



PACIFIC NORTHWEST
BIBLICAL COUNSELING
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**The Implications of Memory in
Counseling**

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Source:

REDEEMING
MEMORY
How God Transforms Memories
from a Heavy Burden to a Blessed Hope
— MATT REHRER, M.D. —



What is Memory?

- Memory is a creative function of the mind that deeply involves the will and emotions to bring about maturity.
- Memory holds particular significance to a person's identity.
- Memory from 4 standpoints:
 - God's perfect memory, intent, and purpose
 - The fall inaugurates the corruption of human memory
 - God redeems human memory at the cross
 - God's provision and promises to sanctify memory



God's Design for Memory

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- Key quote:

“You forget what you should remember and remember what you should forget,

while doubting that God will forget what he promised and remember what he promised to forget.”

- God redeems human memory through Christ, who was forsaken at the cross and remembered at the resurrection.

Corrupt Memory

“The Cudgel of Corrupt Memory”



Corrupt Memory

Distortions of a **GOOD** Past:

- Grumbling
 - “Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate the bread to the full; for you have brought us out into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Ex 16:3).



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- Nostalgia
 - “Do not say, ‘Why is it that the former days are better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this” (Eccl 7:10).



Corrupt Memory

Distortions of a **BAD** Past:

- Bitterness
 - As with Naomi: “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me”.
 - Bitterness blinded Naomi to the blessing of Ruth.



Corrupt Memory

Distortions of a **BAD** Past:

- Bitterness
- Regret
 - “Regret may be no more than a form of self-love. A man may have such a high regard for himself that any failure to live up to his own image of himself disappoints him deeply. This state of mind crystallizes finally into a feeling of chronic regret which appears to be proof of a deep penitence but is actually proof of deep self-love.”



Corrupt Memory

Distortions of a **BAD** Past:

- Bitterness
- Regret
- Shame and Guilt
 - Guilt arises internally from conviction and conscience, while shame arises externally from others’ condemnations.
 - Guilt lives in the courtroom. Shame lives in the community.
 - Corrupt memory infects the soul with the problem and deprives it of any solution.



Corrupt Memory

“The corrupt memory constantly gravitates away from God and towards self. The memory cudgel claims to be a scepter, picked up by a man to claim his own self-rule and sit on his own throne. However, the memory cudgel serves you wrongly by beating you away from the throne room of God. Fallen memory desires to serve self, and yet it damages self.”



Corrupt Memory

Application questions for you to consider:

- How might heart idolatry influence memory?
- How has the idea of grumbling and nostalgia influenced your thinking regarding distortions of a good past?
- Thinking about a past counselee that struggled with bitterness or regret – how does the concept of corrupt memory make you think differently about how to counsel in the future?
- What have you learned about the differences between guilt and shame and the role of corrupt memory?



God's Remedy for Memory

God's remedy is always rooted in the hope of the gospel:

- “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).
- The judge declares the penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23a).
- “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23b).
- The cross sits at the center of an amazing transaction of God's remembrance in justice and God's forgetfulness in mercy. His justice is satisfied in punishment, while his mercy is satisfied in pardon.



God's Remedy for Memory

- Christ forsaken means God forgets perfectly.
- The resurrection is God's perfect remembrance.



God's Remedy for Memory

The cross sits at the center
of an amazing transaction of
God's remembrance in justice
and God's forgetfulness in mercy.

To the very depths that Christ was forsaken at the cross,
his resurrection represents the very pinnacle
of remembrance in all of human history.



God's Remedy for Memory

Application questions for you to consider:

- How did Christ utilize His memory in the wilderness temptation? Why is context important in the application of Scripture memory?
- How has your understanding of the gospel been expanded as you consider the transaction of memory that took place at the death and resurrection of Jesus?
- What new counseling connections can you draw between remembrance, forgetting, and the gospel?



