

# Egypt & Exodus

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

## Sermon 5: Remember: God's Father Love

### Deuteronomy

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- April 5, 2020

Well, good morning, Grace. My name is Robert Morris and I'm one of the pastors here on staff. And it's great to welcome you to join us from wherever you are today. That's what's wonderful about technology. Even though we can't be together in the worship center as we normally would, we're still able to connect and learn and worship together and continue to be a church that exists to glorify God by guiding people to become like Christ in all of life. That hasn't changed. We are still an active and thriving church that is transformed by grace and biblical truth, we're committed to relational discipleship, and we want to be engaged in ministry. And it has been truly incredible to see how many of you have been participating in virtual small groups, signed up for neighborhood care groups, and are truly thriving, not merely surviving during this season.

As a church that is still active, we would love for you to join us in generosity. Each week in worship we normally have a time to be generous. However, while we're not in the same room and passing plates, we would love for you to still be able to give, and we have four ways you can do that: on our website, with Text 2 Give, through the Realm Connect app, or by mailing a check. We are incredibly grateful for your generosity.

Now there are many other ways to engage in worship today as well. On our website, following the sermon, we hope you'll take time to go through the prayer prompts or even submit a prayer request. You can discuss and apply what you're learning or experience some worship music. And if you have children, participate in family discipleship. After the sermon and right here on Facebook at 10:15 am we'll have a Grace Kids message for you to watch with your kids. I know my children have enjoyed hearing from Pastor Brad and using some of the activities and discussion questions that he's provided the past two weeks, and I hope your families have too.

Lastly, next week is Easter, and it's definitely one of the most unique Easters, not only in Grace's history, but also around the world as Christians are unable to physically gather together to celebrate Jesus and all that He's done for us. But that won't stop us from celebrating. And in

fact, we hope it creates a new opportunity for you to invite friends to church. Yes, I said “invite to church.” Who could you invite to watch virtually with you? This year it doesn’t have to be someone who lives in the city of Austin. Or it could be someone who wouldn’t typically step inside a church building, but might tune into a sermon on Facebook or on the website with you. We want you to leverage our current circumstances to help you thrive in the way you invite others to hear the life-changing message of the gospel. Thank you so much for joining us in worship today. It’s good to be with you.

**Music: “I Will Follow” by Jon Guerra**

When the sea is calm and all is right  
When I feel your favor flood my life  
Even in the good I’ll follow You  
Even in the good I’ll follow You

When the boat is tossed upon the waves  
When I wonder if You’ll keep me safe  
Even in the storms I’ll follow You  
Even in the storms I’ll follow You

(Chorus)  
I believe everything that You say You are  
I believe that I have seen Your unchanging heart  
In the good things and in the hardest part  
I believe and I will follow You  
I believe and I will follow You

When I see the wicked prospering  
When I feel I have no voice to sing  
Even in the want I’ll follow You  
Even in the want I’ll follow You

(Chorus)

When I find myself so far from home  
And you lead me somewhere I don’t wanna go  
Even in my death I’ll follow You

Even in my death I'll follow You

When I've come to end this race I've run  
And I receive the prize that Christ has won  
I will be with You in paradise  
I will be with You in paradise

(Chorus)

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[Pastor Matt Cassidy]

## Introduction

Good morning, Grace. Palm Sunday like it's never been done before. Let's start our time with a word of prayer.

*Lord, we lift up this time to You, that our hearts would be open to Your Spirit's guidance and analysis. And I'd ask that You would help us understand what flows inside of our souls, what our hearts are filled with, so that You might be a kind and loving father to help us; not change so much what we do, but who we are, so that that will change what we do.*

*Lord, I'd ask that as we look in Deuteronomy that our hearts would be open towards their circumstance so that we could understand how it applies to our circumstance, so that we might live in our situation in a way that shows that we are forever trying to be conformed to the fullness of Jesus Christ. Lord, we'd ask that You would bless our time together. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Palm Sunday, like it's never been done before. And now next week, Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday, at Grace, we'll have one service at 9:15. That was Jonathan's idea. That was a beautiful idea because he said, "Hey, we can finally all meet together. Instead of having multiple services we can finally have one service together where all of Grace meets together without meeting together." So, we'll do that. By all means join us at 9:15 next week and invite your friends to do it as well. It's going to be a great sermon. I've been looking forward to

preaching this sermon for six months. I wrote it out six months ago, and I'm looking forward to next week.

