

Forget Me Not

Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:12-20

Song: “God of Our Fathers, Known of Old”

Many years ago I headed to the library following an afternoon graduate class session. I immersed myself in research for several hours. At about 8 p.m. I suddenly remembered that I was now married and was supposed to go home for dinner! I was so lost in thought that I had completely forgotten. After I returned to our apartment, my wife made sure I would never again forget to come home!

Moses pleaded with Israelites to always remember what God had done for them. They would soon be establishing homes for themselves in the promised land. He knew that if they were not purposefully mindful, in the future they would end up crediting themselves or other gods for their success.

Forgetting something important can produce painful consequences. Mindful thankfulness helps us cultivate humility and allows us to remember those we need to thank. Participating in regular worship allows us to focus our minds on all that God has done for us and to express our appreciation to Him.

Father, we recognize and give thanks that our identity and all we have in You are a direct result of Your work of grace in our lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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 March 21–27. **Troy D. Stuart** is married and has three sons. He has worked at a university in the US and at a Christian school in Thailand.

Acceptable Religion

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).

Scripture: James 1:19-27

Song: “O Thou, the Helpless Orphan’s Hope”

One Christian organization that focuses on adoption has developed a unique program that brings together God’s call to look after orphans and widows. Families who are trying to adopt a child raise funds for the adoption by offering to do a service project for a widow. Projects often involve construction, such as putting a new roof on a widow’s house.

The community the apostle James wrote to was struggling to love each other well. Moral filth and anger issues had contaminated the church. James gives them a remedy: Talk less. Listen more. Serve people in need. This is what love looks like in action. This is the lifestyle of people who will not be polluted by sin.

The world needs these words today. Life is fast. Information bombards us from every direction. It is so easy to speak before we think, to listen last rather than first. The world screams at us to look out for number one and get everything that is coming to us. The Bible speaks a different word: Look out for people who are hurting. Listen to your neighbor. These are the characteristics of pure and faultless religion.

Father, we pray for children without parents, for widows, and for all who are in need. We pray that You would use us to bring help and hope to people who are vulnerable and hurting. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Enemy on the Loose

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:5-9

Song: “Oh, Watch and Wait”

One summer I was home from Thailand, visiting my mother in Louisiana. At about 10 p.m. a helicopter flew over the roof and flooded my mother’s yard with light. Several police cars stopped on the road out front, and a police boat eased along the bayou behind the house. The authorities were searching for a man who had escaped from them and had fled into the neighborhood. I made sure all the doors were locked and stayed awake and watchful for much of the night.

Peter gives us a clear command: Be alert. We have an enemy who is real and dangerous. The devil is looking for people to hurt. He wants to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10). Thankfully, God’s hand is mighty. He can empower us to resist the devil. But we must remain alert and mindful of his schemes.

Apathy and passivity are counter to the Christian life. Christ’s followers are to pay attention to what is happening around them; they are to remain aware of their surroundings. This keen alertness helps us not only to put up a good defense against spiritual attacks, but it also allows us to seize opportunities to serve others and advance God’s kingdom.

Father, please give us eyes to see what is happening around us today. May we be aware of Satan’s efforts to deceive us. May we be responsive to opportunities to serve You by serving others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Out of the Pit

Praise the LORD . . . who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion (Psalm 103:2-4).

Scripture: Psalm 103:1-10

Song: “By His Power He Lifted Me”

Certain cultures have unique ways of preparing pork for special occasions and events. Cajun country in south Louisiana has its Boucherie Festival celebrations that involve cooking pigs in various ways and always include plenty of zydeco music and dancing. Hawaiian style luaus are notable for featuring whole pigs that have been cooked in a pit.

Some believers may recall a time in their life when, rather than being like one of the people enjoying the party, they were more like the pig in the pit. Our sin separates us from God, and the truth is that because of sin we all deserve death. Thankfully, Scripture emphasizes a more powerful message. God, who is rich in compassion, was willing and able to rescue us from our death sentence.

