



REMEMBER

One Generation Away | 8.2.26

Libin Abraham

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Libin Abraham 0:00

So this month, as we step into this milestone season, the message or the series that's been on our heart is entitled "One Generation Away. One generation away, and I was thinking about this because I heard the story of the Vanderbilt family in the 1800s. The Vanderbilt family was the wealthiest family in America. Here's a picture of the dad, Cornelius Commodore Vanderbilt, as they called him. He was often referred to as the first tycoon. In the 1800s, he built a massive empire through railroads and shipping. They were the epitome, the image of wealth and success and influence all around the world, and especially here in America. When Commodore or Cornelius passed away, he left a fortune of \$100 million. That's in the 1800s. It's a lot of money then, and a lot of money now, but it would be billions of dollars today. And his kids did well with it, but in the next 100 years, his grandkids and then on, they squandered the entire wealth and influence, the legacy that their family had. In fact, in the 1970s, when they gathered as a family for a family reunion, not one of them had any significant money? None of the Vanderbilts were among the wealthiest in America. Just within a short amount of time, all of it was wasted, and it wasn't wasted because of an outside war or some external tragedy. It was wasted because they lacked stewardship. And in fact, they said I got to visit the Biltmore a few years ago in Asheville, North Carolina. This used to be one of the Vanderbilt homes. A lot of things were happening there, but now it's a museum because they couldn't carry on steward the legacy and influence of their family. It's a tragedy what happened in just a few generations. So as I was thinking about where we are as a church, I was reminded of the reality that we are always just one generation away from either remembering or forgetting. We're one generation away from stewarding or squandering. One generation away from revival or ruin, that we have been given today, right now, every single one of us in this room and online, if we call ourselves a part of this faith community, God has given us a sacred trust to steward His mission to carry on the story of God's goodness and faith to the next generation, but we're always just one generation away, either from remembering or forgetting, stewarding or squandering. We get to choose which generation we will be, and one of the ways that we continue this legacy of faith and pass on this legacy of faith is simply by the spiritual act of remembering, refusing to forget. All throughout the Old Testament, God wove into the rhythms of His people rhythms of remembrance. So every year they took in the Passover because they didn't want to forget their Passover from Egypt, their rescue from Egypt, how the angel of death passed over them. They would observe annual feasts like Pentecost and the tabernacles, all to remember the faithfulness of God. It was as if God knew how prone we were to drift, and how quickly we forget. God even gave them a weekly reminder called the Sabbath to remember that He is Creator, He is Sustainer. When Jesus gathered with His disciples on the night He was to be betrayed, He says, "Take the bread, drink it, come in cup in remembrance of Me. As often as you gather, keep My sacrifice, keep the cross at the center of your heart and at the center of your life, you need. We need to remember. Remembering isn't just merely an act of the mind. Remembering is an act of worship, because it anchors our soul, our heart in the faithfulness of God. Remembering is worship, because it reminds us of who He is, what God has done, and we live in the wonder of His faithfulness. It's a call to remember. One of the most explicit moments when God commands the people to remember is in Joshua, especially when the 12 memorial stones are erected. And you know that story if you've been around church for a little while. By the time we get to Joshua three, the children of Israel who have been wandering for 40 years in the wilderness, they're about to enter the promised land. There is one last barrier in front of them.

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This natural barrier. It's a river. It's the Jordan River. It's the only thing that stands. Between them and the Promised Land. Now they'll have to fight Jericho and all that. There's little battles ahead, but this last natural barrier between them and the Promised Land. So here's where they are in front of this obstacle called the Jordan River, Joshua three verse 15. Now the

