

Remembering What God Has Done

Part 2: Hear, Do, Proclaim

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

What a Joy to Know God!

There is power in testimony. When you hear the testimony of God you can put yourself in the story and listen experientially. Last time we talked about Gideon. Imagine Gideon was your friend and you sat down with him for coffee. When you talked with him last he was very afraid of everything that was going on in the country. He was really afraid of the Midianites. Now, something is a little bit different - he just led an army of 300 people to defeat the Midianites! How has his countenance changed since you last caught up with him? He is pretty excited and overjoyed! When you are reading the Word, take in the testimonies you see on a personal basis.

Galatians 5:22-23 says *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”* God gave us Himself and in giving us Himself He gave us all of these things: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We have all these character traits of God at work within us. God is joy. He gives us Himself and therefore He gives us joy! So when we are walking around we have God in us - joy in us!

If you think the Christian life is boring, you are just doing it wrong. You cannot have a true relationship with God that is boring! He’s the most joyful person you will ever know! He is the most patient person you will ever know! You have to meet Him! You won’t want to leave Him! The more you know Him, the more you want Him!

Call to Action

James 1:2 says *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”* One religious interpretation of this verse is “you know, you have to understand joy ... joy is really not that good. If it is linked to trials, joy is really not that good.” That’s not right! Count it all joy! God is joy. Graham Cooke says joy is intensity of gladness that is bigger than our circumstances. Happiness depends on circumstance. Joy has to do with wonder and pleasure. God is for me. God is joy. God is present to help me. That is not “you need to understand joy - it’s not really that great.” It is “you need to understand how good God is that His presence turns a trial into fullness of joy!”

There is a lot marketing research on calls to action. “Try, free, now!” “Click here, 50% off today.” “Limited time offer, call now!” My first job I (Joe) had out of college was at a country economic development commission. Next door to me was a state economic development commission. One of their workers would call business around the state and ask them “do you want free money?” Some people still hung up on him. As we talk about sharing the Gospel, it is a lot like this free money offer. Promises from God like in James 1:2 are like “free money!” Yet many turn Him down on the offer!

James 1:22-24 says *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”* We are supposed to be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only. If you hear only and don’t “do” you forget what you look like! This verse is talking about being able to see your identity. If you are doer, you see your identity, you see yourself in the mirror of the Word and you walk away and you REMEMBER your identity. When you are not a doer of the Word, you see yourself in the mirror, walk away and forget what sort of man you are.

The Mirror Bible puts it this way: “they realize that they are looking at themselves. For the one, it seems just too good to be true; he departs back to his old way of seeing himself and immediately forgets what manner of person he is - never giving another thought to the one he saw in the mirror.”

Not only does our identity influence our actions, but our actions actually help strengthen our identity. By acting on the Word, as we walk away from the mirror, we REMEMBER who we are! We remember what we look like to the Lord. Doing does that to us!

There is a call to action in the Kingdom! We have joy to give out to people who don’t have the joy of the Lord. Not only are we called to act on His Word, but in doing so, it helps to strengthen our identity in Christ.

Keys to Action

1. Belief influences action. What you believe influences your action. When you get in the car in the morning to go to work, you put the key in the ignition and you turn it because you believe it will cause the car to start. I smell food and know the cook is great so I don’t just take a small taste but instead a big first bite. I believe it is going to be great because of who made it!

Gideon’s life began to change (in terms of action) when his belief started to change. Judges 6:22 says *“Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, ‘Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.’”* When Gideon realizes that God was really talking with him, he begins to take action. Gideon goes from being hidden away to thinking “this really is God talking to me.” As soon as Gideon’s belief changed about God being with him, his actions changed.

Take a look through your life. Don't allow condemnation to come in, but take a look through your actions and try to see if there are some instances where how you are acting may not line up with what you believe. We all have areas of our lives where we mentally assent to something, but do not act accordingly. I would challenge you to consider whether you really believe what it is you think you believe. If not, find scripture and testimonies about that area.