Not only has He rescued us, but He also crowned us with love. When we accepted His offer of salvation, He invited us to His party. God rejoices over all of us who allow Him to rescue us from the pit. His heart is not to condemn us but to heal us.

Father, we humbly thank You for having compassion on us in our helpless state. We praise You for sending Jesus to rescue us and for crowning us with such unmerited love. We pray for people who have not yet surrendered their lives to Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

Martian Miles

As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:11-12).

Scripture: Psalm 103:11-22

Song: “When at a Distance, Lord, We Trace”

For years NASA has discussed its vision of sending humans to Mars. When its orbit is closest to earth, Mars is about 38.6 million miles away. That’s a long trip! My home in Thailand is a mere 9,000 miles from my family and friends in Louisiana, about 24 hours of travel time. A flight to Mars would take astronauts six months or more!

Today’s passage speaks of the enormity of God’s love. His love for us is greater than the distance between us and the highest heavens. It is a love so big we cannot measure it in any meaningful way. From within this gargantuan love, God has redeemed us and will not hold our sins against us. He removes our transgressions from us by a distance greater than the size of our galaxy.

It is human nature to hold on to our guilt and shame. Often we are slow to accept that we are forgiven. That makes it easy to fall into the error of assuming that God is also slow to forgive. This passage speaks words that counter this tendency in us. God’s love for us is vast; His willingness to forgive us is beyond measure. What a reason for rejoicing!

Father, Your love for us is overwhelming. Our hearts worship You in thankfulness for Your forgiveness and mercy. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Truth in Advertising

Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him (2 Timothy 2:11-12).

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Song: “Holy Spirit, Truth Divine”

In the United States, it is against the law to lie to or grossly mislead people when advertising a product. These requirements are referred to as truth-in-advertisement laws. Despite these laws’ good intentions, consumers must still constantly be wary of companies’ efforts to exaggerate the merits of their products.

The gospel makes the boldest claims and biggest promises ever given to humankind: Jesus is God, and He died for our sins and rose again; nothing can separate us from God’s love; everyone who puts their faith in Christ will reign with God forever. And in today’s passage, the apostle Paul could not be clearer in affirming that the gospel message is trustworthy.

In an uncertain world, we need the certainty of God’s truth. No generation has lived with more voices clamoring for their attention than this one. News organizations, media channels, and social media outlets bombard us with competing messages all day, every day. Christians must make a conscious choice to regularly unplug from these voices and turn their minds to God’s Word. Scripture is the one place to which people can turn and know for sure that the message it communicates is true.

Father, thank You for the Bible. Thank You for being our foundation of truth in a world that often strives to mislead us. Give us courage to live by Your words of truth in our communities this week. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Beautiful Kingdom

The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills (Deuteronomy 8:7).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:1-11

Song: “There Is a Stream Whose Gentle Flow”

Few fishing spots on earth can compete with the waters of south Louisiana. There is nothing like heading out in a boat at sunrise when the water is smooth as glass, and then dropping anchor by some thick, green rush. Porpoises jumping near the boat and blue heron swooping down from the sky make for an ideal setting to reel in redfish and speckled trout.

At the end of Moses’ life, the Israelites stood on the brink of moving into the land God had promised would be theirs one day. In vivid detail, Moses described the wonderful place they were going, and he implored them always to remember, once they were settled, what God had done to bring them there.

God’s heart is to lead His people into marvelous places. The promised land was brimming with water, wheat, figs, oil, and honey. It was a life-giving land. God’s offer to us is a life-giving kingdom. His church is a place brimming with hope, joy, love, and peace. Moses’ words remind us to never lose sight of all that God has done to bring us into His kingdom and to always be thankful for the church.

Father, thank You for the beauty in Your church. We praise You for allowing us to be part of Your community of grace and love. We pray Your blessing on all Your people around the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.