

12-29-24 Hindsight: Looking Back to Move Forward

Week 1

Text: Deuteronomy 11:1–7, 18–20; 1 Samuel 7:12

Topic(s): Remember, Teaching Our Children, God’s Word, God’s Works, Ebenezer

Big Idea of the Message: God has given his people the joyful task of actively remembering what he has done for and through us; a chance to celebrate, give thanks, and teach our children.

Application Point: We have been changed in the past year by God’s grace, in both challenging and joyful ways; remembering these things will empower us to move into the future.

New year, new you. How many are making some changes in 2025? (In what ways?)

How many have sung the song, ‘Come though Fount of every Blessing’?

In the **2nd verse it says:** Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by thy help I’m come; and I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.

How many wondered what “Ebenezer” meant? (Scrooge)

In Hebrew the word ebenezer means **“stone of help.”** This raised stone was a reminder to the Israelites of what the Lord had done for them. This Ebenezer was a monument set to remember the great help that God granted the one raising the stone.

The word “hither” really means “so far”. The songwriter (Robert Robinson) looked back at where they had been, where they had come from, and realized that the Lord had been with them. They got to the place where they were, not by themselves, but because the Lord had brought them this far.

1 Samuel 7:7-12.

Samuel wanted the people to remember that day, the day that God fought for His people. So, Samuel took a stone, a single stone, and set it up where the army had won the battle. He called it Ebenezer, which means “stone of help”. It was meant to help people remember what God had done for them. Jacob built a memorial at Bethel (**Gen. 28:20-22**); Joshua set up 12 stones in the Jordan river (**Josh 4:9**); and more on the bank at Gilgal to mark the place where the waters opened, and Israel crossed into the promise land.

One of God’s names is Jehovah (Yahweh) Jireh, “the LORD will provide.”

As we close out the year 2024, we should reflect at all God has done on our behalf. We should remember all the things He has done and got us through. We should raise our Ebenezer as we look forward to 2025.

We need to be in constant reminder of what God has done for us. The book of Deuteronomy serves as a reminder of what God had done for the Jewish people. God had Moses write it down as a reminder for all of Israel. As believers, we can read it and find lessons to apply to our Christian journey.

We should reflect at where we have come from, what God has brought us through, take stock in the ways He has provided and lead us. Reflecting back can remind us that God will provide and is our stone of help.

Read Deuteronomy 11:1.

The word “**therefore**” is found 1,355 times in the NKJV of the Bible. When I read “therefore” I am reminded to slow down and ask, “What is the word therefore ‘there-for’?” What is its meaning? God has made a statement and then has drawn a conclusion based on what He just said or is about to say.

I like to think of it as a connecting word that I then insert, “For that (this) reason, or because of the statements prior I am to do something” then continue with God’s Word.

Turn back to **Deuteronomy 10:12-22**. Let’s start reading there.

Our Ebenezer stone should make us:

I. Remember all that God has already done.

- As human beings, our memories are limited. We tend to forget. Therefore, God, through His Word reminds us not to forget the wonderful things He has accomplished in our lives.
- I remember times when God stepped in to give guidance, provision & protection in my life.
- What about you? Do you remember when God provided for you?
- **Read Deuteronomy 11:2-7.**
- Moses was laying out all the God had done for the people of Israel.
- Brag, praise and let others know what God has done in your life personally.
- As we close out 2024, what has God done in your life, in the past year, in all the years prior?
- As you look at the stone I have given you, remember what He has done for you. What He did for you. How He worked in your life this past year.

A. Share with your children (others) all that God has done.

- So, how can we remember to remember how awesome, and great God is?
- Pass it on!
- **Deuteronomy 4:9**
- We must testify of what God has done and is doing in our lives.
- **Deuteronomy 6:1-9.**
- It is our responsibility to share from the Bible & the experiences God has taken us through, so that our children will understand that we believe in & worship a living God. We must not fail to share our faith with our children.
- The people of Israel moved into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. And as long as Joshua lived, the people who outlived him served the Lord & were faithful to Him.
- They were a generation who had seen the mighty works of God first-hand & had experienced God’s deliverance, provision, protection & healing. They also saw God’s awesome power on Mount Sinai.
- But after that generation & their children’s generation passed away, things changed drastically for the children of Israel.

And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. Judges 2:10

- It is our God given responsibility to share with our children and grandchildren all that God has done for us. It is not our responsibility to carry their faith and salvation.
- I tell my kids you didn't have to experience what I did growing up; God has broken that cycle.
- We must keep reminding them of where we would be without God and all the blessings that He has given us.
- Let the stone I gave remind you to share what God has done in your life with others.

