

Remember

Fresh Start Podcast Transcription

FreshStartforallNations.org/resource/podcast-remember/

The message today is entitled "Remember." Let's read a selection of that passage that I have highlighted in the title and then we're going to pray. *For I know [perceive and have knowledge of, and am acquainted with] Him whom I have believed [adhered to, entrusted in, relied on] and I am positively persuaded that He is able to guard and keep that which He has been entrusted to me and which I have committed to Him until that day.* Remember. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for this opportunity that we can gather. Thank You for the creative worship team that put together the worship set today in a very creative way. Bless Justin [inaudible], bless Steve Shirley, bless Larry [inaudible] and others that were a part of putting that together. Lord, we just didn't skip a beat, Lord. We're looking forward to Ben and so grateful to have Ben and Katherine in our midst now. Looking forward to Ben leading us in worship next week and in the weeks to come and in the years to come, we pray. So, Lord, we open our hearts to You and we are totally confident that you will open Your heart to us and speak to our hearts in many wonderful and profound ways today. From Your word, by Your Spirit, with no limitation. We're the ones that limit things, but there's no limitation with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

I want to start with a story this morning that I think will kind of set the tone for this message. As you know, or some of you know, we recently were in Africa in the month of May and June. We went to Botswana and then to Capetown. While in Capetown, we had a wonderful opportunity to minister to a woman who was really distressed over the loss of her grandchild. That would be understandable, the death of her grandchild who was either 12 or 13, right in there. It was a tragic loss for sure. So, she wanted to talk about this, so the Fresh Start team and myself met with her, sat down with her, listened and cared for her heart for over an hour.

During the course of that time, listening and caring, some questions started coming to my mind in terms of how she was feeling about this. She was very devastated about the loss of her granddaughter. She said her granddaughter was a wonderful young Christian woman, loved Jesus, obedient to her parents, just a wonderful example and an influence to her peers, so many positives. So, that was very devastating and distressing. But, it also bothered her

that her son and the mother of her granddaughter, her daughter in law, were not getting along. That was part of the grief and the loss. She also was bothered by the perspective and belief that this death could have been avoided. Though the granddaughter did have some health issues, she believed—however premised, in her opinion—the mother was negligent, so it could have been avoided. You know how that is, that just compounds the grief. The death, the loss is bad enough. But when you think it could have been avoided, that just compounds it even more. So, I was listening and caring and asking her questions and seeking to build a bridge to her heart during the course of our conversation. But, then I began to ask the questions such as, (her name is Suzie)

“Suzie what do you think bothers you the most about this situation? The death of your granddaughter, or how it affected your son?” Because she went on to say it really had been a catalyst for her son to turn away from the Lord, so she was upset with her daughter in law, she was upset that she had lost her granddaughter, and she was upset that her son had not responded well to this death, this loss, and had basically turned away from the Lord. So, I said, “When you consider all of those scenarios, which one bothers you the most?”

And she said, “Well, I know my granddaughter is in Heaven. It was a devastating loss, but I know she’s in Heaven, so that gives me great peace. I think I’m bothered most about how it’s affecting my son.”

So, I asked more questions and one of those questions was, I said, “Please, don’t misunderstand my question,” keep in mind that we had had many moments; I’m just giving you the highlights, the big pieces. I asked her, “Why does it bother you? Why does it really bother you, in terms of how this is affecting your son?”

She said, “Well, I want him to go to Heaven! I don’t want him to go to Hell. I’m going to Heaven some day and I want him to be there with me!”

I said, “That’s understandable that you would want him to go to Heaven. Tell me more.” She would tell me more and elaborate on that, and then I said, “Please don’t hit me, but why do you want him to go to Heaven?”

“Well, why not? I don’t want him to go to Hell for sure!” We’d gone on and had a dialogue of listening and caring, it was all very positive, all very engaging. She felt loved, she felt cared for.

