

EXCERPT



The Practice of Remembering *Uncovering the Place of Memories in Our Spiritual Life*

December 5, 2023 | \$18, 216 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0730-3

Previously titled *As I Recall*, Casey Tygrett's writing in *The Practice of Remembering* explores the power of memory and offers biblical texts and practices to guide us in bringing our memories to God for spiritual transformation.

Bring Out Your Shells

The question of memory—specifically what memories mean in light of our life of faith—has always been with me. I suppose memory and memories have been the subtext for all pastoral work I have done in the last twenty-two years.

Helping people to remember the story of the gospel, to remember times when they were close to God, and to bring to mind memories of life and hope that keep them going—these are all part and parcel of walking with others, walking with Jesus.

It hasn't escaped me, however, that even with this powerful subtext we are tempted to say, "The past is behind us. It doesn't matter. It's irrelevant." Perhaps I would have agreed with these statements before, but today I believe that memories (and memory) *matter*. Even though transformation is seen as a future-oriented work, memory matters in the sacred work of spiritual transformation.

So why bother with a conversation about memory, and again does God have anything to do with our recall?

This is the critical question that sets into motion the conversation that we have in front of us. It is a conversation with God in God's presence, and one that is important to our spiritual growth and transformation.

My hope is to invite you to this conversation in all the many and varied ways that it is present in our comings and goings through life with Jesus. In this book you will encounter reflections on memory as it comes to light in large sections of the Bible. At the end of each chapter you will find either a "Practice" or a "Pause." Since spiritual formation is about both *being* and *doing*, it makes sense to have both work and rest included. You are welcome to do both.

I encourage you to spend time with each practice or pause and allow the content of the chapter to draw you to prayer, silence, or action based on what you have heard. The practices may take some time, so give yourself space to come back to each practice or pause when you have time.

Now, as in most cases, the best place to start is on a beach.

One of my favorite places in the world is Grand Cayman, one of the beautiful Cayman Islands in the middle of the Caribbean. For what it's worth, the times we have gone to Grand Cayman as a family have been at the tail end of tropical storm season. While we risked our lives for the beauty, it was also 75 percent off the peak season cost. The risk is well worth it.

We have pictures of my daughter walking the beach at various heights and life stages, leaving progressively larger footprints in the sand. We spent many evenings watching for the "green flash"—a serendipitous moment where the sunset meets the horizon and a brief, brilliant flash of green light hits the sky. We never captured the green flash, but we never ceased to search for it either.



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Casey Tygrett (DMin, Lincoln Christian Seminary) is a theologian in residence at Parkview Christian Church in Orland Park, Illinois. He previously served as teaching pastor at Heartland Community Church and has taught at Lincoln Christian University and Seminary and Emmanuel Christian Seminary. Casey now oversees the spiritual direction practice for Soul Care, hosts the *Restlessness Is a Gift Podcast*, and is the author of *Becoming Curious* and *The Gift of Restlessness*.

As we walked the beach at night with our skin and spirits tired from the hot days near the equator, we would search for shells. Some of those shells sit in a glass jar not far from where I'm writing—they have accompanied us through two moves, not to mention surviving the plane ride back to the States.

They are gentle signs of our presence in a place and time in the past. We saw them, felt them, placed them in a cup and valued them enough to pack them wrapped in our underwear so they would survive the flight unharmed.

The shells are an apt image for our memories. We walk through life encountering God, gore, and grace, and we collect those *experiences* along the way. We then weed through the shells, keeping some and letting others topple into the surf, and those we keep become a fixed item from a moment in time—a *memory*.

The memories build, and we are able to bring the jar out and show them to friends and family and tell the story this collection of memories carries. My daughter has grown up gathering shells, and she has learned the *script* for how we conduct ourselves on the beach at night. Perhaps one day she'll take her kids to the salt-washed shores as well.