Jordan River is at flood stage all during the harvest. I'm like God. Could you at least have made the river shallower for them? No, no, of course it's just like God to make sure the river is overflowing when they get to it. Maybe you've had seasons where it seems like the river is at flood stage. You're asking God to remove the obstacles, but it keeps intensifying because for them and for us, sometimes God will let our obstacles get to the greatest level possible, so that we will never forget just how powerful He is. And here is the Jordan River overflowing. It seems insurmountable. It's at flood stage, and yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from the upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away. Notice here, they are carrying the ark in front of the nation. So the priests are carrying the ark, which is symbolic of the presence of God. This is the way that God has always worked in history. God's presence goes first, and we follow His leading. It's never the way other way around. So I was praying for the next 50 years of our church. My prayers, God, may we always be a people who are attuned to the living presence of God? We're not getting ahead of you. We're not even trying to be beside it. No, no, we want to follow you. Lead us with your presence. You lead us with your power, and we will follow you wherever you take us. And here, the ark goes ahead. The priests are carrying the ark because miracles happen when His presence goes ahead of us. That's when breakthroughs happen. And notice here that the priests are told to step into the river before it parted. When did the flow stop? When their feet hit the water's edge. See, at the Red Sea, all Moses had to do was lift up his staff, lifted up his hand, and the Red Sea parted. But for this generation, God did it a little different. In fact, I think God required a little bit more faith because no, no, I want you to step into a flowing river at flood stage, and it's only when your feet touch the water's edge that I'm going to stop the flow of the river. I would not have wanted to be the first two guys carrying the ark, stepping into the river. Are you sure, God? But they needed to trust before the waters parted that God was going to be faithful. Faith always precedes sight, and that's been the story for the last 50 years, and it will be the story for the next 50 years. We will be asked to do some radical things that makes no human sense personally in your life and in our church's life. Why? Because sometimes we don't wait for the waters to part before we step into the river. No, no, we follow God, and we are willing to step in even at flood stage, knowing that that's when God will do the miracle, and here the priests step into the river, and that's when the rivers begin to part. And the text goes on: the priests who carried the ark of the Lord, of the covenant of the Lord, stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all of Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground. This is a powerful picture of Jesus, because Jesus stands as our mediator. The waters of judgment should have consumed us, but He stands between us and judgment. He takes on the judgment Himself, so that we can enter eternal life in complete safety and security. So here, the people pass through the river; they get to the other side. God is faithful as the priests stand in the middle to hold the waters until they get to the other side.

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Now I would imagine as they cross the Jordan River, they're celebrating, kids are singing, families are hugging each other. Joshua is so thankful that God is with him as God was with Moses. They can literally run and see Canaan, but God says, "Stop, not yet. I need you to do one more thing before you enter this land. And by the time we get to Joshua four, here is God's instruction for them: when the whole nation had finished cross. The Jordan. The Lord said to Joshua, "Choose 12 men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you, and put them down at the place where you stay tonight. Sometimes when we think about these 12 stones, we think they're like pebbles, little little cute stones. No, no, no, they're not. In the next verse, we're going to see that they had to carry these stones on their shoulders. They were heavy, and I, for one, would have appreciated if God said, "Just take one for the whole community, but 12? Why 12? Well, it's because there's 12 tribes, and he wanted every tribe to have their own stone, their own marker, their own boulder, to tell their kids and their grandkids, "Here is how the Lord came through for us, 12 stones, because He wanted everyone to participate. He wanted every tribe represented to carry a stone for themselves, and the stone would say, "The impossible became our testimony. Here is the story of God's faithfulness. We stood at the bank of the Jordan River at flush days, and here is how we crossed over into the dry ground. Everyone needed to remember. Everyone had to tell the story. Everyone took a stone for each tribe. Text goes on in verse four. So Joshua called together the 12 men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. So they had to go right where the priests were standing, gather a stone from there. 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. Now we get to the real heart of why God commanded such an instruction. The stones were not for Joshua; they weren't for God; they weren't even for Joshua's generation. These 12 stones were for future generations who were not there at the

crossing of the Jordan River. They were for people who were not even existing at that time. So God says, "Look, here's why these stones are important. Erect these stones, these 12 stones, so that in the future, when your descendants ask you, "What do these stones mean? then you can tell them the story of what happened at the Jordan River. So really, these stones are not about the stones. This is a command of God to tell stories, not just collect stones. The stones would stir up curiosity and questions. The stones were just conversation starters, so that grandkids and nephews and nieces and family members would see generations later. Dad, tell me about these stones. Granddad, grandma, tell me about what this means. And then you could testify to the story of God. This is why this was important. God assumes the kids will ask, and when they ask, the parents would tell, and the stories would continue for generations. Stones would create conversation. Verse 18 says, "And the priests came up out of the river, carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as as before. As soon as the priests got out of the water, the river came back.