Then I said, “Let’s go higher. Let’s go higher. I want your son to go to Heaven, too, but there’s something that I want more and the Lord wants more and He is deserving of. He deserves the worship of your son. How about we go higher, and instead of making it about your son and how he is responding, let’s make it about the Lord and what He is worthy of? He’s worthy of another worshiper. He’s worthy of the worship of your son. No matter what has happened,

no matter how he has initially responded. Let's make it more about the Lord and what He is worthy of. The Lamb is worthy of the reward of His suffering. This is all about the Lord."

The lightbulb came on and she realized what she had done. She had been operating so horizontally in her grief and loss and when she heard those words, that the Lamb is worthy of the reward of His suffering; that the Lamb is worthy of another worshiper. And that's what this is about; it's not about him escaping Hell, it's about the Lamb that's worthy of the reward of His suffering. He's worthy of His worship. He's worthy that your son would enter into the destiny that God made him for. It set her free. Just in the snap of a finger and the flash of a moment. It was a eureka moment. It was a lightbulb moment and she saw that she— the reason it gave her such relief is because it put her heart in position to receive the comfort that she wasn't receiving when she was focused on her son and her daughter in law and her granddaughter. She was receiving no comfort there, and "hope in hope" that he would go to Heaven, no comfort there. But when I proposed that we make it about Jesus and what He's worthy of, Boom! She was free.

Now, how common is that perspective in the church today? I said I was one of Pastor Murdoch's Timothys. That's one of the key things that I've learned since I've met Pastor and Nancy. From the word of God, from my life experience and opportunity to apply. Heaven and Hell matters, but it's all about the King. It's all about the Lamb and what He's worthy of. He's worthy of my worship and it's helped me realize as we go through this passage, and basically the theme of this passage is, there's going to be trials, there's going to be tribulations, there's going to be problems, there's going to be persecution. The tests are going to come. How are we responding? Are we passing the test?

We're going to see many things today and I hope and pray *remember* many things that are important today.

One thing to remember, before I even get into the outline, is, remember that the Lamb is worthy. It's about the Lamb. It's about the King. Just keep that in mind any time you're offended or any time you're tested or any time you're tempted. Oh, yeah, we tend to think it's horizontal. You know, this person was right or wrong and they owe me an apology, justice/injustice. All that may be true, but the truest thing is God is allowing it and He's got a purpose in it. What He wants is ultimately for us to go vertical and worship the King. It's about the Lamb. It's between you and Him, at the core. It's never between you and the other person and the circumstances, first and foremost. It's between you and Him, at the core.

So, let's move forward with that. Remember to stir up the gift that is in you. Verse 6: *that is why I would remind you to stir up, to rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning the gracious gift of God. The inner fire that is in you, by means of the laying on of my hands.* Remember that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today. They're all for today. Some of them didn't cease way back when. They are all for today and we need them. We vitally need the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I can remember back in 1977, Ron Colly High School, Sunday nights we started driving from Fremont to attend Sunday evening worship services with Trinity Church Interdenominational. Mindy and I and the boys (Joy wasn't born yet) 1977. You know what they did when we were there? Somebody spoke in tongues! What is that? But, then there was an interpretation and Pastor was so good about explaining what was going on, so for those of us it was all new to—I mean, I was a believer, I came to saving faith in 1974, but a fairly new believer—it was like, what is this? So, there was a lot of things going on that were totally new. The worship was new, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the form of speaking in tongues with interpretation, words of prophecy. It was like, whoa, this open worship thing, what is this? That was new. But, it didn't blow me away. It intrigued me. It drew me, because there was something else that was true. I know now what to call it: the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit. I mean, He's always present, but He manifests His presence in more distinct ways at times and on those Sunday evening gatherings, those were definitely times where the Holy Spirit was manifesting His presence and there's nothing more seeker-friendly, by the way, than the presence of the Holy Spirit. It drew us. Some Sundays, not trying to impress anybody, but we were so hungry for what we were beginning to receive, some Sundays we would drive 100 miles on the road back and forth. We'd drive it in the morning, drive back. Drive back for Sunday night, drive back. 50 miles round trip times 2. Some Sundays 100 miles and didn't think anything of it. We'd sing songs that we were learning back and forth on the road. It was a wonderful time. It was a wonderful season. I *remember* it well. [laughter] It made a divine impression.

