

The Heart of Worship: Remembrance
Psalm 78:4-7
Sunday, February 1, 2026

Good Morning Connection Family! It is so nice to be back together in person for worship this week! We are so grateful to the team and the technology that made last week possible, but we are even more grateful to be back here worshipping together!

For the past few weeks, we've been in this series all about getting back to the heart of worship. I don't know about you but for me, it's been refreshing, hasn't it? We've talked about what worship is and what it is not. We've gotten to experience worship in some new ways this series too. So far, we've focused on the heart of worship being Holiness, Presence, and Glory.

Today, we're talking about another aspect of worship that is so important to remember. And that's exactly what we're talking about. The heart of worship is Remembrance.

Let's pray.

How good is your memory? Would you say it's pretty good? Pretty bad? Somewhere in the middle?

Google says that the average human brain's memory capacity is roughly about **2.5 petabytes, or 2.5 million gigabytes** of information. If you have NO idea what that means, like me, this is the equivalent of about 3 million hours of TV shows, or to throw it back real old school, about **1.8 million floppy disks** worth of information. That is a LOT of memory!

But we all know that memory is not as simple as just how much information it can hold. Memories are hard to truly quantify because they are complex and many dynamics often complicate our memories like feelings, smells, lack of sleep, certain sounds, preconceived ideas, our brain's ability to reconstruct memories and so much more.

For example, I have so many memories of going to the beach as a kid. My parents would take my brother and I every summer to the old Blue Surf Motel right on the boardwalk in Bethany Beach. And nothing transports me back there faster than when I

smell fresh tar on a black top. One summer, they must have been repaving there behind our motel because my brain smelled that smell one summer while we were there. And now EVERY TIME I smell it, no matter where I am, I'm 4 years old again at the beach with my family.

Of course, there are things we can do that improve our memory like sleeping well, managing our stress effectively, eating or not eating certain foods and keeping our minds active. Likewise, there are things that can negatively affect our memory and make it worse like physical trauma, abuse, or drug and alcohol use.

Additionally, because our brains take in so much information daily, even more than we realize we are taking in, our brains systemically work to focus on the necessary and forget the unimportant so we don't experience mental overload.

Our memories are wild!

So how do we make sure our hearts and minds remember the right things? How do we intentionally train them to be in tune with God and His will for our lives? How do we remember all the good that God has done and use it as an act of worship?

Psalm 77:11-12 says,

"I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."

How? How do we do this? How did the people of the Old Testament remember? What visible, tangible sign did they have to remind them of God's faithfulness time and time again?

One word: Altars. They built altars.

Altars were built often in the days we read about in the Old Testament and they served several purposes in the bible. Altars were used as indicators of worship, thanksgiving, places of memorial, prayer and dedication to God. They were reminders of times God had delivered his people and the power that He had to do so. The word altar is mentioned over 400 times in the Bible, with over 370 of them found in the Old Testament alone.

Maybe some of these sound familiar-

Noah: **Genesis 8:20 & 21-**

"...Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹ The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "...never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."

Abraham alone constructed many altars in his lifetime, and 4 of them were pretty distinct ones at pivotal times in his life- one of the most memorable being on Mount Moriah where he had prepared his own son, Isaac, to be the sacrifice before God intervened: **Genesis 22:13 & 14-**

"Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

And, if your memory can work this far back, remember David's first sermon on First Steps, back in July when he preached on the Israelites crossing the Jordan River? Do you remember what they did in that story? Do you remember what we did?

Joshua 4:5-7-

"Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."

We did the same with an object lesson that Sunday and we took our small stones, brought them forward and placed them in a wooden box that is still in the lobby, serving as a reminder for both that message and for the amazing work that God has done and is doing here in and through our church.

The altars that were created in the Old Testament served as memorials for their people, where their children and generations to come could look back and say, “Wow, God did that, right here, wow!”

God’s people understood the importance of remembering. And what’s more, they understood the importance of passing it on and teaching the incoming generations about God and His faithfulness.

The psalmist beautifully writes it this way:

“We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds.”

Psalm 78:4-7

Do we understand and appreciate this idea of remembrance today? Do we grasp just how important it is to pass it down and impart it on the next generation?

In our fast moving, ever changing and impatient culture, I think we’ve generally lost this. If something breaks, we throw it away. If someone isn’t moving fast enough, we become easily annoyed. If we run out of something, we just go out and buy more of it. Rarely are things saved, or treasured, or kept for very long.

There’s a term now “planned obsolescence”, that refers to the practice of products being designed to break quickly or become obsolete in the near future. Of course this is mostly to encourage the sale of new products and upgrades so that companies can make more off of us.

But I think that this idea of planned obsolescence actually applies to more than just the products we use. I think it also applies to the era we are living in.