**What a man is full of spills out when he gets bumped.**

**- Indian proverb**

This new season that we're in has new demands on us, and it's showing. It's showing what's in our heart. And it reminded me of a proverb that came out of India that says, "What a man is full of spills out when he's bumped." Been bumped lately? Yeah. What spills out? Anger or pity? You want to get away, right, you want to run away? Ignore it like it didn't happen or feel like you have a reason to cheat, a reason to kind of bend the rules this time because you got bumped? Something tested the nature of what's going on inside of your heart. These bumps, this testing, that we're dealing with set us up, make us ripe to understand what's going on in the Book of Deuteronomy.

That's one of the reasons I was excited to come teach today – Deuteronomy 8. It's just a wonderful book teaching about the heart. As a matter of fact, the word "heart" is used four times in this chapter. In this chapter Moses is speaking and he's telling us our future. He's telling us how this thing is going to end. He does for Israel, that's for sure, but he's telling it to us as well. If we understand Deuteronomy, and especially chapter 8, we're going to see that the key to our future is remembering. We have to remember the right things the right way, remember the nature of God and the nature of his actions. Because remembering anchors our soul to the past, in the present, and it charts a course for our future.

In Israel's case, Israel is coming out of forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They're about to enter the lavish promised land beyond their imaginations. And they must remember what took place in the wilderness. Because what a man is full of spills out when they're bumped. And they were bumped in the wilderness. The wilderness was purposely for bumping them, for tempting and testing them. And what happened? They had contempt towards God's love. They rejected His provisions. They were suspect of His protection. They failed those tests. And in that, it showed what they were made of.

Deuteronomy 8 is key to the Book of Deuteronomy. That chapter, I think, does a nice job of summarizing the book itself. It's the first Old Testament chapter I committed to memory. I would challenge you to do the same. It's worth it. And the reason is because it talks about the condition of our heart and tells us what our future is. It is a chapter of prophecy. It's going to tell you, based on your soul health, what the future looks like. It does for Israel and it does for us as well.

### **Deuteronomy 8:1-5**

**Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land YHWH promised on oath to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup> Remember how YHWH your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. <sup>4</sup> Your clothing did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so YHWH your God disciplines you.**

Look in chapter 8, verses 1 through 5. I'll read it to you. And look for the key of remembering. "Be careful to follow every command that I'm giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that YHWH promised on oath to your ancestors. Now you remember how YHWH your God led you all the way through the wilderness for these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna. Now neither you nor your ancestors had known this manna, but it was to teach you that man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know this – know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so YHWH your God disciplines you."

*Know this, that in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so YHWH your God disciplines you. That's the key.*

## **Remember**

Israel needs to learn this in their heart and soul, that every breath they have is a gift from their loving father. That's what they're to remember, that God provided for them in the desert, God protected them in the desert, and God was disciplining them, He was disciplining them. It says that you have to remember this in your heart. It's our soul. You must remember.

Here, let me just tell you – you might not know this – I didn't know until I studied this passage years ago – “remember” means literally “re-member.” It means putting things together, like re-membering parts of the body so that everything is working together in community and harmony.

And the opposite of remembering is not forgetting. It's dismembering. It's taking the parts away from each other so they're no longer in harmony, in other words, disassociating the facts of what happened in the past so that there's no connection between the two. Forgetting is when it's just erased. Most of us don't forget, we dismember.



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And it is important for Israel to remember. And Israel knows this. They know how important it is. As a matter of fact, in the logo for this week, in the bulletin that you didn't get, but it's there on the slide, you'll see that the tradition for Israel to remember is this. They had a thing called a phylactery. They would wrap a leather band around their hand and in that leather strap there was a box and in the box was a passage out of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, so that they would remember, they would have to remember about God. Because what we remember anchors us to our past, to our present, and sets a course for our future. And that's why Moses is making such an issue of remembering – remembering right.