Libin Abraham 14:22

On the 10th day of the first month, the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal, on the eastern border of Jericho. And Joshua set up at Gilgal the 12 stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future, when your descendants ask their parents, "What do these stones mean? Tell them, "Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground, for the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what He had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until. We had crossed over. He did this so that hear this: all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful, and so that you might always fear the Lord your God. This is why God did this. Two reasons: so that you might fear Him, meaning you would have regard for him, you would trust him, you would be devoted to him. But second of all, so that all the nations of the earth would know just how powerful God is, I found that fascinating because remembering wasn't just a memorial; remembering was missional. Their remembering of the story of God, their ability to tell stories of what God did at Jordan and then what God did at the Red Sea-that was supposed to be evangelistic to the entire world. The nations would see how powerful God is by telling the story of what God had did. So they gather these 12 stones, they erect them at Gilgal. Gilgal became their first home on the other side of the Jordan, right at the entry of the Promised Land. Gilgal became their headquarters. They gathered all throughout Joshua at Gilgal to renew their covenant, to remember the stories of God's victory. Before they set out to battle, they came to Gilgal and prayed. They offered sacrifices here. They gathered around these 12 stones to remember how powerful God is. Because the hope was that these stones forever would tell of the mighty works of God, and the entire world would know just how powerful he is. At least that was the hope. So what happened? Well, when you stood in notes, you'll see they crossed the Jordan. They remembered the miracle, but then something sad happens. Something tragic, kind of like what happened to the Vanderbilt family. They end up forgetting God and His works. They did all that work to collect stone, so that forever they will remember Him. But they forgot Him and what He did. Let me show you how. Judges chapter two. When you fast forward to Judges two, notice what it says, beginning in verse seven. The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua, and of the elders who outlived him, and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel, Joshua, son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110. They buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-Herez, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gash, that whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. But hear this: after them, another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works He had done For Israel, really, just one generation away, yeah. Joshua dies, and the generation of elders with him dies. And after he was buried, another generation rose up. They neither knew the Lord's work, and they didn't know God, because to forget what He had done was to forget God. Just one generations later, the stones were still there and the stories were still true, but the conversation stopped. Visits to Gilgal became less and less frequent. They got settled into the Promised Land, and they were literally enjoying the blessing of God, the favor of God in the Promised Land, while forgetting God. And one generation after Joshua, they didn't know about the Red Sea that their forefathers crossed on dry ground. They didn't know anything about the manna that their grandparents ate in the wilderness or the water from the rock that they drank to stay alive. They had no idea about the plagues that God used in Egypt to confront Pharaoh and to rescue his people. All of it was forgotten. wasn't just one generation away.

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Joshua's own grandkids, or maybe the the kids that came after him, they didn't know about the Jordan River, nor the fall of the Jericho walls. Why? Because we're always just one generation away from forgetting or from remembering, the tragic story here is within one generation, the stones remained, but the stories disappeared. The memorial was there, but the meaning was lost. Stones remained, but the stories were gone. The memorial remained. But the meaning was lost. Let that

sink in. As a result of a generation forgetting God and His works, idols were erected. The people that God rescued had no regard for Him. They descended into moral chaos as they lost any framework of the God, their Lord. So, thinking about the events of this story, I ask myself this question: Who is really at fault here? Is it the generation who did not know, or is it the generation who did not tell. Yeah, is it the ones who didn't know or the ones who didn't tell? The downward descent began with those who refused to tell the stories of God and to pass down the stories of His faithfulness and His miracles, His provision. They they were experiencing the blessings of God, but they forgot to talk about the one who provided. They were experiencing the safety and security of their promised land, but they forgot to talk about the one who defended them and was victorious. They they neglected to bend down and go back to Gilgal and go back to the 12 stones and say, "Son, can I tell you? Daughter, can I tell you? Grandson, can I tell you about the stories of God? And the same can be true of our life. I know we can judge that, but the same can be true of our life. We can get so comfortable in this world that we forget that Jesus is our life. We can enjoy the daily provisions that God gives us, and we neglect to pass on to the next generation that Jesus is the source of life. He is the bread of life. That we can divert our hope into politics or our career or to our resources. That we can fail to pass on to the next generation that Jesus is our only hope. There is no hope outside of Him. We can live in the most blessed and prosperous nation in human history and forget that we belong to a different kingdom, a heavenly kingdom. That's where our citizenship is. The greatest things we can pass down, more than what we've accumulated or accomplished, is the stories of God, and that's our assignment-not just to let stones remain and stories be lost, but to tell the stories. When I think about my own faith journey, my my faith journey really does echo back to my grandparents. My grandfather was the first to come to know Jesus and to follow Him, and the way that happened is, his wife, my grandmother, was paralyzed for months, and a group of missionaries were walking their village, and they said, "Can we pray for you? And he says, "Please pray for my wife. She hasn't been able to walk in months. They prayed, and that night she began to walk. She was healed. That led to a series of events where my grandfather followed Jesus, gave his life to him. And my grandfather tells a story of when he went down to the river to be baptized. He said it was a walk of death, literally a walk of death, not just his old life being buried and new life being raised to Christ, but it was a death relationally. Both sides of his family lived on the opposite side of the same street. So as he walked down the river, they both came out of their homes to hurl insults and curses at my grandfather for following Jesus. So he said it was a walk of death as I was losing all of my family. But he said I considered it a great joy to lose all of it to gain Christ. Fast forward to my parents. My parents had a lucrative, successful career in Saudi Arabia, and then my dad's brother, who worked one cubicle over from him, contracted pneumonia and died quickly. That tragedy is when God called my dad into ministry through that tragic season.