We are living in a time when if we don’t make it a point to be intentional with our faith, it will soon be forgotten, and lost amongst the noise of the next new thing.

How can we remember what God has done for us if we don't have places of remembrance, altars of our own?

And how will our future generations remember if we do not teach and guide them? How can we leave behind something for them to look to and remember?

I want you to pause right now, and think back over your life. Think about all of the times that God has pulled you through something. A time when He made a way where there seemed to be no way. When He came through and provided for you when no one else did. Maybe a time where He took something ugly and horrible in your life and turned it around to something beautiful and holy. This could be anything, from the smallest, most trivial thing, to a major life changing moment. Think about it.

We can make altars of our own today. We can create places in our minds, in our bibles, in our journals that can serve as altars to what God has done for us. Each time we remember and we share our story of what God has done for us, it grows a little bit more and we remember it a little bit clearer. And it makes it easier to tell, and to pass it on, to share with others what God has done and how we've seen and experienced His faithfulness in our lives.

One of the biggest tools we can use to aid us in remembrance is gratitude. By simply looking back at everything God has done and being thankful for it. And then the next time a hard time comes, we can look back at the last hard time, when we were thankful and God brought us through. These altars of gratitude give us hope and courage, and allow us to see that anything is possible with Jesus.

My small group just started a new study series by pastor and author Craig Groeschel, and he's done some amazing research on the brain and applying it to our faith walk with Jesus by using his findings to help make changes in our brains.

In his one message, **The Power of Memory**, he talks about living in what he calls-**Active Remembrance-** defined as **"times when we can recall specific moments of God's goodness to help us build courage and give us peace in difficult times."**

He also notes that we can use this as “fuel for the soul” when we realize that our memories can be “a tool to shift focus from present, uncontrollable, or negative circumstances to God’s proven faithfulness.”

WOW.

How much could our current outlook change with these thoughts? How different could we look at and experience these current challenging times with this fresh perspective? What altar could we start creating now to remember God’s faithfulness, even as it is currently working in our lives?

There’s a lot of reasons why the Bible is a really cool book. But one of my favorite things about the Bible is that it really is one big love story. A love story between a good, loving father and His children. When you zoom out and put all the parts together, you can fully see this love story all played out.

Because the altars early in the Old Testament became the Tabernacle, the holy dwelling place of God that His people moved and journeyed with from desert, to promised land.

And then later, the Tabernacle became the permanent structure of the Temple, which King Solomon was commissioned to build to create a permanent place for God’s presence to abide.

But when we cross into the New Testament, we see Jesus sacrificing Himself for you and me on the ultimate altar, the cross. And here, this progression reaches its fulfillment. You and I become the “living temple”, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We become the new temple where the Holy Spirit dwells within US.

Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 6:16-

“...For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’”.

Likewise, 1 Peter 2:5 says-

“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

When we tell the stories and testify to what God has done in us and for us, we're building altars for others to see. We're teaching and guiding the next generation, so that they may know and see the faithfulness of God.

You know, when I was growing up, and I would go to camps and retreats or be in classes at a Christian college, often people would ask to hear my testimony, for me to share my story. And when I was younger, I would be ashamed and I would say things like "you don't wanna hear MY testimony" and "my testimony is boring". I used to truly think because I had been raised in a Christian home and been brought up in a loving family with no major problems that this was true. People didn't want to hear that. People wanted to hear exciting testimonies about being rescued from prison, addiction, and spiritual warfare, and my story didn't have any of those elements.

But then something happened, and I realized that THAT was my testimony. My story is one of God's faithfulness and goodness. And that my whole life, He has been there guiding me and loving me as I've strived to follow Him and love Him more. And that's not boring, that's beautiful, and I'm so blessed!

The song **Goodness of God by Jenn Johnson** is one that I just identify with so well, and it's the first song I've heard in a long time that really speaks to stories like mine- **"All my life you have been faithful. All my life you have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able, I will sing, of the goodness of God."**

When we come together as the body of Christ in times of worship, it's a powerful time of all of us coming together with our altars, remembering what God has done and bringing the gratitude collectively to God. How amazing and beautiful is that?!

So how are you creating altars of remembrance in your life? How are you remembering God's faithfulness and being thankful for all that He had done for you? How are you singing about the goodness of God in your life?

You know, before written texts, oral tradition was the primary means of communication for biblical knowledge to spread and many people couldn't read. Many stories now recorded in the bible were told and retold for years or decades before being recorded.

We have the bible today because people talked and shared and spread the story to others.

So, just as importantly as remembering, WHO are you telling?

Let's pray.

When ever we talk about remembering what God has done, I so clearly hear the verse saying, "Do this in remembrance of me..."

And that's exactly what we have the opportunity to do together today. We get to come together at the Lord's table to remember what He did for us on the cross, through celebrating the sacrament of communion.