**We are too prone to engrave our trials in marble and write our blessings in sand.**

**- Charles Spurgeon**

We do not remember the right way in two different ways. In other words, we dismember two ways. And Spurgeon said it like this. I love his quote. He said, "We are too prone to engrave our trials in marble and write our blessing in sand." We are prone to engrave our trials in marble – oh, we don't forget the bad days, no, no, no. And then we write our blessings in the sand. That's a way of dismembering, not remembering appropriately.

Here's a couple of ways that we dismember. We don't remember appropriately, accurately, truthfully. One is that we remember the bad as not being bad. In Israel's case, if you know the story when you read through the Bible with us, you'll read that Israel was regularly wanting to go back to Egypt. Because when they dismembered their storyline in Egypt, they said *We had this amazing menu. Oh, the fresh vegetables that we ate as opposed to this manna oatmeal stuff that we eat every single day. We didn't live in tents; we lived in houses.* They forgot the part where they beat the men senselessly and they killed the little boys. And they say, *Oh, but the salad was to die for.* They disassociated what was happening there. They dismembered it, not remembered it.

We do that too. I do this. When I think about the good old days when I was a pirate, I have these memory flashbacks and they are so clear and vivid. And I know they're not just my memories, because I don't remember that clearly. And I think about the things that I did. But what I don't remember is the consequences. That's the dismember part of that – the pain that I caused. And so, a number of years ago, because this continued to happen so many times in my life, I remember making a plea to the Spirit. I said, "Dear Spirit, when I dismember those Friday nights, could you help me remember Saturday morning? Could you bring back in the same clarity -- 4K with Dolby surround – I want to remember the shame and the regret and the pain that I caused the people that I love the most. Help me go from dismembering to remembering the whole thing."

Sometimes we don't remember appropriately because we don't remember the bad thing as being bad. Sometimes we remember poorly when we think the good thing was not good. Israel in this storyline --- right there in verse 16 of the chapter it says, *He gave you manna!* This is the second time he says it, by the way. He repeats it. He says, *He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something that your ancestors had never known before, to humble you, to test you, so in the end it might be very well with you.* And then it says later on, *He gave you water from a rock – from a rock! You're in the desert and He gave you manna.*

And they complained about it, but it was a good thing. You try to feed 3 million people three times a day. Yeah. You had this thing called manna. It literally translates as "What's this?" Yeah, every day you had "what's this?" But He gave it to them every day. That was not a bad thing – that was a good thing. And water from the rock – that was a good thing. But you keep



remembering it – dismembering it – as a bad thing. So, Moses is saying, *You have to remember. You have to re-member.*

## **Remember: God the Father**

### **Deuteronomy 8:5**

**Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so YHWH your God disciplines you.**

And what are they to remember? Key: verse 5. “Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so YHWH your God disciplines you.” Know in your heart --- know that it is a fact. It is in your soul. It’s not up here, okay? It is down here. It is in your essence of your being. It affects the way you think, the way you feel, and what you do. You’re confident about this, you’re certain about this, you don’t have doubts about this. As a man disciplines his son, YHWH your God is a father who disciplines you, too.

God is your father, a loving father. Deuteronomy 1, when the book starts it reads like this. Oh, I love this sentence. It says, “When you were in the desert there you saw YHWH your God. He carried you as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” He carried all of you like a father carries his son, all the way to the end. In the wilderness the mighty Father, with His love – He’s showing himself to be a father. He’s providing and He’s protecting. And in that desert, He’s being a father that disciplines to build grit into us. Grit.

In our wilderness experience -- in their wilderness experience and in our wilderness experience, it is to make us courageous and tenderhearted. That’s what grit is – courageous and tenderhearted. And He allowed them to experience this wilderness, because that’s what a loving father does, so that in the wilderness they would be tested, get bumped. In the passage that we read it says that’s so that they would know what was in their heart.