The imagery of gathering shells helps me understand both how we come to have and hold our memories, and what critical significance they hold for our formation with Jesus. The framework of *experiences*, *memories*, *stories*, and *scripts* is one that we will return to throughout the book. It will serve as a foundation for us as we examine not only how memory affects us but also how the Scriptures and the Spirit guide us in being formed through the content of our memories.

Perhaps as we begin, the best thing you can do is to imagine your memories as gathered shells, textured and colorful, laid out in front of you. As you look at them, ask yourself these two simple questions: What do I recall? Why?

Bring out your shells. We can now begin to remember.

-Taken from the introduction, "A Question Before Remembering"

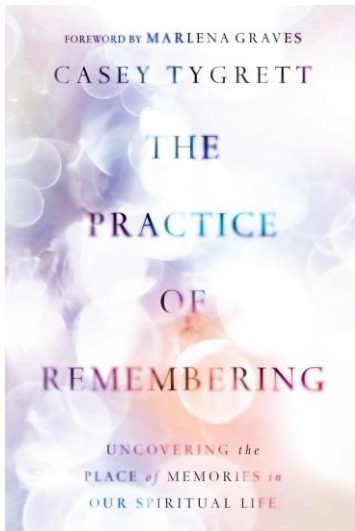


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ENDORSEMENTS



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How we hold and carry our memories—good and bad—is a part of what forms us spiritually. In this way we have a common bond with the people of Scripture who also had a sensory life. Exploring the power of memory, Casey Tygrett offers biblical texts and practices to guide us in bringing our memories to God for spiritual transformation.

What Is the Role of Memory in Spiritual Formation?

"If you've ever wondered where wonderment comes from, thought about where thoughts are born, or wished you could forget a painful memory, then Casey Tygrett's *The Practice of Remembering* is a must-read. It is not a *how to* but a *how come* book. How is it that we can remember the color of socks we were wearing in an accident a decade ago, yet we can't remember what we had for lunch last hour? How do all these memories we carry with us relate to the life Christ would have us live? Tygrett has some thoughts on these subjects. *The Practice of Remembering* is a good read for anyone who thinks."

Matthew Sleeth, executive director of Blessed Earth

"Through personal story, neurological insights, and spiritual practices, Casey Tygrett pastors his readers, inviting us to bring our whole selves—our past, present, and future selves, our physical, emotional, spiritual selves—into a life formed by the God who was, who is, and who is to come."

Mandy Smith, pastor and author of *The Vulnerable Pastor*

"Our memories bind us not only to our personal past, but also to people, places, and experiences. Casey Tygrett's *The Practice of Remembering* is an exquisite meditation on the role of memory in our formation. By teaching us to pay careful attention to our memories, Tygrett points us toward a richer and more connected life."

C. Christopher Smith, senior editor of The Englewood Review of Books and author of *How the Body of Christ Talks*

"I love this book. Casey Tygrett offers a simple yet life-altering invitation: to remember. Charting a path that begins in the past, in our memories, he does not let us stop there. Instead, with his coaching, we begin the spiritual practice of cultivating our life's memory collections and find clues to where God is at work in our present and future."

Catherine McNeil, author of *Long Days of Small Things*

"*The Practice of Remembering* does something no other book I have seen dares to do. It explores the importance of memory in our spiritual formation. Our experiences, memories, and stories form a script that influences our lives in deep ways. This beautifully written, honest book is full of much-needed wisdom. Prepare to be changed."

James Bryan Smith, author of *The Good and Beautiful God*

"There are smells, tastes, and moments in life that instantly take me back in time. I have my own mental DeLorean nearing eighty-eight miles per hour ready to shoot me back to another time, but I can never predict when it will reach velocity. Sometimes I wonder why recollections strike, but I've never pondered it deeply until now. Casey Tygrett, with deep insight and a sharp pen, leads us more deeply into what God is revealing to us through our personal and communal stories and how embracing those stories leads us forward."

Sean Palmer, teaching pastor at Ecclesia Houston



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