Tools to Sanctify Memory

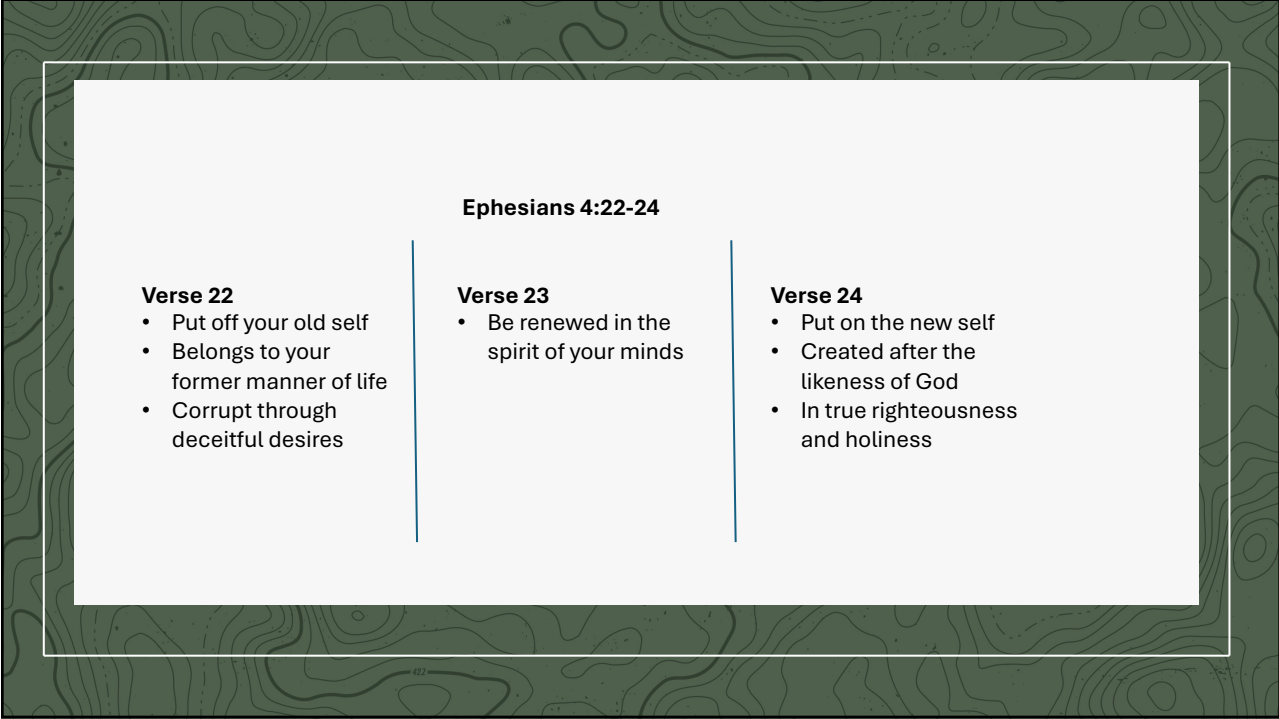
- God uses imperfect memory in the sanctification process to drive you back to Him in humility and reliance.
- Romans 8:32
“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”
- John Piper calls this the most far-reaching promise of future grace and says, “There never has been and never will be a circumstance in my life where this promise is irrelevant.”
- The principle of this verse is called “*majori ad minus.*” Meaning arguing from “the greater to the lesser.”
- By overcoming the greater obstacles (our salvation), it assures us that He can and will overcome the lesser ones (our suffering).



