

A Ministry of Reminding

2 Peter 1:12–15

An elderly couple were having problems remembering things, so they decided to go to their doctor to get checked out to make sure nothing was wrong with them. When they arrived at the doctor's, they explained to the doctor about the problems they were having with their memory. After checking the couple out, the doctor tells them that they were physically okay but might want to start writing things down and make notes to help them remember things. The couple thanked the doctor and left.

Later that night while watching TV, the old man got up from his chair and his wife asks, "Where are you going?"

He replies, "To the kitchen."

She asks, "Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?"

He replies, "Sure."

She then asks him, "Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?"

He says, "No, I can remember that."

She then says, "Well, I also would like some strawberries on top. You had better write that down cause I know you'll forget that."

He says, "I can remember that, you want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries."

She replies, "Well, I also would like whip cream on top. I know you will forget that so you better write it down."

With irritation in his voice, he says, "I don't need to write that down, I can remember that." He then fumes into the kitchen.

After about 20 minutes he returns from the kitchen and hands her a plate of bacon and eggs.

She stares at the plate for a moment and says, "You forgot my toast."

I feel like I'm becoming more like that couple every day. Cindy can give me four items that I need to get at the grocery store and before I even walk out the door I've forgotten two things. I actually use a handy-dandy app on my phone called *AnyList* to make the list before I go to the store, even if it is only a couple of things. But if I don't write it down and I do forget, I always say, "When in doubt, grab ice cream."

Well, we can laugh about this kind of stuff, but when it comes to the spiritual realm our forgetting or remembering is a much weightier thing. Our ability to continue to grow and progress well in the faith is tied to our ability to remember the truth about God and what He has done for us in Christ. Our ability to navigate the storms of life without shipwreck is tied to our remembering and waking in truths about God and His promises.

It is vital that we know truth. It is vital that we remember truth. The success of our journey with Christ depends upon it.

Peter understood how vital it was that his readers know and remember truth. In the passage that we are looking at today, he talks about his commitment to a ministry of reminding in the lives of his readers.

In case you haven't been with us the past couple of weeks Peter has been communicating vital truths to his readers. He has explained that as believers in Christ, they have been granted everything they need for life and godliness. And he has urged them, in light of what God has done for them, to make every effort to seek to grow in godliness. And he has explained that as they do this, they will walk with a kind of stability in life and that God's eternal kingdom will be abundantly supplied to them.

This is the truth that he has communicated to them. And he now says that he is going to carry out a ministry of reminding them of these things. Take a look at verse 12:

¹² Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.

Peter is thinking about the future and the opportunity that he has to continue to influence his readers. He says that he *will always be ready to remind [them]* of the things that he has talked about in the first 11 verses of this letter. He is committed to this ministry of reminding.

Peter affirms his readers. He affirms that they know the truth and are already established in it. He says *you already know* the truth and you *have been established in the truth*. But though that is true, he says that he will continue to remind them of the truth.

Now, before we walk through the rest of our passage, I think it is important to notice the overall context of this letter. One of the things that Peter is concerned about is the influence of false teachers. If we look ahead to chapter 2 starting in verse 1, Peter writes this:

¹ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³ and in their greed they will exploit

you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Peter has a very real concern about false teachers and the affect that they might have. If you would go on to read the rest chapter 2 you'd see that the lives of these false teachers is the absolute opposite of what Peter is urging for his reader. They "never cease from sin" (2:14); they are those who have forsaken the right way and "have gone astray" (2:15). What they teach is dangerous and the influence of their lives is dangerous. And so this is part of what drives Peter to commit to reminding his readers of truth.

And the reality is that in our day nothing has changed. If there were no false teachers, we would need this ministry of reminding. But the fact that there are all sorts of false teachers out there with easy access to us through TV and social media and the internet, makes this ministry of reminding all the more vital.

Now, in verse 13 Peter goes on and says:

¹³ I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

Peter believes that it is absolutely right to keep reminding them of the truth as long as he lives. He says that he wants to *stir [them] up by way of reminder*. To *stir up* means to cause someone to become fully awake, to arouse someone to action. And so, they may know the truth, but Peter is suggesting that at times they need to be reminded in ways that stirs them to appropriate action.

Peter knows that he may not have a lot more time for this ministry of reminding. He says that the *laying aside of [his] earthly dwelling is imminent*. By "earthly dwelling" he means his body. Jesus has made it clear to him that this is the case. Whether Jesus had given Peter a special revelation about his death or whether this refers to Jesus' words to Peter in John 21:18-19 where Jesus spoke to him about the kind of death Peter would face, we don't know for sure. Whatever the case, Peter knew for certain from Christ that his days on earth were short. And so his commitment was that as long as his life continued, he would seek to remind them of the truth; to stir them up.

And Peter's hope is that the influence of all of this will outlast his time on earth. In verse 15 he says:

¹⁵ And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

Peter is committed to making every effort during the remainder of his life to help them to be in a position after he dies that *at any time . . . [they] will be able to call these things to mind*.

Some scholars believe that Peter is speaking here of the Gospel of Mark. Tradition holds that Mark was the one who wrote down Peter's sermons. But it could be that Peter is thinking of future letters that he will write to them. Whatever the case, Peter communicates his commitment to helping them *recall* the truth even after he is gone.

And so in this first chapter of 2 Peter, Peter communicates some vital truths and now he is saying that he is committed to this ministry of reminding his readers of these truths. He will have a ministry of reminding in their lives.

Now, as we think about what Peter is communicating here, there are several principles that we see about a ministry of reminding. Let me give you six principles.