It’s very important that we see that the appeal here is to YHWH being the father. That’s the attribute He’s taking on now. There are plenty of passages in the Bible where God is like a mother who comes and nurtures you, who consoles you, who never forgets you. Absolutely. In this section it is the father who disciplines you. At least in our house it was *Wait until your father*

*gets home.* And that's kind of the view here, that the Father is bringing the attributes that a father is supposed to be bringing. The word discipline – it's not fun to be disciplined, but it has purpose. That's what we're to remember, that there was purpose in the pain, that there was love behind that spanking, because He's a loving father.

## Discipline

That's the father part of it. "As a father disciplines his son ..." Discipline – let me explain that. Discipline is what parents do the children that they love and it focuses on the future. Now sometimes people get discipline mixed up with punishment. But punishment is focusing on a past offense and you're just making them pay for it. That's not what parents do. There's a place for that – the judicial system is based on punishment. But in parenting I need to look at my son and daughter and see what's in their soul, because something bumped them, and I want to do what I need to do with consequences so that they don't do it in the future. So, you could have the same consequence in some respects – a spanking – but if it's punishment, it's what you did. But if it's discipline, it's to prevent a future occurrence, a reoccurrence, of that event. And a father's love is what is motivating a father to discipline his son, to spank him or have a consequence.

And in this story, Israel is the son and they're getting bumped in the desert. The desert was to test them so that they would know what was inside their soul. And they would see that, that it wasn't good – it was ingratitude, it was contempt – and God says, *Yeah, let's fix that now. Let's fix that. Let's turn that into goodness and grit. Let's make you courageous. Let's make you tenderhearted.* That's what a loving father does. That's what God is doing here. He's providing and He's protecting them all along. He's making them more like Christ in all of life – that would be the vocabulary that we would use. He's teaching them to live in the desert, in the wilderness – a simple life. Just manna, just water, dove for dinner. And if they can be grateful and appreciative in that, that's going to make them able to be prosperous and grateful and obedient.

They're spending forty years in the wilderness for this lesson. But I need to add some details. They're in the desert, the wilderness, for forty years, because of their choice. They chose to reject God and that's what cost them the forty years. But the wilderness itself? That was God's plan. God has a wilderness for all of His children. Those He loves He sends into the wilderness. They spent a year at Mount Sinai in the wilderness receiving the manna and the water from the

rock. And then they had a two-week journey into the promised land. That was God's plan. The wilderness was part of God's plan, because in the wilderness we're bumped, we're tested, and we find out what's in us. So, God can do that.

### **What Israel Was Intended to Learn**

And what was Israel to learn? What were they supposed to learn? What were they supposed to have deep inside their soul? That it was the heart of the Father that was motivating the thing taking place in the desert. It was a loving father disciplining his son so that they might have a healthy soul. God wants them to be prosperous. That's the point. He knows --- the next chapter in the story is the promised land. And he wants them to have prosperity without being like spoiled brats. And so, He sees in the bumping what's in their soul. They see themselves in that and He says, *Wow, I've got to help you not be a spoiled brat, but I need you to be humble and grateful, and that leads to obedience.* That's what He's been doing. That's how He's been a loving father. That's what father love looks like.

There are so many examples of bad fathers and bad father love in the name of I don't know what – being liked? But this is a common story. You probably know this story. Hopefully, it's not your story. There are some rules in the house and one of the sons chose to play sports or something – he's playing baseball. And the rules are maybe if you don't make grades down here than you'll have a consequence over here. You'll have to get a ride to school, you can't use the car anymore. But if you do something significant, if you take drugs, then you're not playing in the game. There. This offense, this consequence. And we've all seen these stories where the child is caught doing drugs of some kind, alcohol or smoking or marijuana or something else, and the dad says, *Yeaaaaah ... but he's starting and they really need him. And so, we're going to give him this consequence over here. That's what we'll do.*