Libin Abraham 23:53

So God left his my dad left his corporate job, sold his dream home that he had built, and gave his life to full-time ministry with four young kids, and time after time, we found ourselves as a family standing at the banks of Jordan at flood stage. But every time we saw God come through, every time faith wasn't just a set of beliefs; it was real life. I remember one weekend we were in Oklahoma and it was a hard time in our family's ministry and all of that. And we went to a conference that was happening at a nearby church. And a visiting pastor who had never met us looked at my dad and he said, "Within a month's time, you're going to be in a new city. Your kids are going to go to new school. Your wife will work a new hospital job, and you will be leading a new church, and within a month's time, we found ourselves in Chattanooga, Tennessee. My dad at a new church, we at a new school, my mom at a new hospital, living in a brand new city. We learned God is alive; He speaks to His people; He leads us. So, in my own journey in 2006, when I was. Hearing a call to ministry, man, I didn't make that step of obedience in a vacuum. No, no, I had a context of what my grandfather did to follow Jesus and my dad, the things he had to give up to follow Jesus. It created a framework of trusting in Jesus for myself over five years ago when we came to Bentry. Man, we didn't do that in a vacuum. We had a lifelong of stories and experiences to where we could tell if God is calling us, He is going to be faithful. You can trust Him. It's the stories that we must pass down. We don't inherit our parents' faith, but we do inherit their stories, don't we? We can watch faith before we understand faith, and in this season of our life with Avery, Liam, and Luke, man, we want to be living stories of faith that are worth passing down to the next generation to show them Jesus is our hope, He is our provider, He speaks, and we want to follow Him. And I imagine you have memorial stones. You do. It may not be physical stones like it was for Joshua's generation, but you have other memorial stones that are conversation starters. Maybe it's a picture of you on your baptism day. Maybe it's a city or a church where you came to Christ, and you can point back and tell someone what happened there. Maybe it's a Bible where you journal, and maybe it's highlighting. Maybe it's notes that you've kept. Maybe it's a prayer journal. Maybe it's a termination letter when you lost your source of income, and yet God provided another one. Maybe it's a hospital bracelet where you weren't sure if you were going to come out of it, and yet God healed you. He rescued you. What memorial stone do you have that you might have forgotten about? Because we must pass down the stories of God's faithfulness, His goodness. And second of all, who has

God entrusted to you? It may be a family member, but it may be not. It may be a coworker. It may be a new believer that's saying, "What does it look like to follow Jesus? What does it look like to walk with God? Tell me your story. Could be a grandchild. It could be a nephew or a niece who is saying, "Tell me the stories of what it looks like to follow Jesus. We have memorial stones, but don't let the meaning be lost. We have stones, but don't let the story disappear. Can I tell you why this is important? You and I, we actually have something far more powerful to point to than Joshua had and his generation had, because we don't just have the story of how God provided manna from heaven; we have the story of how God became man in Jesus, and He became the bread of life. We don't just have the story of how water came from a rock; we have the story of John four, where Jesus says, "I am the living water. Whoever drinks of me will never thirst again.