2. Taking risk. There are a lot of areas in our lives where we can tend to be very safe. There are a number of instances where that can be a good thing. Locking our car door is not bad. Nevertheless, we can sometimes be overly-safe: protecting ourselves so much that it starts to not really allow the Lord much access to release power in our lives. When we are overly safe, we can end up not really giving the Lord a whole lot of opportunity to move.

Consider Gideon again. He stepped out and took a risk. He believed God and did what He told him to do. He tore down an altar. People wanted to kill him afterwards. He stepped out and took a risk. What happened was God's power came right along with Gideon as he took a risk at the lead of the Lord.

In Luke 9:1-2 we see that when Jesus sent out the disciples, He sent them out with power and authority: *"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."* As God is calling us out to do things, He is going to give us POWER and AUTHORITY! We will be accompanied with power and authority!

We can either be motivated by fear or by God. (2 Tim. 1:7) When we are motivated by God, we have POWER, love, and a sound mind.

3. Do what's in front of you. A lot of times when we start to think about action, we can get very grandiose. We make a huge plan. Yet, so many times, we really actually have things right in front of us that we can do. We can start to act today (now) because we have opportunities. All we need to do is step out, take a little bit of risk, and God's power will be right there with us. Do what's in front of you.

So much of what Jesus did was what was right in front of them. People would come up to Him with a need and leave with a solution. We have people all around us on whom we can make an impact every day. There are all sorts of things that we can notice in the lives of those around us. We have opportunity. Our next step doesn't need to be big, it just needs to be a step.

Proclaiming what God has Done!

We are called to HEAR the testimony of God, DO the testimony of God, and PROCLAIM the testimony of God. "I hear do proclaim!"

Psalms 71:15 *"My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only. O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come."* Imagine yourself in the Psalmist's shoes. You are so caught up in what God has done for you that everyone who knows you hears all about what God has done for you! Your friends say to each other "you know when you get together with Joe that he is going to tell you about the latest thing that God did." Your friends may not all know the Lord but they are all thinking "something really good is going on with Joe." What if all Christians your friends were doing the exact same thing - telling them about how good God is - everything that God is doing in their lives!

Imagine if as a society of Christians we could not help ourselves but proclaim how good God is! "These are the things that God is doing in my life right now!" "And this is the thing God did 10 years ago that applies to your situation. God is so good!" Consider the sort of impact that has! It would be really hard to not know God and think that following Jesus is boring or less than joyful!

Testimonies are not just verbal. In Joshua 4:4-6 we read *"Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'"* In addition to sharing verbal testimonies, we can actually build a monument to the testimony of the Lord!

Monuments to moves of God help future generations relate to the reality of what God did. When it talks about the future children seeing the monument described in Joshua 4, it says they will start to ask about them. *"What do these stones mean to you?"* Monuments (physical testimonies) are not just meant to elicit the question "what does it mean" but they are supposed to elicit the question "what does this mean TO YOU." Children will see the monuments to the Lord and not just ask about historical facts, they will ask about historical facts impact on your life! "What does it mean TO YOU?"

When first out of college, I (Joe) was thinking big. Thinking of a big economics job in DC. I was striking out big in my job search. One day I could no longer mask the fact that the job search was awful. We decided I would find a local economics place to intern and work at an electronics store concurrently to make some money. I called up a local economics place and offer to volunteer for them for free. The executive director interviewed me. I bombed the interview and gave him a paper I wrote in college. Much to my surprise, he offered me a job - a paid position. The position did not

exist. When I left after a few years, they gave me a certificate as a token of appreciation for the work I did while I was there. It was incredibly kind of them. So I have that certificate - that monument - in my office at work. And people ask me about it! Yet, I forget about what that certificate really means - about the reality of what God did for me in providing a non-existent job through the local economics commission.

What are the testimonies that you do have? What are the stories of God's work in your life that you are maybe overlooking? What has God given to you that provides a great example on which you can say "this is something God has done for me!"

Hear, do, proclaim. Run the race. When you take the first step, it's great, but you don't win a race by one step. You have to keep running. You have to keep going. Keep running the race.