That's not love. That's not a father. That's a fan. And what's tragic in those stories, and it's predictable – we've seen it so many times – does the son become a repeat offender on drug use, if that's the story? Oh, yeah. Sure, he is. And why is that? Because he's remembering accurately that since he's an athlete, the consequence for drug use is not this; it's this, because he's special. He's going to remember this: rules don't apply to him. He can live a life with no consequence. And that's a tragic thing for a child to learn because that's not how the world

works. There are consequences. Discipline is to get the sewage out of a soul. And you see that sewage when you get bumped. And a loving father says, *We have to fix that.*

When I was in seminary, Melinda and I were part of a wonderful Bible study hosted by a husband and wife. They were just wonderful people with crazy backgrounds. And they lived up on a hill and it overlooked a valley. They had a seventeen-year-old daughter and she was becoming impossible to live with. She had a great life. Again, the house was up on a hill, she was on the second story with a view of the valley lit up at night – it was spectacular. She had her own car, she had a closet full of clothing. But she was vain and conceited and certainly ungrateful. And one morning at breakfast, the dad just snapped and said, “It’s going to be different when you get home from school, baby.”

Now his background was considerably different than hers. He ran away from home when he was seventeen. He lived in Florida and hitchhiked all the way to California so that he could lie to get into the army and become an army ranger, so that he could go to Vietnam. It was so bad at his house that he hitchhiked across the country and then volunteered to go to the Vietnam jungle for two tours. That’s his background. So, he just doesn’t understand this level of ingratitude.

So, when she came home that day, she got what she wanted. She wanted to live on her own and she got it. Her dad was graceful to her. He said, “You know what? I’m going to let you live here rent free. But in the garage. And in the garage, you’ll find those dresses that belong to you – all four of them. That’s all that you’ve ever paid for. And the bed – that’s not your bed upstairs – that’s my bed. But I’ll let you use my cot. You can sleep on that. That car is not yours. I hope you can find a way to school.”

“What about taking a shower, Dad?”

The dad worked construction and when they custom-built the house, they put in a mud room, a shower area before you went into the house. He said, “You can shower in the mud room. Just don’t mess up my construction gear.”

She dismembered her background. She didn’t connect her father’s provision and protection all those years and didn’t know that everything she had was a gift of her father’s love. And this act of discipline – I think maybe more than a month, living in the garage – that’s an act of father love. That’s what father love looks like. As a father disciplines his son, YHWH disciplines you.

And listen, I want to say that if you come from a background where your father spoiled you or ignored you or even abused you, that's not father love. None of those are. They're all evil in their own way. And if that's your background, if that's your story, you need to find a new definition of "father."

The Father in the Bible is a father that loves you, that causes you to have circumstances in life that bump you so that you would see the evil in your heart, so that He can do some surgery and make that right. Know this – the heart of the Father is to love you and to discipline you. And the purpose of that discipline is to make us humble and grateful. And in that humble gratitude, we are obedient. And in that obedience, then we can have blessings and not turn into a monster. That's their story, and that's quite often our story, too. Moses is shouting. He says, *You've got to remember this or else! If you don't remember right about God's loving provision and protection, then someday you're going to get to the promised land, and you're going to wake up some day and say, "Where did all this awesome stuff come from? Wow, this is great. You know what? This is mine. I did this. I made all of these great things happen."* And when that happens, it doesn't go well.

Prosperity sometimes is a bump. And God is saying, *Look, you can't handle prosperity if you can't handle the desert.* The context of the story here is this. God knows this. The context of the story is simple. They've been in slavery for 400 years or so, they were in the wilderness for forty years, and now they're literally in inheritance. They're going to inherit somebody else's good stuff. And it's crazy over the top.

Let me read this to you. But listen with their ears. Four hundred years of slavery, forty years in the desert, eating nothing but oatmeal and water with some dove for dinner, for forty years. Listen to how exaggerated – not exaggerated, but opulent – the description here is. This is what's going to happen next. "Observe the commands of YHWH your God, walking in obedience and revering Him. For YHWH your God is bringing you into a good land." Now listen – it's not flat and dry. "A land with water ..." Let's talk about water – "Brooks and streams and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills." Valleys and hills – those are great. Water everywhere – and then it talks about food. Listen to all the food: "The land will have wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, olive oil and honey; and the land will have bread and it won't be scarce; nothing will be lacking." And I love this – he says, "Even the rocks are great there. The land will have rocks with iron in it and you can dig for copper out of the

hills.” Wow. I mean, when you’re looking forward to the rocks, it’s going to be a great day when you get there.