Libin Abraham 28:04

We don't just have a story of the river being parted. We have the story of a veil being torn in two because Jesus became man. He died on a cross. He rose from the grave, and God raised his raises his son and gave us a spirit, so we don't just have a river story; we have a resurrection story to tell. Amen. So hear me: the cross is more than a memorial; it's the very means of our salvation. And unlike the stones of Gilgal, it's not just a memorial. It is a power of God that saves. If Joshua was commanded to tell the next generation, yes, we must tell that generation too. But Jesus says, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, because a cross is the only thing that saves. When I think about the cross, it's more than a memorial. It is the only means of salvation. But just like Joshua and his generations, they could keep the stones as a memorial. Lots of churches with a cross on it. Lots of people with a cross around their neck or a cross around their walls, but may we be a place who don't just look at the cross as symbol, but we will be people who, for the next 50, for the next 500 years, we will preach Christ crucified and risen. Amen. That's who we will be. We will preach the cross. We will preach the resurrection because it is the only hope for our salvation and for the salvation of all humanity. Amen. This is our commitment. The cross is what we point back to. It's more than a river story. It's a story of the resurrection. So here's my question for you. As we respond in just a moment. What story are you believing? Three questions, actually. What story are you believing? Maybe you stand at the flood stage of Jordan and you're not sure what to believe. Maybe you feel abandoned. Maybe you feel alone. Maybe you feel like God has left, and this is the end. What story are you believing? Can you believe in the story of Scripture, where God comes through for His people, where He is faithful, that even when you can't see His hand, you can trust His heart. That He is a good Father, He is a faithful. What story are you believing? Second of all, what story are you living? Are you living a story that requires faith, where you're willing to step into the Jordan River before it's parted and before the river flow stops, can you live a story where faith precedes sight? And lastly, what story are you leaving? What story are you believing? What story are you living? And what story are you leaving when your children and grandchildren. When your friends ask you, "Tell me the story of your life, will it be the story of your accomplishments and achievements and all that you've accumulated, or will it be the story of grace, amazing grace? Will it be the story of answered prayers and breakthroughs? When you find yourself at the end of your rope, you realize Jesus was there. May that be the story that we pass on as a church and as a people. Oh, the fact that we have kids in the room. Kids make some noise in the room. Also, students, I love that you're here as well. I know you're here every Sunday. We have the next generation right here. And kids, I already know this about you. You love asking questions. You ask a million of them. So here's my invitation to you: ask a ton of questions about your parents' faith to them. Ask your mom or your dad. Ask your granddad. Ask your uncle. Call them up on the phone. Say, dad, uncle, granddad, tell me about the time you met Jesus. Would you tell me the story? I want to know. Tell me about the hardest season of your life when you didn't know you could keep going, and yet God came through. Tell me what you love most about Jesus. Ask him. Tell them your pastor told you to ask them, because these are the stories that's most important to pass down. What story are you believing? What story are you living? What story are you leaving? Here is how the psalmist said in Psalm 78, verse two: "I will declare wise sayings.

Libin Abraham 32:42

I will speak mysteries from the past, things we have heard and known, and that our ancestors have passed down to us. We will not hide them from their children. We're not going to hide them. We're not going to keep it a secret. It won't end with us. But we'll tell a future generation the praise-worthy acts of the Lord, His might, and the wondrous works He has performed. That's what we're committing to. Just stand on your feet today, friends. We are just one generation away from forgetting or remembering, because in our generation who forgets the works of God, they'll eventually forget God. But we commit today to telling the stories, passing down the memories and the faithfulness of God, beginning at the cross, and how it all was applied to our life. We're going to sing this song over you, and we invite you to remember it. And as we, I want to actually invite our prayer team to come up forward. I didn't do this in the last service, but I feel like there's some of you who find yourself at the bank of the Jordan River, and the water seems to only be rising, and you need an encouragement today

through prayer to remember. Remember that we are the people who follow a Savior who broke through a guarded, sealed tomb, and that God is still doing miracles today. So, if you find yourself in the front of a in the face of a river that's rising, come forward for prayer. Maybe right where you are, you can just say, "God, what have I forgotten that I need to remember today? Let's return to whatever Gilgal looks like for you, but there are stones and stories worth telling. Let's remember. Let's let faith rise and let's recommit to being a generation that passes down the stories of God.