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

There is power in testimony. When you are reading the Word, take in the testimonies you see on a personal basis. Galatians 5:22-23 says "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*" God gave us Himself and in giving us Himself He gave us all of these things: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We have all these character traits of God at work within us. For example, God is joy. He gives us Himself and therefore He gives us joy!

If you think the Christian life is boring, you are just doing it wrong. You cannot have a true relationship with God that is boring. He's the most joyful person you will ever know. He is the most patient person you will ever know. You just have to know Him more! You won't want to leave Him. In fact, the more you know Him, the more you want Him!

James 1:2 says, "*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*" This doesn't translate into "You know, you just have to understand joy ... if it's linked to trials, joy is really not that good." That's incorrect thinking. Count it all joy! Graham Cooke describes joy as intensity of gladness that is bigger than our circumstances. Joy has to do with wonder and pleasure. God is for me. God is joy. God is present to help me. So it's not, "You need to understand joy - it's not really that great all the time." On the contrary, you need to understand how good God is because His presence even turns trials into fullness of joy!

James 1:22-24 says, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.*" We are supposed to be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only. If you hear only and don't do the Word, you forget what you look like!

This verse is talking about being able to see your identity. If you are doer, you see your identity, you see yourself in the mirror of the Word and you walk away and you REMEMBER your identity. When you are not a doer of the Word, you see yourself in the mirror, walk away and forget what sort of man you are. The Mirror Bible translation puts it this way: “They realize that they are looking at themselves. For the one, it seems just too good to be true; he departs back to his old way of seeing himself and immediately forgets what manner of person he is - never giving another thought to the one he saw in the mirror.”

Not only does our identity influence our actions, our actions actually help strengthen our identity! By acting on the Word, as we walk away from the mirror, we REMEMBER who we are! We remember what we look like to the Lord. Doing the Word has that affect in us! There is a call to action in the Kingdom! We have joy to give out to people who don't have the joy of the Lord. Not only are we called to act on His Word, but in doing so, it helps to strengthen our identity in Christ.

1. Belief influences action. What you believe influences your action. When you get in the car in the morning to go to work, you put the key in the ignition and you turn it because you believe it will cause the car to start. Gideon's life began to change (in terms of action) when his belief started to change. When Gideon realized that God was really talking with him, he began to take action. Gideon goes from being hidden away to thinking -wow- this really is God talking to me! As soon as Gideon's belief changed about God being with him, his actions changed.

Take a look through your life. Don't allow condemnation to come in, but take a look through your actions and try to see if there are some instances where the way you are acting may not line up with what you believe. We all have areas of our lives where we mentally aspire to something, but do not act accordingly. I would challenge you to consider whether you really believe what it is you think you believe. If not, find scripture and testimonies about that area until you really believe it!

2. Taking risk. There are a lot of areas in our lives where we can tend to be very safe. That can be a good thing; for instance, locking our car door is not bad. Nevertheless, we can sometimes be overly-safe: protecting ourselves so much that it starts to not really allow the Lord much access to release power in our lives. When we are overly safe, we can end up not really giving the Lord much opportunity to move.

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authority! We can either be motivated by fear or by God. (2 Tim. 1:7) When we are motivated by God, we have POWER, love, and a sound mind.

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Imagine if as a society of Christians we could not help ourselves but proclaim how good God is! "These are the things that God is doing in my life right now! And this is the thing God did 10 years ago that applies to your situation. God is so good!" Consider the sort of impact that has! Following Jesus would definitely seem far from boring or less than joyful!

Commemorate your testimony. Testimonies are not just verbal. In Joshua 4:4-6 we read *"Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'"* In addition to sharing verbal testimonies, we can actually build a monument to the testimony of the Lord!

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Points to Ponder . . .

- How does doing the Word reinforce your identity in Christ?
- In what ways does right believing help you take action?
- How does taking risk relate to acting on the Word of God?
- In what ways can a grandiose vision get in the way of being faithful to the Word of the Lord?
- How can proclamation of testimonies change the tone in a room or the course of someone's life?
- What are some modern-day monuments (physical testimonies) that bring glory to God?