### **Deuteronomy 8:10-14**

**When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise YHWH your God for the good land He has given to you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget YHWH your God, failing to observe His commands, His laws and His decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget YHWH your God.**

And so, when you get there, if you’re humble and grateful, that’s going to lead to obedience and praise. That’s what happens in a heart that’s healthy. And that’s why the next section of Scripture – let’s read that together: “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise YHWH your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget YHWH your God” – here’s how you dismember – “failing to observe His commands, His laws and His decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise” – here’s what you’re going to think – this is disremember, not remember – “Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and your flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart” – there’s that word again – “in your heart you will become proud and you will forget YHWH your God.” You’re going to forget all the lessons that you’ve learned in the desert about loving discipline.

That’s why Moses is saying, *This is your future. You have to be exceptionally careful here. Because the Father’s love was sent to you to help you become grateful and humble so that you would be obedient so He could bless you. But if you forget, you’re going to become proud and arrogant. And the prosperity itself will bump you. It’s going to be the prosperity that bumps you, and evil will spill out.*

The reason there’s somewhat of a panic in Moses’ voice here – I hope you can kind of hear it – *Don’t mess this up! Don’t dismember this! Remember YHWH and His father’s love for you* -- it goes all the way back to Moses’ day, saying that for every thousand men that can handle

failure there is only one that can handle prosperity. In other words, *You guys didn't do very well in the desert. And because of that, you're not going to do well when you get money and when you have wealth.* And so, there's something about success that contaminates a soul.

There was a strange article that was written at the very end of the 1980's, in 1989 or 1990, from a New York publication called *The Village Voice*. It was about how the author knew three really big celebrities when they weren't celebrities. And she was grieving what happened to their heart. And she has no walk with God, I assure you. But here's what she writes about them. She said, "I pity these celebrities. No, I really do." And she names them. "They were once perfectly pleasant human beings. But now their wrath is awful. I think when God wants to play a really rotten practical joke on someone he grants them their deepest wish. Then he laughs merrily as they realize they want to kill themselves. These three people wanted fame. And they worked and they pushed and the morning after they became so famous they wanted to take an overdose and die." The last sentence says, "The disillusionment turned them into howling and insufferable people."

They could handle the grind of becoming great actors, but once they became famous, it crushed them. Because what bumped them spilled out.

### **Deuteronomy 8:13-15**

**... your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget YHWH your God: who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>15</sup> He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions He brought you water out of hard rock.**

This is how you can dismember. This is the passage here. In verses 14 and 15 he says, "Your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, and your heart will become proud and you will forget YHWH your God." Here's what you forgot, this is the part you separated in your disremembering. You forgot this: "Who brought you out of Egypt" – He brought you "out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness." He protected you there. Look what it says: "... that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and

scorpions. He brought you water out of a hard rock.” All the dangers, all the needs for sustenance – He provided all that. You dismembered that from your storyline.

### **Deuteronomy 8:16-17**

**He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. <sup>17</sup> Otherwise: you may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”**

And then verse 16 and 17: “He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness” – remember, again he has to explain this. It was such a great thing. How else can you feed so many people? “He gave you manna, something your ancestors had never known, to humble you and test you so that in the end it would be good with you.” He’s building grit in your life. He’s making you like Christ in all of life. “Otherwise you’re going to say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’”

If you feel like he’s being repetitious, it’s because he’s being repetitious. And if you feel like I’m being repetitious, it’s because he’s being repetitious. Moses is screaming at us from his grave. And he’s saying, *I know how this ends. I know what your future looks like. I can tell you your future right now.* Here’s what it looks like: what you’re filled with spills out when you get bumped. What is that? God, because He loves you like a father, is disciplining you because He is trying to purify that filth that spills out, so that you would be humble and grateful, so that, in that gratitude, you would be obedient. And in that obedience, you would be blessed. You’ve got to remember the Father’s love is what’s motivating all of this.