Tools to Sanctify Memory

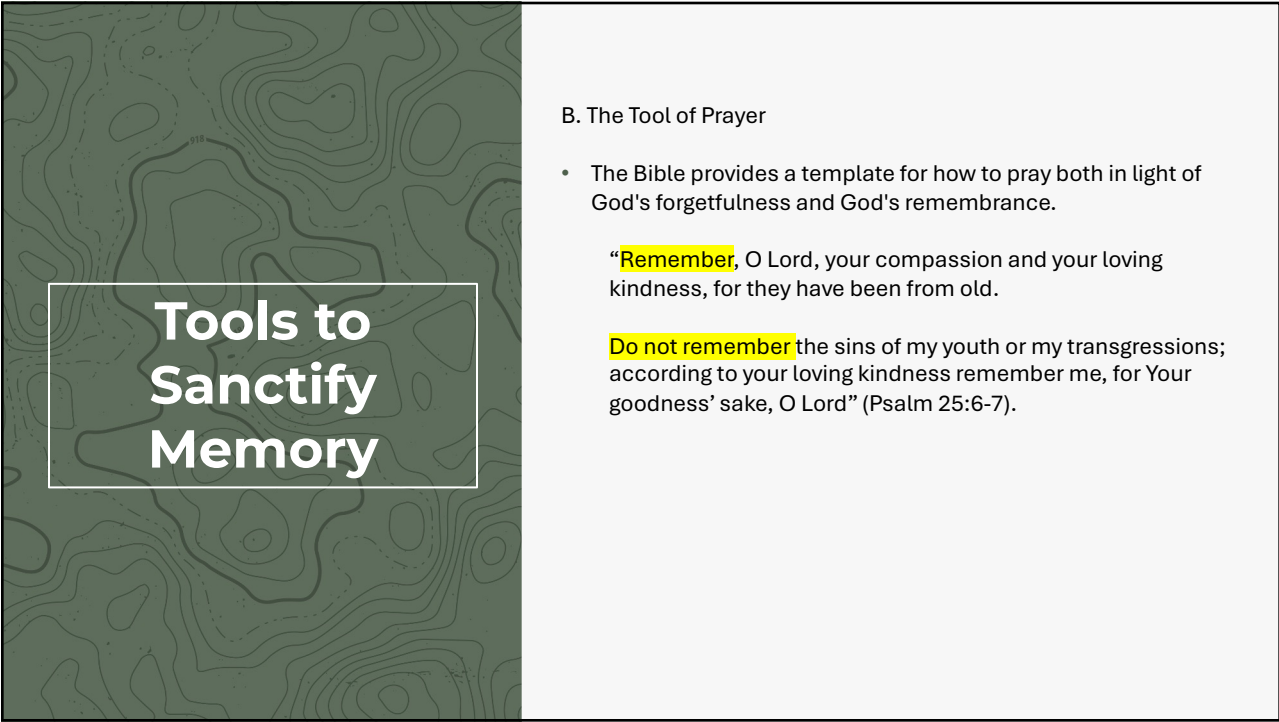
A. The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

- “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26).
- “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).



Ephesians 4:22-24

<p>Verse 22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put off your old self• Belongs to your former manner of life• Corrupt through deceitful desires	<p>Verse 23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be renewed in the spirit of your minds	<p>Verse 24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put on the new self• Created after the likeness of God• In true righteousness and holiness
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Tools to Sanctify Memory

B. The Tool of Prayer

- The Bible provides a template for how to pray both in light of God's forgetfulness and God's remembrance.

“**Remember**, O Lord, your compassion and your loving kindness, for they have been from old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your loving kindness remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O Lord” (Psalm 25:6-7).



Tools to Sanctify Memory

Application questions for you to consider:

- How will you help your counselees with greater reliance on the help of the Holy Spirit?
- How can you incorporate the language of memory in your prayer like David in Psalm 25:6-7? And help your counselee to do the same?
- What ways can you help your counselee make the written record of Scripture – promises and commands – accessible in times of need?



What to Remember

C. Scripture

Both a **Tool to Sanctify** and **What to Remember**

Remember the Promises:

- Christian remembers the key called Promises



What to Remember

“Christian and Hopeful sat in Doubting Castle, wounded from the cudgel of Giant Despair. At the lowest point, they knelt down and began to pray at midnight. While praying with dawn fast approaching, Christian stopped and cried out, “What a fool I am to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk in liberty!

I have a key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle.” So he put his hand into his shirt, plucked out the key, and thrust it into the lock; and the key opened the door. The two pilgrims opened the gate, which creaked and woke up the giant, and yet, Despair could not capture them!”

