, that it never came to begin with.

However, God in His Word told us about the Flood and gave the world a sign, not only of the Flood but also of His promise not to bring one again. Thus, if we remember what the rainbow means, we can have the assurance, written across the sky in these beautiful colors, that God’s Word is sure. And if we can trust His Word on this promise, why not trust His Word on all that He tells us, as well?

**Next time you see a rainbow, think of God’s promises. How can we learn to trust all of those promises?**

## Concerning the Days That Are Past

In Deuteronomy 4, we have read the wonderful admonitions that the Lord gave to His people through Moses regarding their great privileges as God's chosen people. He had redeemed them out of Egypt “by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes’” (*Deut. 4:34, NKJV*). In other words, not only did God do something great for you, but He also did it in ways that should help you remember, and never forget, what great things He has done for you.

**Read Deuteronomy 4:32–39. What was the Lord telling them to remember, and why was it so important that they remember these things?**

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Moses points the people back through all history, even to the Creation itself, and asks them, rhetorically, if anything in all history had ever been done as was done for them. In fact, he tells them to ask; that is, to study for themselves and see if anything such as what they experienced had ever happened before. By asking them a few questions, Moses was trying to get them to realize for themselves what the Lord had done for them, and thus, ultimately, how grateful and thankful to Him they should be for His mighty acts in their lives.

Central to these acts was the deliverance from Egypt and then, perhaps in some ways even more astonishing, God speaking to them at Sinai, which allowed them to hear “His words out of the midst of the fire.”

**Read Deuteronomy 4:40. What conclusion, then, did Moses want the people to draw from these words about what God had done for them?**

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The Lord didn't do all those things for no purpose. He had redeemed His people, keeping His end of the covenant that He had established with them. They were freed from Egypt, about to enter the Promised Land. God did His part; they were now called on to do theirs, which was, simply, to obey.

**How does this model represent the plan of salvation as expressed in the New Testament? What did Jesus do for us, and how are we to respond to what He has done for us? (See Rev. 14:12.)**

## “Take Heed . . . Lest You Forget”

**Read** Deuteronomy 4:9, 23. What is the Lord telling them to do here, and why is this admonition so important for the nation?

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Two verbs dominate the opening of both these verses: “take heed” and “forget.” What the Lord is saying to them is: *Take heed so that you don’t forget.* That is, *Don’t you forget what the Lord has done for you nor the covenant that He has made with you.*

The verb “take heed,” *smr* (which also is used in a different form in Deuteronomy 4:9, translated “keep yourself”), occurs all through the Old Testament, and it means to “keep,” “to watch,” “to preserve,” or “to guard.” Interestingly enough, the first time it appears in Scripture is even before sin, when the Lord told Adam to “keep” the garden that He had given to him (*Gen. 2:15*).

Now, though, the Lord tells the people, each one individually (the verb is in the singular), to guard themselves, lest they forget. This is not “forget” so much in the sense of memory loss (though over time and in new generations that could come), but more in the sense of being lax about their covenant obligations. That is, they were to be mindful about who they were and what that meant in terms of how they were to live before God, before other Hebrews, before the strangers among them, and before the nations around them.

**Read** Deuteronomy 4:9 (see also *Deut. 6:7* and *Deut. 11:19*) again, but focus on the last part, about the Israelites teaching the nation’s history to their children and grandchildren. What would that have to do with helping them not to forget?

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It’s not a coincidence that right after Moses tells them not to forget, not to let these things “depart from your heart,” he tells them to teach these things to the next generation and to the generation after. 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?

**How has telling others of your experience with the Lord benefited not just others but yourself, as well? How has the recounting of God’s leading helped you not to forget His leadings?**

## Eaten and Full

One former church leader, who had worked at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 34 years, told a story about how, many years earlier, he and his wife, having landed at an airport, had lost a piece of luggage. “Right there,” he said, “by the luggage conveyer belt and in public, we got on our knees and prayed, asking the Lord for the return of our lost luggage.” He then said that, many years later, the same thing happened: they arrived at the airport, but a piece of luggage didn’t. He told what happened next. “Don’t worry,” he had said to his wife. “Insurance will cover it.”

**With** this story in mind, read Deuteronomy 8:7–18. What warning is the Lord giving to His people here, and what should it mean for us today, as well?