But, you know, there's something else that's true. Character matters. Integrity matters. And, I've noticed another thing as I've gone on and grown on in the Lord is that what we tend to do ("we" meaning whomever, not thinking of anybody in particular—churches, businesses, organizations) what we tend to do—observably, not always—is elevate somebody who has a strong speaking gift or strong gifts of different kinds, we tend to elevate them maybe in a way that they're not ready for because they don't have the character to hold it. So, the Lord showed me early on, the gifts of the Holy Spirit matter. They're all for today. I'm desperate for

Him. I'm desperate for any gift that He wants to give me and His life in me makes that possible, but I never want any gift He gives me to go further, to be more pronounced, to be more obvious than character. –The character of my life.

Pastor Murdoch—a Paul to me, I'm one of his Timothys—he was a man, he was (and *is*, I should say, but I'm remembering; in the *remember* context) I remember how he cultivated a culture at Trinity that was a servant leadership culture. I mean, he would obey the Lord no matter what the cost. He was very teachable. I sat in board meetings where we didn't always agree. Most of the time we did, but sometimes we didn't. He didn't try to manipulate. Some things were really hard for him when the vote didn't go how he thought it should or would, but he didn't play the God card, "Well, God told me and God said you'll be doomed and damned if you don't," no, no, no, he didn't manipulate. He submitted. He was and is a man under absolute authority and delegated authority. That's character. He's one of the most gifted men I know, yet he's a pastor. He's still a pastor. He may not have the position or the title now but, as far as Mindy and I are concerned, and Mindy and I have talked about it, as long as he is alive, he's our pastor. So, a man of character, but a man that's gifted.

Now, I'll let you connect the dots of people that you've known along the way of people that were very gifted, but maybe didn't have the commensurate character. They become very dangerous people, don't they? Among other things. They hurt a lot of people, among other things. So, remember, all the gifts of today are for today, but remember something else: Character matters! Integrity matters. Maturity matters. And remember, there is a cost. Be ready to suffer.

Verse 8 out of this section of scripture that I've highlighted from 2 Timothy 6-14, verse 8, another word from Paul to Timothy: *Take your share of the suffering to which the preaching of the gospel may expose you and do it in the power of God.* I believe that holiness is God's goal for us, not happiness. Now, one translation does say, "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord." Well, if God is your Lord, you put yourself in a position to be happy, but happiness isn't God's goal, holiness is God's goal. What does that mean? It means you don't belong to yourself, you belong to him. You've submitted to Him and you want your life to be a reflection of His life. You want to bring glory to His name. You know, it seems to be—you may not like to hear this, but I'm reminding you—that often, for that kind of phenomenon to take place, it involves suffering. If you want to be happy, we tend to be outcome-based. Results-oriented. I like results. I like to get things done, but I've learned to hold loosely those results or those outcomes and make Him the goal. More of Him the goal, surrender, making

Him more of the goal. For Himself, Christ for Himself. Not for any particular outcome, not for any particular benefit, not so that I'll be happy, but that He will be glorified and others will be blessed. Whether I know they are or not, because it's all about Him.

But, the path to holiness seems to almost always involve some type of suffering. It might be the suffering of persecution, it might be the suffering of something else. A loss of some kind, an offense, a betrayal of some kind. But, remember, to stir up the gift that's in you. All the gifts are for today. If you don't know what gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit God has given you, get with somebody and seek that out and excavate and plow and enter into what God has for you. Not for your benefit. Not so people will think you're the hero or something special, but for His benefit! Just like Pastor Murdoch would say again and again over the years, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not the toys, but the tools of God. So, nothing to take lightly but to take very seriously. After all, it's His gift manifest in that way. So, do you know what gifts He's given you. You may think, I don't know. Well, that's curable. We can find out. Fan it into flame. Fan it into flame. You may think, well, I'm kind of afraid to exercise it. Well, stir it up. Stir it up, exercise it. Maybe in a small group. Maybe one on one, but exercise that gift, develop that gift and God will bless that willingness and that risk taking and that humility, because it's all about Him. It's not about how you look. Because if we're going to be all in for God, it's going to involve risks, it's going to involve sacrifice and it's going to cost us something. It might even cost us our reputation, so to speak, or your perception of what people think of you, and it may not be favorable or you may be willing to be of no reputation. Jesus was! Philippians the second chapter, starting with verse 5 and the verses following, the New King James version speaks of that, *he was willing to be of no reputation*. Are you? That's humility if you are. So, remember to stir up the gift that is in you. Remember there is a cost, be ready to suffer. And remember, Jesus paid the price so that you could live a life set apart.

