



REMEMBERING THE WILDERNESS

Dillon Barber // April 26, 2026

Text: Deuteronomy 8 (ESV)

Big Idea: We are to remember God's faithfulness in the good times and the hard times so that we may live well and honor the Lord.

Good morning, friends. Welcome to Foothills Church. My name is Dillon Barber, and I am one of the Pastors here at Foothills. (Greet 9:30 Classic and Online community). It's a pleasure to be here with you this morning. Let's turn in our Bible's to Deuteronomy chapter 8. I'll be reading from the ESV this morning. A couple weeks ago pastor Brian kicked off our series in the first few chapters of Deuteronomy, and he shared how Israel had disobeyed God's command to enter the land of Canaan and take it for themselves, and so the consequence was that the entire generation of people would die in the wilderness and God would raise up a new generation and they would inherit the promised land. Does all this sound familiar? Ok good. Good remembering. The book of Deuteronomy contains sermons given by Moses, to prepare this new generation of Israelites to enter the land, and to renew the covenant that God made with their parents at Sinai. Brian shared with us that a major theme in the book is remembering. That's why we titled the Series, Remember and renew. Make sense?

This morning we are going to continue the theme of Remembering. I was thinking this week about how much our reliance on memory is changing in the digital world. We used to have to remember things in our brains, now we just carry a smart phone in our pockets, and it does all the remembering for us. Seriously, I don't have to remember anything anymore. I keep it all in my phone, schedules, notes, reminders, or best of all, photos and videos. We take pictures of everything. I have thousands of pictures on my phone. Of course, the special events, and moments and all that, but I have pictures of receipts, price tags, food, pets, projects on my house. Thanks to the smart phone, everyone can have a photographic memory.

And we don't just take pictures of the good memories, we take pictures of our car accidents, our injuries, our trips to the hospital, all kinds of things. I have a picture in my phone from 2014, when I was on a missions trip in Honduras and Sam Parsons smashed my finger in a rebar bender. I'll never forget that one. But how often do we go back and look at those pictures and videos? I mean I like to scroll through and look at my kids when they were little or remember the trips and vacations and things like that, I enjoy those memories, but how often do we look at the hard pictures and remember the difficult things? We tend to leave those behind. We don't delete them, we keep them, but we don't reflect on them either. Who wants to think about the day that their parent or spouse died? Who wants to remember the day they lost their job, or they broke up with someone. We carry these memories, and these wounds with us but we don't often want to remember.

Well this morning Moses is going to preach a whole sermon on the importance of remembering and he is going to challenge us to remember the hard things in life because the hard days, the hard seasons so often reveal God's faithfulness and therefore they are worth remembering.

Let's look at verse 1. Moses sets up the purpose statement of his sermon. Why is it important to follow all these commands about remembering? So that you may live, multiply and possess the land that God promised. All of this, all of God's word, all the record of his actions and interactions with humanity, all the instructions and warnings and wisdom, all of it is given for us to study and learn so that we can live the healthiest, best lives that we can live in relationship with God. He wants us to live healthy full, productive, lives with him. And he wants us to have healthy families, and raise healthy kids, that grow up to be healthy adults that live good healthy productive lives walking with the Lord. Now most of us aren't descendants of Abraham, we aren't promised the land, but God has a purpose for us as well and he wants us to live out his purpose and his calling on our lives and accomplish all that he sets before us according to his plan.

Those are good reasons to obey what Moses commanded in Deuteronomy 8. Now let's look at what Moses commanded. Look at verse 2.

Remember the whole way God has led you. Moses tells the Israelites, to remember the whole way that God led them through the wilderness. Now we have to be careful not to hyper-spiritualize the Bible but the lesson here is so easy to apply. God led Israel through a literal and spiritual wilderness. They walked through some of the most arid regions of the middle east, for 40 years. But they also went on a journey of growth and development and maturity. So I think it's safe to say that we can have wilderness experiences as well. Seasons of life that are difficult that God uses to shape us and teach us and grow us. Moses commanded Israel to remember the whole way that God led them and the lessons that they learned in the wilderness. And we can do the same. He highlights four lessons that God taught them.

1. God humbles us in the wilderness. V. 2. Humility is a good thing right? Our culture doesn't always value humility. Some associate humility with weakness, or meekness or being a door mat for everyone to walk over. But that's not true humility. Humility is knowing that your strength and talent, and ability come from God. And are to use our God-given strength and ability to be a blessing to others. Being humble is a good thing. But the process of learning humility, and being humbled, can be painful and difficult. Raise your hand if you enjoy being humbled? No fun. Often learning humility means we have to struggle, sometimes it means we fail and have to try again. Sometimes things in our lives get messy before we learn humility, we have to learn hard lessons about ourselves. It's rough but it's good. James 4:6 says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humility is a good thing but learning it can be really rough sometimes. Moses, says, remember how God humbled you in the Wilderness.

