

# Thanks for the Memories!

Joe Slater

First sung in 1938 in a movie, “Thanks for the Memories” became the late Bob Hope’s signature song. Whether entertaining the troops or starring in a TV special, the conclusion was always some rendition of “Thanks for the Memories.”

I’m not Bob Hope by any stretch of the imagination. My twisted sense of humor has occasionally earned the strong caution, “Don’t quit your day job!” (Meaning, “You’ll never make it as a comedian!”)

However, for the past 15+ years with this congregation, my purpose has never been to entertain the troops in the Lord’s army. Rather, it has been to *“preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2). To whatever degree those efforts have succeeded, the glory belongs to God.

I will, however, hold many cherished memories of my years with you. I’ll remember “seeing the lights come on” when someone learned and understood the gospel. I’ll remember the honor and privilege of officiating at scores of funerals and a handful of weddings. I’ll remember faithful elders, deacons, and members who supported the teaching of the truth even when doing so was painful. I’ll remember seeing hungry souls feeding on God’s word and growing in their faith and active service. I’ll remember good brethren pulling together and supporting each other at times when it seemed one thing after another was knocking us down. I’ll remember the generosity of my brothers and sisters not only toward my family and myself, but toward others in places nearby and far away.

I could go on, but you get the point. I hope that your memories are good, and especially that you will remember how much we love you. Thanks for the memories!

# Obedience from the Heart

God has always required obedience. Yet, God requires that obedience which rises out of a heart of love and gratitude. Paul spoke of the love of Christ as that which ought to motivate us to live for the One who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Jesus identified the greatest command, saying, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind”* (Matthew 22:37). Without love in the heart, our service to God is but empty ritual (Isaiah 29:13).

On the other hand, genuine love will express itself in complete and unconditional obedience to the commands of our Lord. Jesus says, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”* (John 14:15). If we say we love the Lord, while deliberately disregarding His word, our religion is nothing but pretense. Jesus questioned those who were living according to human tradition, asking, *“And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”* (Luke 6:46). God has always desired obedience from the heart. When King Saul failed to obey the voice of the Lord, Samuel explained the significance of his disobedience, saying, *“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22). A lifetime of worshipping God means nothing without a daily walk in obedience to His will. Hebrews 5:9 tells us that Jesus became to *“all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”* If we would truly please God, we must learn and practice obedience from the heart.

Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

# BREATHE!

We take thousands of breaths each day without even noticing. Yet behind each breath lies an intricate and miraculous process. Our brain sends signals to the diaphragm, which contracts and allows air to fill our lungs. Oxygen enters the bloodstream, nourishes our cells, and keeps us alive. All of this happens in seconds – without our conscious effort.

Scientists still don't fully understand the precise mechanisms behind breathing. Why does the body know exactly how much oxygen we need? Why does the heart and brain work together in such perfect harmony? The truth is, we know so little about the very process that keeps us alive. And yet, God knows. He designed it all.

If we don’t even understand how a single breath is sustained, how can we expect to understand God’s greater work in our lives? We make plans, assume outcomes, and try to control our circumstances — but God’s ways are not our ways. His perspective reaches far beyond what we can see or understand.

There are moments when we feel like nothing is working out, when our efforts seem wasted and doors seem closed. We pray and seek answers, but things don’t unfold the way we expect. But just as our bodies breathe without our control, God is working behind the scenes, aligning things according to His will – even when we don’t see it.

Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6). The breath we take, the life we live – it all depends on Him. He holds everything together. We may not understand how, but we can trust that He does.

When we feel discouraged or confused, remember: the One who gives us breath is in control. Even when we don’t understand, He knows what He is doing.

--Robert Kargbo (Middleton, WI)