### **Deuteronomy 8:18**

**But remember YHWH 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.**

In verse 18, look what it says – repetition again: “But remember YHWH 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.” That’s what God does, because God is a father, He’s a loving father who disciplines His children. He has a wilderness for every one of His children, because it’s in the wilderness where we get bumped. That’s where we find out what’s inside of our hearts, so that we can replace what’s inside of our hearts with the knowledge, the fullness, the knowing, that God’s our father and He disciplines us in love. God loves all of His children and He sends them to the wilderness so that He might make them like Christ in all of life.

Need proof? Jesus was baptized and the Spirit came upon Him and said, “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased. Now go to the wilderness for forty days, no food, to be tempted. It says in Hebrews that Jesus learned obedience through suffering. Jesus, the literal Son of God, was loved by God and pronounced that love and then sentenced to the wilderness. If He’ll do it for Jesus, He’ll do it for us. We need to remember, though – we need to put it together that it’s the love of God that disciplines us.

### **Application for Remembering**

How do you remember your wilderness? I thought we’d end today with how we do this. How do I maybe rewrite my history so that I can remember instead of dismember it? Here’s some things that we’ve done at our house. I just thought it would be helpful. And I have a homework assignment.

Melinda does this – she journals. Once a year – this is called our Christmas book [Matt holds up a red book] – she has thirty-five years of this. We’ve been married thirty-five years. Thirty-five pages where she goes through and writes a quick summary of all the things that God had done in that one year, the way He provided and the way He protected. I was going to put a picture up here of one of them, because I remember the way He provided one year. Our first year of marriage at Christmas, we didn’t have a Christmas tree. And then somebody gave us a Christmas tree. It was used, but it was great.

Me, I collect stuff. When I’m living my life, I grab things that remind me of God’s provision and protection during difficult times so that I’ll always remember it’s the loving Father that did that, that was working in my life. This one is sentimental to me. Back in the day I always had to carry a calendar before mobile phones. And one year, 1983, I was so broke that I didn’t have a calendar. I have to have a calendar. I was in graduate school and I had to know when

homework assignments were happening and when everything else was going on in my life. I had to have a calendar. And I woke up that morning and I was so desperate. I said, “Dear God, I just need a calendar. Show yourself to be God – give me a calendar.”

I had to go to the registrar’s office and the registrar had this [Matt holds up a 5” x 7” bound calendar] sitting on the corner of their desk. And it was a gift from a bank or something. And they said, “Hey, do you want that calendar? I’m not going to use it.” I started crying in the registrar’s office. “Yeah, I want that calendar.” God provided. I didn’t have enough money to buy a calendar and He gave me that.

I have this. This is Pinocchio. [Matt holds up a small figurine of Pinocchio.] And I have this to remind me that my pirate days were beyond naïve; they were foolish and even spiteful towards God. And if you’ve read the real story of Pinocchio, the cost that he inflicted on Geppetto and everyone else that tried to love him is painful. And through a miracle of grace Pinocchio becomes a real boy. And I just have this in my office to remind me that God has made me into a real man, as a gift of grace.

And then this [Matt holds up a small metal car part] – there’s a long story that goes with this. This is called a constant velocity joint. It’s a ball bearing set. It’s solid steel. And I had to replace it in the middle of the Mojave Desert from 3:00 am to 6:30 am one morning because it went out on me. And it went out on me because there’s a boot that goes around it, a rubber boot that keeps the oil in here and keeps the gear safe, the bearing safe. And the boot tore. And I knew the boot tore and didn’t care. Because what could happen – a little sand get in there?