Verse 9. Let's take a look at verse 9, 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 9: *for it is He who delivered and saved us and called us with a calling in himself*. Holy and leading to holiness, that is to a life of consecration, a vocation of holiness. He did it not because of any merit that we have done, but because of and to further his own purpose in grace, in other words, unmerited favor which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. So, again, it's not about us. It's not about earning it. Jesus paid the price. I believe that our life is not our own. We've been bought with a price.

So, here's the question: Are we living to love and living to give, or are we still giving to get? Do we still have ulterior motives? Are we really in touch with what we've really received? I

think of Luke the seventh chapter, that part where Simon the pharisee invites Jesus over and he's a pharisee so they believe that obeying the law is the way to salvation, so isn't that ironic, he believes the law is the way and then an uninvited sinful woman, a notorious sinful woman, Simon Peter knew her, Jesus knew her, and here she was uninvited, but she wasn't cowering down looking shame-ridden and all of that, she was captivated by the love, the grace that was radiating from Jesus. She wasn't thinking about, I need to forgive myself, I'm so ashamed, I'm hopeless, I'm doomed, I'm damned, give me a morsel, give me a crumb. No, she was captivated by His love and she was already extravagantly reflecting back to Him what she was sensing from Him in the way of kissing his feet, washing His feet with her tears and perfume that she probably couldn't afford. So, it was interesting. Here's the cast of characters that I see: Simon the pharisee, as a pharisee believes that the law is the way, the sinful woman had gone astray and right in the midst Jesus Who is the Way. She knew it. Simon the pharisee didn't. Even before she heard the words, "Your sins are forgiven," and of course that got a little reaction out of the crowd: "Who is this that forgives sins?!" She was already captivated by His love. She was captivated by grace. Truth and grace. It's both, or it's neither. True truth includes grace or it's not truth. So, it reminds me of what God has taught me.

As another example of me being one of Pastor Murdoch's Timothy's, early in the Trinity days, I was a truth guy for sure. But, I kind of was developing a reputation of being a Mack truck of truth. I had to learn to build bridges, so Pastor Murdoch came to me, Paul to Timothy, so to speak, one of his Timothy's, and he said, "Steve, you're going to help a lot of people. But, you're going to help a lot more if you learn to build bridges." Boom. I did. I took it to heart.

So, going back to where I started this morning, in Capetown. I built a 45-minute bridge. A 45-minute bridge of grace. Love and acceptance. Caring and loving and listening and caring, before I called Suzie up to the ultimate truth of Christ for Himself. I didn't start with that. If I would have started with that, it would have been a disconnect, probably. I've learned to build bridges of grace over which the truth can travel. So, when Mindy and I meet with a couple for premarital counseling, sometimes they don't know the Lord initially. But, we start with their hearts and we invite them into God's design. You know, they might be living together, they might be having intimacy together outside of marriage. I invite them into God's design. I don't lead with, "Shame on you, how could you do such a thing. Don't you know that's sin?" It is. It is, but I don't say it that way. I listen, I care, I build a bridge of grace. Something none of us deserve. So, I think the more we are in touch with what God has done for us and what we don't deserve, I think the more our hearts are ignited and filled with love. Just like the sinful

woman in Luke the seventh chapter. She was ignited with love, she was captivated by His love and she reflected it back. Grace, she responded to grace, but she responded to the truth integrity of Who He is and Who He was and is.