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Look at what being faithful to the Lord would bring them. Not only would they possess a wonderful and rich land, “a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing” (*Deut. 8:9, NKJV*), but also they would be exceedingly blessed in that land: flocks and herds and gold and silver and beautiful houses. That is, they would be given all the material comforts that this life affords.

But then, what? They would face the danger that always attends wealth and physical prosperity, that of forgetting that it was only the Lord “who [gave them] power to get wealth” (*Deut. 8:18, NKJV*).

Maybe not at first, but as the years go by and they have all the material comforts that they need, they will forget their past, forget how the Lord had led them through “that great and terrible wilderness” (*Deut. 1:19, NKJV*), and, indeed, think that it was their own smartness and talents that enabled them to be so successful.

This is precisely what the Lord was warning them against doing (and unfortunately, especially as one reads the later prophets, this is exactly what happened to them).

Thus, amid this prosperity, Moses tells them to remember that it was the Lord alone who had done this for them and not to be deceived by the material blessings that He had given them. Centuries later, Jesus Himself warned, in the parable of the sower, about “the deceitfulness of riches” (*Mark 4:19*).

**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?**

## Remember That You Were a Slave

**Read** Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 6:12; Deuteronomy 15:15; Deuteronomy 16:3, 12; and Deuteronomy 24:18, 22. What specifically did the Lord want the people never to forget, and why?

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As we have seen, all through the Old Testament the Lord constantly brought the minds of the people back to the Exodus, their miraculous deliverance by God from Egypt. To this day, thousands of years later, practicing Jews keep the Passover celebration, a memorial to what the Lord has done for them. “It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households’ ” (*Exod. 12:25–27, NKJV*).

For the church today, the Passover is a symbol of the deliverance we have been offered in Christ: “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (*1 Cor. 5:7, NKJV*).

**Read** Ephesians 2:8–13. What are these Gentile believers told to remember? How does it parallel what the Hebrews in Deuteronomy were told to remember, as well?

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Paul wanted these people to remember what God had done for them in Christ, what He had saved them from, and what they now had because of God’s grace to them. As with the children of Israel, it wasn’t anything in and of themselves that commended them to God. Instead, it was only God’s grace, given to them, even though they were “strangers from the covenants of promise,” that made them who they were in Christ Jesus.

Whether Jews in the wilderness, Christians in Ephesus, or Seventh-day Adventists anywhere in the world, how crucial it is for us always to remember, and not forget, what God has done for us in Christ. No wonder, then, that we have these words: “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*, p. 83.

**Further Thought:** “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*, pp. 106, 107.

Since the founding of Christianity, there has never been a church that has partaken of the wealth and creature comforts that the church in some countries of the world enjoys today. The question is, *At what cost?* Such affluence *surely* influences our spirituality—and not for good, either. How could it? Since when have wealth and material abundance fostered the Christian virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice? In most cases, the opposite occurs: the more people have, the more self-sufficient they become, and the less they tend to depend upon God. Wealth and prosperity, however nice, do come with many dangerous spiritual traps.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1** Discuss the question of how wealth (which can be very relative; that is, someone not deemed wealthy in his country might be seen as super-rich by those in another one) impacts our spirituality. What are ways that those “with money” can protect themselves from some of the spiritual dangers that wealth can create?
- 2** In class, talk about the closing scenes in Christ’s life and what they tell us about God’s love for us and why we must never forget the reality of that love. What other things can you think of that reveal the goodness of God, and why we should always keep this reality in mind?
- 3** Though some scientists say there was no worldwide flood, despite the Bible saying that there was (and the rainbow), some say there was no six-day Creation, either, despite the Bible saying that there was (and the seventh-day Sabbath to memorialize it). What should this tell us about what a powerful, and negative, impact culture can have on faith?

## First-Time Visitor Knows All

By ELIANE HOSOKAWA IMAYUKI

Brazilian immigrant Sandra Sato drove straight to a Seventh-day Adventist church in Kakegawa, Japan, to thank God for her newly acquired driver's license.

She had promised God that if she got her license, the first place she would go with the car would be the church.

That evening, Sandra joyfully told members of the Tokai Christian Center church that God had answered her prayers to obtain a driver's license.

"And I'm also ready for baptism," she announced.

