How To Erase Bad Memories
Philippians 3:13-14
Compass of Salinas/Marina
Life Group Discussions
October #2

This Sunday’s message addressed one of the biggest ways people self-sabotage: They re-live bad memories. It just comes naturally to humans. And yet one of the most important skills to learn is how to erase these memories. So what bad memories do you have……?

1. Your memories can bless you or torture you. Dante was right when he said, “Hell on earth is when you rehearse bad memories”. Paul had plenty of bad memories. After all he tried to kill the early church by killing Christians. Jesus was a cuss word to him. So what does Paul say he did in Philippians 3:13-14?

   - Forgetting the past. Do you really think that is possible? Defend your opinion. Be careful. Paul said he did it. Was he lying or delusional?

2. Consider the following:

   **Bad memories affect us.** A boy is hungry for encouragement and praise from his parents but he gets none. No matter how he excels in school or in sports, he hears no praise. None! Except once he tells about when he was named to the National Honor Society in high school. His mother had said to him, “We’ve given you every advantage and so we expect you to excel.” Is it any wonder he is a driven man today, driven for praise and recognition?
   **Bad memories are not easy to erase and they affect us!**

   A little girl has a dominating father who verbally abuses, constantly belittles and humiliates her mother. Her mother is weak. She doesn’t standup to him. And the little girl records in her memory all of this. She promises herself she will not be like her weak mother, that she will never let a man dominate her or verbally abuse her.
   
   She grows up to resent any man who is a strong leader. So what does she do? She marries a weak man. She wears the pants in the family. She does not realize that she is doing the same thing to her husband her father did to her mother.
   
   And she has a hair-trigger temper if anyone has a different opinion than she does, God help them. She is still angry about her weak mother and it affects her.
   
   **Do you think it has anything to do with her bad memories of her father and mother?**

   That woman has been in my office for counseling many times over the years, always with a different name because it’s a different woman, but always with the same story and problem: **She doesn’t know how to erase bad memories.**

   - What is the point of those 2 examples?

   - **(Personal; not to share unless you wish).** Spend some time thinking about how a bad memory you have from childhood has affected and shaped you. Don’t rush pass this. Sometimes the root of recurring sin or personality issues…..is bad memories growing up. We give ourselves ‘orders’ or we develop false beliefs like I am socially a klutz and should keep quiet. It is an order we give ourselves. So….what memories have affected you, even imprisoned you?
3. How can we erase bad memories? Consider this quote:
   
   First, talk to yourself and say there is no future living in the past! Make up your mind about that!
   
   Nothing is free in life. Anything great, anything worthwhile, is not free. There is always a price to be paid. Erasing bad memories is not free. It has a price tag. Many are willing to pay the price. You have to decide there is no future in the past!
   
   People want happy memories but they keep bringing up the past. They aren’t willing to pay the price of breaking the habit of being HISTORICAL.
   
   It is the quickest way to dig the grave of a marriage. Keep throwing the past in the other person’s face and it will ruin any relationship. And yet legions of marriages do it.
   
   There is no future living in the past.
   
   So many have their bad memories on life support by rehearsing them to anyone who will listen. Usually they are seeking sympathy. They get sympathy but sympathy is a poor substitute for joy. It is impossible to be happier than the memories we rehearse.
   
   Paul admits there was a battle inside him when he writes to the Philippians “Forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to the future.”
   
   Why did he say he was straining to not live in the past? Because it took effort. He was fighting a battle not to rehearse the past guilt. Paul had to win the battle of his mind and stop rehearsing his bad memories. You can be sure Satan tried to bring up the past!! Paul fought the battle of memories.
   
   Paul says to the Corinthians in chapter 10, verse 5 “Take every thought captive to Jesus.”
   
   That’s what Paul did! Paul means that the battle is in our mind. It takes effort to take control of your mind and not let bad memories run like rabbits everywhere.
   
   No one can do that for us. Only we can thought stop. Many people are not willing to put out the effort. There is no future living in the past!
   
   Surely someone here needs to stop living in the past? What bad memory is it time to make up your mind to thought stop and take your mind captive to Jesus instead of replaying bad memories again and again. What memory is that for you?
   
   • Underline the most important sentence and say why.