B. Lead others to love God above all else. (Be an example)

- **Deuteronomy 6:5. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."**
- We ourselves are to love God so much that our children will realize this themselves. When we love God with all our heart, soul, mind & strength, our children should be drawn to follow in our footsteps & love God the same way.
- Prayerfully.
- Challenge them to stay after His way over their own. Don't be afraid to admit when you blew it.
- Let them see the love you have for God and others over yourself.
- Let the stone I gave you be a reminder in 2025 to continue to love God above all else.

C. Make sure we remove all idols out of our lives.

- **Deuteronomy 4:20, Deuteronomy 5:15-19.**
- So, God's purpose was clear. He told the Israelites that He was their God, & they were not to worship any other so-called gods.
- I believe that is what God want today as well. We are His people & He will not tolerate any other gods or idols in our lives. He desires to have top priority in our lives.
- Read **Deuteronomy 4:24, 25, 29-31.**
- Is there anything in your life currently that is taking priority over God? (Give me some examples)
- Let the stone I gave you serve as a reminder to remove any and all idols out of your life.

D. Give God the praise whether times are good or hard.

- **Deuteronomy 6:10-12.**
- This was a caution Moses gave to Israel. They were moving into the land of Canaan – a land of abundance that God was giving them & he knew what could happen.
- The Bible clearly tells us that every good & perfect gift comes from God. If we do not acknowledge this, we will be ungrateful people who have overlooked the Giver because we are obsessed with the gifts.
- First, remember the goodness of God & pass it on to our children.
- Second, our love for God must surpass everything else.

- Third, there should be no other gods or idols on the throne of our hearts.
- Fourth, when enjoying the blessings, we must never forget from whom we received them.

II. Reminds ourselves of where we would be apart from God.

- Not knowing God's commands, the people did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They were so absorbed with their good life that they forgot God. They even began to worship some of the idols of the nations around them.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. Judges 2:11-12

- So, the Lord handed them over to their enemies. Then in their distress they would cry out to God. The Lord heard their cries & raised up leaders for them.
- The leader would, with God's help, rescue them from their enemies. Peace would be restored, & they followed the Lord for a while, & then resumed their idolatry & evil practices. They went through this cycle time & time again!
- I wonder if we have fallen into a similar cycle, where we've become far too comfortable with all that God has given us?
- We've received so much from the Lord & have become so preoccupied with them that we have forgotten to give the Lord His rightful place in our lives & in our families.
- We may not be bowing down to idols, but there are other things that we have made into idols in our lives.
- The idolatry of greed - a constant desire to have more & more or bigger & better things.

"For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, & the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world." John 2:16

- God's Word is clear - He will not accept idolatry in any form. So, we really need to give God, (in our individual lives & in our families) the rightful place due Him.
- One generation or more of parents failed to love God the way they should & did not pass on their faith to their children. The consequence of this failure is that the next generations grew up with no desire for God in their lives.
- Moses gave us the remedy when we do forget or fall away from God. **(Deuteronomy 4:29-31)**

Conclusion

Let's rebuild our families, giving priority to worshiping God, reading the Bible, praying together, & not be content to make this a once-a-week ritual. Jesus should be the Head of our homes, & we must live a life of faith & obedience every day of the week.

Our children must know that God is important to us every day, & they must witness it at home. Let's share with them testimonies of God's grace, His provision, His protection & miracles we believe He has performed in our lives.

When Joshua entered the Promised Land, he laid an ultimatum before the people. It is recorded in **Joshua 24:14-15, "Now therefore fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity & truth; & put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river & in Egypt; & serve the Lord. "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me & my house, we will serve the Lord."**

Joshua 24:16-18 says, "The people answered & said, 'far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for the Lord our God is He who brought us & our fathers out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage who did those great signs in our sight & preserved us in all the way that we went & among all the people through whom we passed. ... We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.'"

Here is how we might say it today, "Lord, guide us, remind us to not ignore you, to run after the things of this world. It is you who died for us, saved us & delivered us from all our sins. We & our families will serve only you, Lord Jesus."

This, I believe is God's desire for families today. Our greatest concern for our children should be that they love God more than anyone or anything else in this world. Our families are God's blessings, & our children are His precious gifts whom He has entrusted to us.

May it never be said of us, 'They raised a generation that did not know the Lord' but rather, that we were parents & grandparents who raised a godly generation of men & women who love the Lord & who are influencing the world for good, & for God!

In 2025 will you build an Ebenezer stone for the Lord? ("The stone of help.")

Ebenezer stone: A powerful, visible reminder that by God's help I have come this far in life, and He will see me through to the end.

"Thus far the Lord has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12

What has God done in your life this past year? How will you remember what He has done?

Will you share it with your children? Grandchildren? Will you share with others?

Will you be an example of God's love?

Will you remove all the idols, obstacles out of your life and put God first?

Will you praise God no matter what is going on in your life? Bad or good?

What would happen if we all more obedient to God in 2025?

What would happen in this church, in your life if I were to seek first the kingdom of God? What about you?