The church members were surprised. They had never seen Sandra until that evening.

Their astonishment grew as Sandra turned to various members and addressed them by name.

"I know many of you," she said. "I have been watching live church broadcasts on social media."

Then she told her story. Sandra and her husband, a former Adventist, worked with thousands of other Brazilian immigrants in factories in central Japan.

While discussing religion, her husband had declared that if she ever wanted to worship, he would only accept her attending an Adventist church. She had belonged to another Christian denomination. Intrigued by her husband's former faith, Sandra had watched live broadcasts from the Tokai Christian Center church. With her husband's help, she had completed Bible studies provided by Hope Channel's affiliate in Brazil. Then she had promised God that she would begin to attend church in person if she got her driver's license.

After a review of the Bible with the Tokai Christian Center pastor, Sandra was baptized. No family members attended the baptism, not even her husband. But her faith has remained strong. At her initiative, a small Bible study group has been established in another city, Iwata, for people seeking to know Christ. God's word is spreading in Japan.



*Read next week about how God is using the small group in Iwata to bless other Brazilian immigrants. Sandra became familiar with the Tokai Christian Center church after watching its online services. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to a project to help many Japanese people, especially young people, learn about Jesus through the internet. Thank you for planning a generous offering.*



**Key Text:** *Deuteronomy 9:7*

**Study Focus:** *Gen. 9:8–17; Exod. 20:8; Deut. 4:9, 23, 32–39; Deut. 6:7; Deut. 8:7–18; Deut. 32:7; Eph. 2:8–13.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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There is a plaque that bears a quotation by philosopher George Santayana at the entrance to Auschwitz that challenges to remembrance all those who enter this site: “The one who does not remember history is bound to live through it again.” Following the lesson on repentance naturally comes a lesson on remembrance. To remember, just as to repent, you will need to turn to the past and bring the past to the present. It is therefore crucial that we understand why it is important to remember, what to remember, and how to remember in order to ensure a true repentance.

### **Lesson Themes:**

This lesson will expose us to a number of themes that will help us deepen our understanding of this notion:

- *Remember the Creation.* Not much of what we believe really makes sense apart from remembering our origins.
- *Remember the Flood.* Even amid catastrophe, God remembers His people.
- *Remember the Exodus.* Remembering past events of salvation (what God did for His people) supports and strengthens faith in God, who will save again.
- *Remember that you once were Gentiles.* How important it is never to forget what God has done for us.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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The book of Deuteronomy, with its 19 occurrences of the verb *zakar*, “remember,” is, more than any other book of the Bible, a text about remembering. As such, Deuteronomy testifies to a rich spectrum in the use of the verb “remember,” with all its various applications and provides a theological teaching that is based on the events of the past experiences of the Israelites. The verb “remember” most often has God as its subject, and concerns, in most cases, His people; God remembers the covenant, His relationship with His people. The verb “remember” also appears with

“Israel” as its subject, and the object of remembrance is God, His actions, and His covenant. Generally, it is the event of the Exodus that retains the attention (*Deut. 5:15; Deut. 15:15; Deut. 16:3, 12; Deut. 24:18, 22*). But occasionally, Moses refers to the years of wandering in the wilderness as a time of testing (*Deut. 8:2*) or as a lesson about God’s wrath to discipline Israel. The idea is that all these past events serve as formative material to shape the faith of Israel. Beyond the book of Deuteronomy, the verb “remember” is an important biblical motif. During this week’s lesson, we will meditate on this motif in regard to four key events in the Bible: (1) Creation from nothing, (2) the deliverance from the Flood, (3) the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and from its own stubbornness, and (4) the conversion of the Gentiles from paganism. All these events have something in common; they all signify God’s act of salvation from darkness to light, from death to life, from wickedness to righteousness.

**Remember the Creation (*Exod. 20:8*).**

The verb “remember” is used in the fourth commandment to remind us of the first event of human history, the Creation by God of the heavens and earth, and the seventh day of Creation, the Sabbath, which also was the first day of human history. The verb “remember” is not only an evocation of the most ancient event of human history—but also, and more important, an appeal to remember our roots, where we came from; it contains the lesson that “it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves” (*Ps. 100:3, NKJV*). 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; 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*).

