

# Today We Remember

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

## Presentation

Open with a viewing of the “Today We Remember” slide show of US soldiers in action and at funerals. The slide show ends with a picture of a soldier saluting the American Flag and the words, “One Nation Under God.”

## Preface

This is the day before Memorial Day. Let’s let this be the day we remember the real losses. We shall remember the lives sacrificed for the freedoms we so often take for granted. It is also the day when we bask in the memories of our very personal and precious losses of loved ones who have left this earth.

## Participation

I would like to do something special today. I want the entire room to remain silent. One at a time, I would like for those who feel compelled to do so, stand up and state the relationship and name of someone special that you are remembering today. I would like for the room to remain reverent as we recite the names of those spouses, parents or children that you so dearly miss.

## Scripture – Read

*“<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. <sup>5</sup>For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NIV*

## Introduction

The verses that are our text are just a few of the many in God’s Word that can bring comfort and encouragement to broken hearts. I want to challenge you to apply the words of Paul to your own life. I want to ask you to consider three important steps to living with the loss of your love ones.

## Content

### 1. Cherish The Rich Memories

Illustration: John H. Powell’s, Mr. Powell to me; was rough on the outside but that stopped at his leather-like skin. Inside, he was a gentle loving man with a heart as big as his pickup truck. He would do anything for anyone. He was more than a father-in-law to me. He was like the father I never had. I don’t know if he loved me for me, or because I married his precious daughter, for he loved her dearly.

The memories are rich and filled with laughter. One year I boxed and wrapped a cow patty as a Christmas present and labeled it, “To John from Frances (his wife).” As he opened it, he instantly knew it was my doing. I have never seen anyone laugh so hard. I suppose he got me back when he was fishing with my brand new rod and reel that was an anniversary present from my wife. He fell asleep and when the fish hit it jerked the rod right out of Mr. Powell’s hands. That was really nothing compared to the time we sunk the boat and were stranded just off of Dauphin Island.

I could go on about the many memories like the time we were going to haul some cattle to the stock yard and as I was driving up the steep hill, the trailer full of cattle came loose and went rolling back down the hill into a ditch. I have never seen cows so upset in my life and I don’t have to tell you what cows do when they are upset.

But there are three things I treasure the most about my memories of the beloved Mr. Powell. They are:

1. the long and casual talks about life and family

2. the words of encouragement and confidence he often bestowed upon me
3. the knowledge of knowing he loved the Lord and is with our Lord waiting to be joined by those he loved

Everyone has memories of one or more people in their life like John Powell. The memories flow like bitter sweet rivers. Most memories are rich with wonderful heart warming thoughts of simple times and meaningful words. Other memories are full of questions and doubts about what we might have done to better express our love or make life better for our deceased love one.

"If only I had told him I loved him?" "If only I had kissed her one last time?" "If only I hadn't spoken so harshly?" Don't allow the 'if only I had...' questions to haunt you. If you failed to do more, you will have your opportunity in eternity.

Thank God for your memories. Treasure them as if they were the greatest treasure here own earth. Talk and walk with God, speaking freely of your loved one and the deepest feelings of your heart. Jesus Christ understands death and he knows the emotions of your heart.

Cherish the memories and thank God for them. They will bring you more joy than all of the riches of the world.

## **2. Receive God's Comfort**

Paul refers to God as the God of all comfort. When we are struggling with life's wounds, God is here to give us His divine comfort.

When someone dies, the family usually has a wake and we all go by and speak words of comfort to family. Usually, we stand in line with an empty helpless feeling asking ourselves, "What will I say?" Though we can offer comforting words, they are limited. When life is lost, we all need comfort from God. God is the only one who can give the real comfort we need because he is the author of life. He is the creator of these frail bodies and we must have reassurance from Him that all is still in control even in our time of emptiness.

Illus: A man put a sign in his yard that read: "Puppies For Sale." A young boy came by to inquire about buying a puppy only to learn that they were \$25.00 each. The boy was crushed because he only had \$2.50. "Could I see them anyway," asked the boy. "Of course," said the owner. The boy's eyes danced at the sight of the five furry puppies. "I heard one had a bad leg," he said. "Yes, I'm afraid she'll be crippled for life," answered the man. "Well, that's the puppy I want," said the boy. "Could I pay you a little at the time?" "But she'll always have a limp and she will need a lot of extra love and help," the man replied. Smiling bravely, the boy pulled up one pant leg, revealing a brace. "I don't walk so well either," said the boy.

God understands your every emotion and pain. He made sure He understood first hand through the death of His own son. God knows that the loss is so deep that it hurts so bad, deep in your chest and soul. He hears your cries and He is present to comfort you.

Allow God to comfort you with His Word and with His Holy Spirit. God's Word promises He will provide great comfort in all of our troubles.

There is an old saying, "You never know Jesus is all you need until He is all you've got." Go to God with your heart and receive His divine comfort.

## **3. Live To Comfort Others**

Paul makes it clear that God's comfort in us should overflow into us comforting others. We are alive today for a purpose and that purpose can be summed up in two words, "God & Others."

Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Illus: Helen Keller once said, "To be blind is bad, but it is worse to have eyes and not to see."

Can you see them? There are hundreds of people just like your loved one right here in your community. They need your comfort! They need your savior!

Look around you. Look into the eyes of the people and see the hurt and confusion. Look at the self destruction, confusion and lies that are consuming people's lives today. You have the answer. You know the answer in God. We must live! We must live to share the faith in Jesus Christ.

Illus: With all of the death I have heard about in this congregation and the death I have seen with my own eyes and felt with my own hurt in three short months, there should be no one idle. We should all be keenly aware of the importance of people knowing Christ as their savior. I have learned to waste no time about people's relationship with God. When I visit people in the hospital, if I am not sure about their salvation, I ask. The worst thing imaginable would be to have to perform their funeral not knowing about their relationship with God. I can't afford to guess about people's destiny. Neither can you!

You might say, "Well you don't understand, I am not comfortable talking about my faith in God." Brother, it is time I speak the truth about that comment. You are right, I don't understand.

Are you not saved by the blood of Christ, forgiven by the grace of God, redeemed, filled with the Holy Spirit, comforted by the hand of God himself and given eternal life? Doesn't your entire hope and existence hinge upon your faith in these facts? Not only should we be able to speak of our God, it should be impossible for us to keep quiet about God.

Other things matter a little, but people count most of all.

What about your friends and loved ones who are living? Do they know Christ? Will they have eternal life as you and your loved ones who are with Him now? How do you know the answers to these questions unless you talk to them about God?

#### ➤ **Conclusion**

Illus: In his book, "When All you've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough," Harold Kushner says, "I have no fear of death because I have lived. There is no way to prevent dying. But the cure for the fear of death is to make sure you have lived."

Mourn the loss of your lost loved ones.

Cherish your memories and photos.

Experience God's comfort.

But Live Also! Don't retreat, Live!

You have been given life. What are you doing with your life?