2. God tests us in the wilderness. Verse 2, testing you to know what was in your heart. Whether you would keep his commandments or not. I thought a lot about this the past few days. If God knows all things, and if he knows the heart of people, why would he need to test them? 1 Samuel 16:7 God sent Samuel to anoint David as king, and he is looking at David's older brother and thinking about how strong and handsome he is, But the Lord said to Samuel, *Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*"

Maybe I'm wrong but I think that God tests us so that we might know our own hearts. He already knows, but we don't always know until we are tested right? Now don't be alarmed, God does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13). He does not put us in situations that could lead us into sin, but he does test us. I think he often tests us with opportunities to trust him. To step out in faith and see what he will do. When we fail the test, we miss out on what God is doing and when we pass the test, we are encouraged and we see God do great things and we grow. That builds our confidence and our trust in him.

When was the last time you were tested in your faith? When did God give you a challenge or an opportunity to walk in faith? Did you ace the test? Did you struggle to pass? Did you get an F? What did you learn from it? Some of our wilderness experiences are opportunities for God to test us.

3. God sustains us in the wilderness. Look at verse 3. God allowed his people to be hungry. I don't remember the details of this in the story. But I imagine that the Israelites fled Egypt with food and supplies and herds of sheep and cattle, and they set off for the promised land. Well at some point they ran out of food. So, they had to rely on God to provide. And he fed them Mana. We don't really know what Mana was. It fell to the ground miraculously every morning, six days a week, and lasted only long enough to make it through the day or the sabbath. So every

morning they had to go and gather just enough. It tasted the same every day and had all the nutrients that a human being needed to sustain life. Imagine eating the same thing every single day for 40 years. God gave them just enough, just what they needed and no more.

Do you remember a time in life when God gave you just enough? Maybe you were a young adult trying to get on your own two feet. Maybe you were a young married couple or starting off in your career and things were so tight, you spent every dollar to your name and somehow paid all the bills at the end the month. God sustained you, with just enough. Maybe you have had to fight for your life, from an accident or surgery or cancer, and it seemed like it took every ounce of your energy, every bit of your body and soul just to make it through the day, and God sustained you. He gave you just enough for one day. Maybe you are in a season right now where you give everything that you have every day to meet the needs of your family and feed the kids and pay the bills and drive people where they need to be and at the end of the day you crawl in bed with nothing left to give, but God gave you just enough. You remember those seasons?

How much closer were you to the Lord in those times? When you depended on him for everything, for every provision and every tiny miracle, and you weren't sure you were going to make it, but you just held on and watched in amazement as God showed up and sustained you.

Moses said that God sustained his people with mana so that they would learn a lesson, that Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Jesus quoted this when Satan tempted him with food after 40 days of fasting. It makes more sense now in Deuteronomy doesn't it? When we eat food we will always be hungry again, but when we are fed by God's word, he satisfies our soul. Moses said, remember how God fed you in the wilderness.

4. God disciplines us in the wilderness. Verse 5. The Lord your God disciplines you. Let's be honest, sometimes we are in the wilderness because of the consequences of our own choices and actions. We make mistakes, we do dumb things, we get caught up in bad habits that harm ourselves and harm the people around us and we find ourselves experiencing the consequences. Sometimes those consequences last a long time, even the rest of our lives.

Hebrews 12 explains that we experienced God's discipline because he cares for us, and when we receive that discipline willingly, instead of fighting against him, we have an opportunity to grow. Listen to what the author of Hebrews says:

*5 "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.*

*6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives."*

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

So next time we find ourselves in the wilderness because of our own actions, and we experienced the difficult reality of God's discipline, let's try not to push back on it or get frustrated or angry with God. Instead let's embrace God's discipline because he loves us and wants us to learn and grow. Sound good?

When we remember the hard lessons that God has taught us in the wilderness, the way we have been humbled, tested, sustained, even disciplined, God builds a story of faithfulness in our lives. **Remembering God's faithfulness helps us to obey him and walk in step with him.**

Look at verse 6. God expects us to obey his commands. Either commands in scripture or commands given by the Spirit which by the way will always line up with scripture. Sometimes obedience means stepping out in faith in a huge way. Sometimes it means saying no to things of the flesh, sometimes obedience means self-sacrifice. It will cost us to obey the Lord. But when we remember all of the lessons we learned in the wilderness, we have a history of God's faithfulness to remind us that he is good, and we can trust him and walk with him. Make sense?