Well, a little sand did get in there. And all it took was a little sand and it ruined that solid steel bearing set. And boy, did I have to pay to fix that. And that sits on my desk. I don’t have very many things in my office, but that sits there because I have seen men of what looks like forged steel in their character, and they let a little something get in there and it destroyed them. Sometimes it was pride, sometimes it was passion. Sometimes it was a need for justice. Whatever it might have been, but you could see it, and it started small and it became something that unraveled them. They dismembered their background. They forgot that God is a loving God and He has a father’s love with discipline. And they thought that their success in life, all these men that I have in mind and a couple of women, they became successful. And those little things, those things that were once vices, are now habits. And they practiced them and it wrecked them.

And these men and women were stronger men than I ever hoped to be. And so, I just remind myself. I try to remember things like that.

Here's another way to remember it. And here's our assignment for this week. The Lord knows we forget, and so we have communion to help us remember. "Whenever you take this bread and this cup, do this in remembrance of me." Remember. We didn't get through the Red Sea, we weren't saved from Egypt. We were saved from ourselves. We were saved from the consequences of sin. We were saved from our own bent and demented souls. And so, we have a lot to be grateful for and to be humble about, so that would lead to obedience, and that obedience would lead to blessing and becoming like Christ in all of life.

So, this is what I want us to do this week in your times together. You can do it over the screens or you can do it in your living room. But do this. As a family, if you're in a family, or with friends, take the bread and talk. Kind of remember. Maybe take something that's dismembered in your background and remember some time in your life when the Lord disciplined you and had you in the desert. Maybe tell a story about getting bumped and when you were tested. It showed an attribute that needed to be dealt with, and how God did deal with that because He loves you like a father loves a son, with disciplining love. Tell that story and then take the bread together. Everybody gets to tell that story, some kind of story in their life.

And then, before you take the cup, tell a story about God's prosperity. Tell about a time when God was able because He helped you become more like Christ in all of life, was able to bring you to some expression of the promised land, whatever that might be. It could have been that you got a boyfriend or a promotion or a better job or whatever. Right? It's how God blessed you and remember how the desert helped you in the promised land. Tell a story together as family and friends, bragging about this: this is the key. This will tell you what your future holds for you. Remember this – in your heart that YHWH God is your father and He disciplines you like a loving father will discipline a son. Know that in your heart. And your future will be blessed. Let's pray for that remembering, okay?

*Lord Jesus, I do ask that when we dismember our past that Your Spirit would cause us to remember it, whether we thought something bad was not bad or something good was not good, that you would give us context in that memory so that we would be reminded of Your love and Your goodness. Lord, I'd ask that You would help maybe some people that are listening right now to take a wilderness experience in their life and maybe reexperience it now with a fuller*

*knowledge of this heartfelt belief and conviction that it was the love of the Father discipline that allowed us to experience that wilderness.*

*Lord, I'd ask that not just in our past, but in our present, would You help us see how You are providing and protecting us, even this very day? Maybe not lavishly, maybe just water out of rocks and manna on the day, but it's still You. Help us become grateful and humble so that it would make it easy for us to obey You, so that we would bless You and be blessed.*

*Lord, I'd ask that You would bless this church in this way, that when we think about our church, we remember how You've blessed us, that we might be grateful, overflowing with gratitude and generosity, so that we might be a blessing to other people. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Hey, Grace, we have a celebration to enjoy, and we can't because we're spread out. I want to tell you in person, but I'll have to do it this way. This week, April 1, actually, we celebrate Ray Anderson, who has been with Grace Covenant Church for twenty-five years. Twenty-five years this congregation has been blessed by that man of God being used by God. And because of our love for him, the leadership decided to give Ray Anderson a gift of \$250,000 dollars, signed "Grace Covenant Church, anniversary." With an asterisk ... it says ... oh, there's the asterisk – "Must be present to collect." So, Ray, come on up here, Ray. Get your check. Ray? Diana? Must be present to collect. Well, that's regrettable. But we can still celebrate. If you know Ray's e-mail or his phone number, give him a call. Thank him for being such a humble, willing, and courageous man of God that has been used for his whole adult life, but in the last twenty-five years, right here at Grace Covenant Church. So, thank you, Ray. I love you. See you guys next week, Resurrection Sunday.