There's a price. Stir up the gift that is in you. Remember. There's a cost. Be ready to suffer. Remember. Remember, Jesus paid the price so that you could live a life set apart for Him. And remember, know in Whom you have believed. He is able. Verse 12: *and this is why I'm suffering as I do. Still, I am not ashamed. For I know (perceive and have knowledge of and am acquainted with) Him Whom I have believed (adhered to, entrusted in, relied upon) and am positively persuaded that He is able to guard and keep that which has been entrusted to me and which I have committed to Him until that day.* In other words, until He comes again. What am I doing? What are you doing with what's been done for you and for me? What are we doing with what's been entrusted to us?

Speaking for myself, I love much because I have been forgiven much. I'm convinced. I'm convinced. I've connected the dots. The reason why I love people so much and love Jesus so much is that I've been forgiven so much. That's the theme of Luke the seventh chapter: He or she that's been forgiven much, loves much. Assuming they know the "much" and I am all in. Woe to me if I invest in men and women and young people, seeing them forgiven forgiving and free, because I have experienced it and I want to give it away. So, my confidence is in Him.

Remember something else: The truth matters. Guard what has been entrusted to you. Verses 13 and 14: *Hold fast and follow the pattern of wholesome and sound teaching which you have heard from me in all the faith and love which are for us in Christ Jesus. Guard and keep with greatest care the precious and excellently adapted truth which has been entrusted to you by the help of the Holy Spirit who makes his home in us.* I love that. Truth without grace isn't truth. It's both grace and truth or it's neither. Have you become a bridge builder? Building a bridge of grace over which the truth can travel? I think one of our strengths of All Nations Church, individually and corporately, our critical mass, is we're into the truth. We value the truth. I think that is largely, if not primarily, the influence for years of Pastor and Nancy Murdoch. I mean, we're spreading the fire together now, but as a Timothy, the truth matters. The accuracy of it matters. But, not as an end in and of itself, but truth applied.

I really appreciate something that Ben Fisher said, and you'll be seeing and knowing and loving Ben and Katherine more and more in the weeks ahead. When we interviewed them

before they said yes to our call to come on staff, he used a different word that really resonated with me, that really captured this grace and truth message. This living the truth message. He used the word "embodied" and I think that's it. Are we embodying the truth? You know, it's one thing to have a Bible study up here with Ross Hindman or Pastor Murdoch or whomever, but what's the goal? Yes, we want it to be accurate, we want to know it. But, do we care just as much, are we just as passionate about living it and having it be a lifestyle and embodying it? Because I believe if that's true, then what's going to happen is we're going to grow as a church in ways that we can't even imagine. Because we've got the truth, but are we bridge builders as well? So, as we build bridges, and I'm not saying anybody is failing. I'm not criticizing anybody, and I'm not saying— you know, we're all different, so just please take this in a positive way. As we are just as excited about loving people and building a bridge of grace over which the truth travels, if we're just as excited about that, then the truth, the accuracy, the soundness of the truth, too, it's both ends. It's both. But, you know what, if you've really believed the message, if you've really made it your own, then you're going to live it anyway. As you live it, there's going to be grace and truth. Why do I know that? Jesus! He's our wonderful example. Look how He ministered when He was on planet earth. The woman caught in adultery. The law said she could have been stoned. He didn't pick up a stone and stone her. Going back to John the first chapter, the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. So, He lived it. And there was the perfect example with the woman caught in adultery, where the pharisees were ready to get her, but he had a challenge: the one who is without sin cast the first stone. Well, they all dropped their stones. They went away. *Woman, where are your accusers? Neither do I accuse you.* But, then the truth came in at the end: *Go and sin no more.* He didn't go soft on the truth. He didn't say it wasn't sin. It was sin. But how He handled it was a grace and truth application. A grace and truth embodiment.