**Remember the Flood (*Gen. 8:1*).**

This passage contains the first occurrence of the verb *zakar*, “remember.” God is the subject of the verb, telling us that God has saved humankind. The use of the verb *zakar*, “remember,” does not mean some kind of memory deficiency on the part of God. The verb “remember” means that God has saved humankind from the depths of forgetfulness. Humans have

now survived the waters of the Flood and will thus be remembered. When the biblical text speaks about God remembering His creatures, it is to refer to God's act of salvation as He fulfills His promise at the appointed time (*Gen. 19:29*). The verb *zakar*, "remember," means, in this instance, the end of the Flood that is precisely marked in time (*Gen. 8:3–6*), just as the Sabbath marks an appointed time at the end of the work of Creation. It is noteworthy that the Sabbath day also plays a role in the Flood's calendar. Note that these seven-day periods contribute to the following chiasmic structure of the narrative whose center is the fact that "God remembered" (table after Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis, SDA International Bible Commentary*, p. 151).

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*).

#### **Remember the Exodus (*Deut. 9:7*).**

The remembering of the Exodus is certainly the most prevailing call to remember in the Bible. In this instance, the verb "remember" has Israel as its subject. Israel remembers not only God's act of salvation, which took Israel out of her condition of slavery in Egypt, but also Israel's unworthiness. In this particular verse (*Deut. 9:7*), the Israelites should remember how stubborn they were toward God, resisting His effort to save them. The double imperative, one stated positively, "Remember!" followed by the other one stated negatively, "Do not forget!" (*NKJV*), is emphatic, strongly reminding the people of their absurd stubbornness. If they were foolish enough to have forgotten that God had saved them from Egypt as brute slaves, and foolish enough to think that God had given them the Promised Land because of their merits and their righteousness, they would therefore suffer from a severe case of amnesia. They are, therefore, called twice to remember, first positively and second negatively, to make sure that they will remember. This insistence adds weight to the following wrath and judgment of God from the day Israel came out of Egypt. The main example that is taken to illustrate the dramatic case of Israel is the nation's rebellion, which took place at Horeb and precipitated the production of new tables. This duty to remember the Exodus will, from then on, be the case par excellence that the Israelites will have to remember and

teach to their children from generation to generation (*Deut. 6:7; Deut. 32:7*). Still, the Jews of today “remember” the story of the Exodus in their yearly Passover reading of the *hagadah*. In the same manner, Christians across the spectrum remember the Lord’s Supper, which itself is the Passover remembrance of the Exodus.

### **Remember That You Once Were Gentiles (*Eph. 2:8–13*)**

Just as Moses did with ancient Israel, Paul will do with the Gentiles who are converted to the new covenant: “Do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you” (*Rom. 11:18, NKJV*). These newly converted ones behaved the same way as Israel of old. Both boasted and were arrogant, thinking in their foolishness that they were worthy of God’s grace. Both had “forgotten.” Just as the Israelites had forgotten how unworthy they were, so the Gentiles forgot the darkness and the iniquity of their previous background. Moreover, they forgot that they were only grafted into the original branches—and that they should, therefore, learn to be humble.

**Discussion and Thought Questions:** How do you “remember” Creation and the first “Sabbath” when you observe the Sabbath? How do you remember the Exodus when you celebrate the Lord’s Supper? What are the historical consequences of the church’s obliviousness to its Jewish roots?

## ***Part III: Life Application***

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**Learn to Remember:** We used to learn by heart entire passages of the Bible. Meditate on and discuss the value of learning Bible verses by heart. Keeping in mind the literary fact that most of the Bible was written to be learned by heart, challenge yourself to learn by heart the Creation story, a text that has been uniquely constructed, with its parallels and repetitions, to be committed to memory. Find lines and words in the Creation story that are repeated; reflect on the reasons that could justify these repetitions.

**Illustration:** Take a fresh flower and an artificial flower and present them both to the class. What is the superiority of the fresh flower over the artificial flower, and why? What is the superiority of the artificial flower over the fresh flower, and why? Discuss the importance of the flower’s root, and the importance of the flower itself.

**Self-Criticism:** Remember the values that were emphasized in the past by the pioneers of our church and have been forgotten today. What should you do to refresh your memory? Someone said that we are dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. Discuss this self-critique.

**Life in the Church:** Your community is made of old people who remember