   • What do you think about the part that said a possible motive for rehearsing the past is to get sympathy. Some people equate sympathy with love and affirmation. What would you say to someone who continually wants sympathy?

   • “Take every thought captive to Jesus”. What does that mean? In a couple of sentences try to describe what that means to do.

   • So be honest: What recurring thought do you need to ‘take captive to Jesus’? I know this is vulnerable, but it is part of being free and letting people pray for you.

4. Read the following:
   
   Secondly, intentionally make great memories! The only way to forget bad memories is to pile up great memories and crowd them out!
It was on a Monday. I had been living with my bad memories of regrets for several months after Jon’s death. Then I heard Jesus say, “How many more months are you going to waste of life. Do you plan on living in the past the rest of your life?”

I went home to Susie and asked, “What day is it?” She said, “Monday” I said, “Time to celebrate!”

And we did. We started making new good memories. Every night when I come home I say to Susie, “Time to celebrate.” And we do something fun even if it’s watching a Hallmark movie. I’m a guy. I don’t like Hallmark movies. I like action movies. Hallmark movies put me to sleep! But you’ve got to compromise if you want to make memories together.

One of the sad things is to see people stop making memories as they grow older. Carl Reiner famous said “Every morning I read the obituaries - - if I’m not in them I have breakfast.”

Warren Buffet is 86. He eats like a 6-year old - - he proudly drinks sugar filled Cokes every day. Burgers and fries are his favorite food, and he treats himself almost every day to a Dairy Queen. He has fun even when eating.

When people come to me after one of them has had an affair, and they say they want to rebuild, I always say, “Then go play together. Do fun things together that make new memories what shove out the bad memories. Playing together brings people closer together!

- Underline the most important sentence or startling idea and discuss why. How does it apply to your life?

- Do you play much? On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being serious and maybe driven, and 10 being playful, where are you? Do you like where you are or would you like to move the needle?

5. C.S, Lewis said after you die, you will know you are approaching heaven when you hear laughter coming across the cosmos. Joy is the serious business of the Holy Spirit in our life.

- Actually write out Galatians 5:22-23. What is joy according to the Bible in those verses?

- What do you think the Bible means when it says joy is the FRUIT of the Holy Spirit? Fruit?

- Think about that verse: If a Christian is not joyful (that is not the same as happy about everything), it means they have QUENCED the Holy Spirit in them. Put out the fire. Name at least 3 ways a person might quench the joy of the Holy Spirit in them.

- Having bad things happen to us is NO EXCUSE for losing our joy. That’s what those verses say. And Paul, after he records a lot of bad things that happened – stoning etc – says “We know SORROW but our joy is inextinguishable”! Not just for Paul but for a lot of ordinary Christians around him who were also suffering for their love of Jesus. Joy that is independent of circumstances is how you get through hard times. On a scale of 1-10 how strong are you in this department? Name one thing that tends to steal your joy! So what can you do about that?

Pray for each other
Memory: “But the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace.” Galatians 5:22
Collect Great Memories, NOT Stuff!
Joshua 4:1-9
Compass of Salinas/Marina
Life Group Discussions
October #3

1. At the end of your life what will matter most is not how much money or stuff you have. What will matter most is your memories. Wise people collect great memories, not stuff. So read several times Joshua 4:1-9. God’s people have escaped Egypt and wandered in the wilderness 40 years until the unbelieving generation died off. Now with a young and fresh generation, Joshua leads the people into the Promise Land to conquer it. They cross the Jordan river.
   - What does God command them to do (there are 12 tribes)?

   - Why are they to do this?

2. How are great memories made? Consider the following:

   And then Joshua attacked Jericho a couple of miles away. He destroyed it. When I take people to Jericho, you can actually see the line in the ruins of old Jericho of all the burned ash in the destruction of it.

   This is the very same spot on the Jordon where John the Baptist baptized Jesus. The very same spot because it was remembering that God does miracles and so does Jesus in His ministry because He is God.

   Archeologists have identified this very spot where Joshua crossed the Jordan and where Jesus was baptized.

   Just recently this spot has been opened up for baptisms today. So in June I took 85 people from Compass to this very spot. Almost 50 were baptized. It’s a little muddy but no one cared. Believe me, this is one of the greatest memories those 50 people will ever have, and they will have this memory forever.