And the sinful woman who I've already referred to from Luke the seventh chapter. Simon the Pharisee was already upset, even questioning the validity and viability of Jesus: "Doesn't He know who she is? I mean, she's a notorious and sinful woman! He ought to be just having nothing to do with her!" But, notice how Jesus responded to her. He didn't jump on the bandwagon of the pharisee, because He wasn't a pharisee. He embodied grace and truth.

We could go on and on with other examples. The Samaritan woman: He asked questions. He didn't accuse, He didn't declare. Even with the pharisees in the end, when He was being captured and beaten and eventually crucified, He was on a mission. He had nothing to prove. He was submitted to His father.

So, grace without truth isn't truth at all. Have we become bridge builders? Are we in touch with what He has done for us? Is there anything we need to remember, in the way of application, today? Is there anything we need to remember that we have forgotten and gotten away from? Is there anything we need to repent of? Is there anything we need to redirect?

Let me review the super points of Remember:

Remember to stir up the gift that is in you. If you don't know what that is, we need to make it our determined purpose to know Him and to know Who He is in us and how He wants to express Himself in us. Not to make it all about gifts, but to make it all about Him. Not just leave it with the gifts, but remember, if you don't have character and maturity, you're dangerous, anyway. There needs to be a marriage of maturity. A marriage of good character, solid character, and integrity, or the gifts can be a dangerous thing. But, remember to stir up the gift that is in you. They're all for today.

Remember there's a cost. Be ready to suffer. The biggest tests may be ahead of you. But, that's all part of the process of being conformed into His likeness. Because we're not victims, and even if we've been victimized, we still have responsibility. No matter how unjustly, how unfairly, no matter how much you've been betrayed. No matter what, no matter what, no matter what. It's always between you and Him at the core. What will you do with Him? Will you give Him the worship He deserves? Because the Lamb is worthy of the reward of His suffering. At the core, that's what it's about. It's not about somebody asking for forgiveness, it's not about somebody saying "I was wrong and I want to make it right." Oh, that might be good, that might be gravy, that might help and I'm not saying He wouldn't want that. But, do you have to have that, or is He enough? The Lamb is worthy of the reward of His suffering.

Remember, Jesus paid the price so that you could live a life. Remember, set apart for Him. Remember, know the One in Whom you have believed. He is able. That will help us. The more we know Him, the more we will know who we are in Him. You know, psychology is the study of man. You will never know who you are; you can take all the psychological tests in the world, you can have all of that kind of stuff, that's interesting stuff. But, the way to know who you are is to know Him because as you know Him more, you'll know what He thinks about you, you'll know what He says about you, you'll know what's true about you in Him because He is the Author and Finisher. He's the Definer and Refiner of us. Know Him. That will keep you from faith in faith, hope in hope, trust in trust, hanging on by a thread, hoping for the best. As opposed to your confidence being in Him. I know in Whom I have believed and He is able. Because I know Him. I know Him. I know Him and He is good all the time.

Remember the truth matters. Guard what has been trusted to you. But, if I was going to say anything, and it goes along with our present mission motto, "Outfitted for life, impacting your world," if you want to impact your world, we've got to be lovers. We've got to be wise. We've got to be embodiments. We have to embody this grace and truth, or we'll be very limited in the difference that we'll make. It doesn't start when we move into our new building at 178th and Pacific. It doesn't start then, it starts now. Are we salt and light now? Are we serving our city now? Are we investing in others now? Are we learning and growing and giving and loving and living to love and living to give and loving to love? It's all about Him. For Him. It makes all the difference.

So, as we close our time today, I'll leave it between you and the Lord to make the application. For you, maybe there is one of these points that is helpful to remember and renew. For others, you're thinking, "Whoa, you got me, Steve." I wasn't trying to get you, by the way, just so the Holy Spirit has His way. Just so He has His way. I'm not trying to find fault, I'm not trying to do anything except just be obedient to deliver what I believe He has put in my heart to give today as we remember. For some of us, what applies is remembering our roots. For some of us, it includes remembering our foundation. I'm speaking to myself, that applies to me. I want to live this, not just know it. Not just know about it. I want to live it and embody it.