1. We are prone to forget the truth

One of the lessons we learn from Scripture is the propensity of God's people to forget. The Israelites saw God do amazing things, but over and over again they forgot. The children of Israel saw God's power in the miracles he worked to set them free from Egypt and yet when they came to cross the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army was in pursuit they cried out in fear as if they had no memory of God's power. Or we see the same thing in the New Testament. Jesus feeds the 5000 and yet the next time the disciples were confronted with feeding a multitude, it was as if they had totally forgotten what Jesus could do.

And the truth of the matter is that we are no different. We are prone to forget the truth. In most cases, we retain the truth in our minds, but we forget it in the sense that we don't allow it to stir up our faith. And so because we are so prone to forget the truth, we need this ministry of being reminded of what is true about God and what He has done for us.

And in most cases, what we really need is not new truth, but . . .

2. We need reminded of the truth we already know

That's what Peter does for his readers. He is telling them truths that they already know. "You know these things," he says. In most cases that is exactly what we need as well.

I've shared over the years that one of my struggles can be to trust God for our finances. I'm so prone to worry in this area of my life. In this area I easily forget what is true. But here's the deal, when I find myself in a place of worry again about our finances, it is always truth I already know that helps me. I remember that God cares about the birds and provides for them. I remember that God is a good, loving Father who knows how to give good gifts to his children. These are things that I know, but I need to be reminded of them and let them stir me to faith. I'm not sure that it was ever new truth that I needed. Invariably, what I've needed was to remember the truth that I already knew.

Here's the third principle we see in this passage.

3. We need reminded of truth even if we are mature in Christ.

Peter's readers were *established in the truth* (v. 12). They were not new believers who had not yet been taught. But still Peter felt this urgency to continue to carry out this ministry of reminding.

No matter how long you have walked with Jesus and no matter how mature you may be, you will never get beyond a need for being reminded of what is true.

I have been growing consistently in my walk with God now since my freshman year in college. That's 34 years ago. There is some level of maturity in my life. But still, whether it is finances or ten other areas of life, I continue to need to be reminded of what is true. We all do.

4. We should take responsibility for reminding ourselves of truth.

Peter says to his readers that he wants to set them up so that at any time after his death they will be able to call to mind the truths that he has communicated. He is talking about them personally calling truths up into their minds.

We see a similar thing when the prophet Jeremiah prays in Lamentations:

²¹ *This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.*
²² *The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.*
²³ *They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:21-23

Jeremiah calls to mind truths about God's lovingkindness and compassion and faithfulness and as he does so, he says, *Therefore I have hope.*

We need to own the responsibility of reminding ourselves of the truth. How can we do this? Well, I think developing a rhythm of regularly being in the Scriptures is a big part of this. And memorizing Scriptures about God and what He has done for you can be incredibly helpful in calling these truths to mind. Some people find that this is one of the benefits of journaling. Over time as they record God's faithfulness to them, they create a record that they can use to remind themselves of God's faithfulness and goodness.

For me, one of the great benefits of getting to places of silence and solitude is that it create space where I find that God's Spirit reminds me of truths that I so desperately need to be reminded of – truths about His love or His care and concern for me or His power. And so for me, if I'm going take responsibility to remind myself of what is

true, I need to be in the Word and I need to pursue the disciplines of silence and solitude.

For each of us it might be different things that help us, but the point is don't be passive about this. You will never get mature enough that you no longer need reminding and you are prone to forgetting what is true and so be diligent to call truth to mind.

And so, we need to remind ourselves of truth, but also . . .

5. We can help others through a ministry of reminding.

That's what we see Peter doing in this passage. Paul did the same thing in his letters. We can help each other in this same way.

We often say that the Christian life is not meant to be a solo journey. We need each other. And one of the reasons that this is true is that we can have this ministry of reminding each other of what is true. We can stir each other up to walk in faith.

And as we do this, I think we would do well to pay attention to Peter's approach. Peter acknowledges that they already know the truth. That approach can be so helpful. Sometimes I will say to someone, "I know you already know this, but let me remind you that_____."

I have been in situations where someone has said those words to me and then they have reminded me of something that is true about God. And when they remind me of truth in a loving way, I find that it strengthens me; it stirs up my faith.

And so when you think about gathering together in your Life Group you can have this ministry of reminding in the lives of others. Parents, with our children, we can have this ministry of reminding. With our friends, we can have this ministry of reminding.

And as we think about this ministry of reminding, whether in our own lives or others, the truth that we mostly need reminded of is the Gospel.

6. We mostly need reminded of the Gospel

Paul said to the Corinthians:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, (1 Corinthians 15:1)

To Timothy, he said:

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, (2 Timothy 2:8).

Today, we are celebrating the Lord's Table. When Jesus instituted this, he did so that it might serve as a regular reminder of the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul writes this:

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

When we remember Jesus, we are remembering the heart of the gospel. And so today as we are taking communion, we are remembering the Gospel, the very thing that we so often need reminded of.

The Gospel reminds us that God is holy and cannot tolerate sin. He is so holy that only a righteous man could pay for our sin – Jesus. The gospel reminds us that God loves us and that nothing will ever separate us from Him because He sent His son to be the provision for our sin. The gospel reminds us that we are no longer enemies of God. The gospel reminds us that before God we are justified and there is now no longer any condemnation. The gospel reminds us that we have an eternal hope. The gospel reminds us that can grow in Christlikeness.

We mostly need reminded of the gospel, because the gospel most clearly reveals who God is and what He has done for us. And so today, as we celebrate communion, be reminded of the gospel.