(The Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan)



What to Remember

C. Scripture

Both a **Tool to Sanctify** and **What to Remember**

Remember the Promises:

- Christian remembers the key called Promises
- Peter clarifies that God’s “divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these, He has granted to us His precious promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:3-4).



What to Remember

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Both a **Tool to Sanctify** and **What to Remember**

Remember the Promises:

Remember the Commands:

- Remember God: “Remember the Lord your God” (Deut 8:18)
- Remember how He has redeemed you: “Forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with loving kindness and compassion, who satisfies your years with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle (Ps 103:2-5).
- Remember God’s Son: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David” (1 Tim 2:8). The key to memory resides here – the person of Christ not only redeemed memory at the cross, but He also provides the promise for future and final victory in the resurrection.



How to Remember

- Scripture memory:
 - David says, “I have stored up Your work in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11).
- Meditation:
 - The Psalmist says, “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:2).



What to Remember

- Remember the Promises
- Remember the Commands
- **Remember Yourself**
 - Remember your roots: once “you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked” (Eph 2:1-2). The tendency is to distort memory, to think better of self and less of God’s grace.
 - Remember your salvation: You were dead **IN** sin and now dead **TO** sin. Remember your salvation by this simple swap of a preposition.
 - Remember your suffering: the concept of remembrance in suffering extends to the foot of the cross.
 - Heb 10: 10-39
 - “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (23).



What to Forget

- Forgetting carries the idea that you may recall in fact, but without effect. Not dwelling on the painful past.
- “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).
- Forgetting past offenses:
 - 1 Cor 3:5 reminds us that “love keeps no record of wrongs”
 - Prov 19:11 reminds us “ it is one’s glory to overlook an offense”
- Forgetfulness in forgiveness begins with remembering your own need for forgiveness.
- The one who is forgiven much forgives much; the one who is forgiven little forgives little (Luke 7:47).



What to Remember, What to Forget

Application questions for you to consider:

- What is the role of memory in suffering? Why is there a place to remember suffering and not just erase it? How does the cross inform your view of suffering?
- What things are Christians called to forget? What are the benefits of forgetfulness?
- Memory is considered a function of the past. So how does memory relate to the future? How do the implications of memory influence our eternal inheritance?

Redeeming Memory

Opening Quote:

“You forget what you should remember and remember what you should forget,

while doubting that God will forget what he promised
and will remember what he promised to forget.”

- Forgetting what we should remember leads to self-reliance and makes it hard to repent or depend on God.
- Remembering what we should forget leads to the cudgel of corrupt memory and makes it hard to forgive.

The Lord's Prayer – Matt. 6:9-13

This chart outlines the main types of prayer presented in the Lord's Prayer.

VERSE	HOW TO PRAY	TYPES OF PRAYER
9 <i>"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."</i>	Acknowledging God's goodness and worth. We are tempted to forget God's goodness in times of blessing and doubt God's goodness in times of hardship.	Worship Adoration Thanksgiving Joshua 1:9 Psalm 139:7-10
10 <i>"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."</i>	Acknowledging His sovereignty. Will we pursue the short-lived glory of the kingdom of self or pursue the glory of the kingdom of God which satisfies the soul?	Submission Surrender Matthew 6:33 Matthew 5:6
11 <i>"Give us this day our daily bread."</i>	Acknowledging our dependence on God for guidance, direction, and provision.	Petition Intercession Philippians 4:19 2 Peter 1:3 Matthew 6:25-32
12 <i>"and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."</i>	Admitting our sin, seeking forgiveness from God, granting forgiveness to others. Love what God loves and hate what God hates.	Confession Repentance Acts 3:19 Colossians 3:12-13 1 John 4:11
13 <i>"And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."</i>	Asking God for strength over temptation. Acknowledge that sin is our greatest problem. Asking for deliverance from without and deliverance from within.	Supplication Deliverance Jeremiah 17:9 Luke 6:43-45