

Thinking Rightly About “Reminders”

There are some important things that we would probably forget if we were left to ourselves, and so God often provides “reminders” to jog our memories and clarify our thinking. Consider two examples in the Scriptures.

In **Deut. 8:3**, Moses said to Israel that God “humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” In the wilderness, God had provided manna to keep the people from starving to death, but the manna was not enough to take away their hunger completely. God wanted them to experience hunger as a reminder of their need for something more important than physical food: the truth that they could get only from Him.

In **2 Cor. 12:7**, Paul wrote, “Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” Whatever Paul’s “thorn” may have been, it was something that was to serve as a reminder to him to remain humble. Every time he felt the pain of the thorn, he would have been reminded of the reason for which it was given, and his pride would have been held in check accordingly.

All of us have something in our lives akin to Israel’s hunger or Paul’s thorn in the flesh. The pain or the unfulfilled need may vary from person to person, but God allows nearly all of us to suffer some kind of serious deprivation. He allows us to experience significant sorrow and yearning in some key area of our lives to remind us that what we really need is . . . Him! If we had everything we wanted in this life and never knew what it was like to yearn, we would soon forget Him, and He loves us too much to leave us without the help we need in remembering Him.

But here is the point: *reminders are not automatic in their effect*. When something happens that *should* remind us of our need for God, we are not reminded unless we consciously *make the connection* between the event and the principle that it was meant to remind us of. And frankly, we often fail to make the connection. We lose the benefit of potentially valuable reminders by our unwillingness to be reminded.

Too much of the time, we see pain as nothing more than pain. We begrudge its presence in our lives and wish that it would go away as soon as possible. In our worst moments, we even become resentful, as if life had treated us unfairly. If our pain causes us to remember anything at all, it is sometimes little more than the “good old days” that we enjoyed before the pain appeared.

But how much better if we allowed our reminders to remind us of greater things. To take an example that all of us can relate to, when we experience the grief of losing a loved

one, wouldn't it be wonderful if we allowed that grief to remind us that what we really yearn for, beneath the surface symptoms of our immediate groaning, is full, unending, face-to-face fellowship with our God? If we would consciously make the connection between earthly sorrow and eternal joy, wouldn't we be stronger spiritually?

So when your heart is hurting, here is what I recommend to you. No matter what the specific thing may be that you have lost or are having to do without, every time the pangs of that sorrow stab your heart, teach yourself to stop and think: *I am hurting at this moment because there is something in this life that I need but do not have. Much more than I need that thing, however, I need God. The greater void in my heart is one that only He can fill, and the lesser void that I now feel should simply be a reminder of what my real need is. I will accept this pain, therefore, and let it remind me to yearn more greatly for God. I will see this hurt as nothing more than homesickness for heaven, and I will relish the thought of that day — it may be soon! — when God will fill my heart fully and forever.*

We have to *learn* to think this way about our sufferings; it does not come naturally. So let's *choose*, let's *determine*, and let's *resolve* that we will think rightly about the "reminders" in each of our lives.

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