[Transition] Ok. So Moses said remember all of these lessons learned in the wilderness, Next he warns Israel of the consequences of forgetting. He's taking a different angle to make his point. Moses gives three warnings.

First warning: Comfort leads to forgetfulness. Verse 11-14. Part of our human nature I think, when things are going well, when we have everything that we need and more, we stop trusting in God's provision and protection. When we don't need God we don't look to God. This is so easy for us in the United States. We have so much compared to the rest of the world. It is so easy to forget that God is our provider. So when everything in life is going good, we don't think as much about God or our dependance on him and its easy to get distracted. This leads to disobedience and the risk of falling away from the Lord. When we don't think we need the Lord's help, we don't seek the Lord for his help.

Second Warning: Comfort leads to pride. Vs 17-18. In so many ways pride is the opposite of humility. Pride says, look at me, look at all that I can do, look what I have accomplished. Where humility says, look at God, look at what he can do, look at what he has accomplished. Now I know many of you here at Foothills. I know you are hardworking people, you

have invested time and energy in your education, in your career, you have worked hard to provide for your families and to honor the Lord with your generosity and to be a blessing to others. I feel like I am seriously preaching to the choir. I know you get this. So just take this as a loving reminder. We can't let pride trick us into thinking that everything we have, every blessing we enjoy is because we earned it ourselves. Moses says, it is the Lord who gives us the ability to do all kinds of things, including working hard and earning a living. So let's be humble, let's honor the Lord for all the skills and talents he has given us, and thank him for the ability to work hard, and for the good jobs he has provided. Amen?

Final Warning: Forgetting leads to new consequences. For the Israelites, they are entering into a covenant contract with the Lord. If they obey the Lord, they will be blessed, and enjoy the land he has given them. If they forget the Lord and disobey, they will be cursed, they will perish and be exiled from his land. It was very black and white. Thankfully because of Jesus, we live under a new covenant. Jesus died for us, bringing forgiveness to those who trust in him. When we believe in Jesus he gives us his Spirit to teach us to obey and walk in step with the Lord. So now we live under grace instead of under the Law. Our salvation depends on Jesus, not our obedience.

So how do we apply this warning today? Let's go back to the beginning. We follow Jesus and obey all that he commands, we remember the Lord and all the lessons he teaches us, so that we can live healthy, Christ centered lives. So we can raise healthy families that love the Lord, so we can fulfill God's purpose for us and do the work that he has prepared for us to do. And when we forget God, when we let comfort distract, or pride sneak in, we disobey and experience the consequences, we are less connected to the Lord, our lives aren't as healthy and fulfilling, our families suffer, and we don't walk in the purpose that God intended for us. In other words, we miss out on the fullness of God's blessing.

(Story of my wilderness on the farm in Auburn)

I know many of you have spent time in the wilderness. If you have ever heard my testimony, I went through a really important wilderness season about 20 years ago. I had just graduated from Seminary, and like most seminary grads, I knew everything. I had just studied all the Bible and theology I could handle, and I graduated excited and ready to take on the world and transform the church and do things the right way. I was also deeply hurt by the church we had been a part of in Portland while I was in school. Well guess what. I couldn't find a ministry job anywhere. Every door was closed. So we moved back to California and I found a job working on a 40-acre farm in Auburn. I spent 18 months doing hard labor, driving a tractor in circles, planting trees and wrestling with God. God humbled me. I didn't earn much money, but we had just enough, God provided. We found Foothills church during that season and God gave me little opportunities to step back into ministry, and my faith grew. As hard as that season was for me, I learned so very much, and looking back I am so grateful for that time on the farm. To be honest, there are days now that I really wish I was sitting on a tractor driving in circles and talking with Jesus. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Questions to wrestle with this week.

1. What are some of the hard seasons of life you have experienced and how did God show up in those seasons? How did he provide for you and care for you and sustain you? Maybe you are in a wilderness right now. How is God showing up?
2. What were the lessons you learned or you are learning in the wilderness? What did God teach you through that difficult season of life?
3. What tools can you use, what habits can you develop that will help you remember what the Lord has done?

Moses teaches us to remember the Lord through the good seasons and the hard seasons of life so that we can live well and have healthy families and live out the purpose the God has given us.

Let's pray.