   Collect great memories, not stuff!

   I have memorials all over my office and at home of the great memories in my life. These memorials of great memories are medicine for hard days in ministry and life. So how do we make great memories?

   On the screen is an hourglass with the sand running very fast through it. That’s our life. The Bible says our life is like dew on the morning grass that is soon gone.

   Blink and a year is gone. Blink and your little girl is 25 and getting married. Blink and your children are grown and you are getting old.

   Time flies by and there is no rewind button in life. Not with your children or grandchildren or your marriage.

   Time flies by and there is no rewind button. So many marriages are dialogues of the deaf. It takes time to really listen. But in many marriages to speed things up one of us will finish the sentence of the other. We’re trying to speed them up. Or we’ll interrupt them. But great marriages take time to listen to each other’s heart and understand what it’s like to walk in their shoes.

   Meyer Friedman wrote a book about this and tells about a man who makes his meals in a blender so he can save the time it takes to chew. True story.

   He also writes about a CEO he knows who scheduled 15 minutes to visit his son’s birthday party.
Making great memories takes time. It does not take spending a lot of money. It just takes spending time.

This last week I read this question: “When you are gone, what memories will your children and grandchildren have of you.” Sobering isn’t it. But it’s a good question. How would you answer it?
• Underline the most important or challenging sentence and say why.

• Time flies by and there is no rewind button….. And yet wasting time is an easy thing to do. In your opinion what are the 2 biggest ways people waste time and explain why they do that.

• So…..think about your life. What is the most frequent way you waste time instead of serving God, investing in people, deepening your spiritual life, etc? This is actually quite sobering because this day will never come again.

3. Consider this quote:
   In my research for this morning I came across these lines: Someday you will only be a memory to your family. Do your best to be a good one!
   Becoming a great memory for people is a form of immortality, isn’t it?
   It’s a mystery but when children become adults they forget how to play. Oh we play golf or tennis, but it’s not play like children do. We insert competition into it and all kinds of other things. It’s not really play.
   You know you are getting older when you pull out your license for a cop who’s stopped you and he looks at your picture, then he looks at you, and then he stares at your picture and studies it, and then he looks at you again and you say, “Yes that’s really me”.
   But your age is irrelevant unless you are cheese or red wine. People who don’t play or laugh very much grow old faster than other people.
   Barbara Johnson is one of my favorite authors. Her books are very funny. And one of my favorites is Pack Up Your Gloomees In A Great Big Box And Sit On the Lid And Laugh. What a great title. Surely someone here has the gloomees today. Her advice is this: When you’ve got the gloomees, but a bag over your head and write on it “closed for remodeling.”
   Joy is a set of attitudes, not a set of circumstances. That’s why John Powell, the great spiritual writer, has a card taped to his mirror that says: “You are looking at the face of the person who is responsible for your happiness today.”
   I have that on my mirror too. Being grim doesn’t make great memories. Being joyful and laughing and having fun does make great memories.
   That means getting out of our ruts. Anybody in a rut? That means not watching TV tonight. Instead playing a game or riding bikes together or go bowling even though it’s been 20 years since you last bowled. That’s what will make it fun and laughs. Get out of ruts and do more celebrating.
   Collect great memories, not stuff.
• Underline the most important or challenging sentence in your opinion and say why?

• Talk to us about the John Powell quote. Is that true? What does he mean? It has been said that if I am depressed or grim or joyful, I did it to myself. What do you think?
• I was counseling a person who said, “My attitude is based on how my husband treats me”. I said, “A bad attitude is one of the biggest disabilities in life. I have on my mirror a stick-em that says “You are looking at the person who is responsible for your attitude today.” Who do you think is right and say what difference does it make?

• (Personal private unless you want to share) Do you often blame your attitude on people or never? Lately have you been letting people determine your attitude or have you fiercely reserved that choice for you?

4. Write out 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Actually write it down and pay close attention to each word in this commandment.

• Is that possible? Does it say “in all circumstances” or “for all circumstances”? Does that matter? How does it help?

5. Consider this:

Decide to be thankful.

I read this last week that the average person complains 14 times a day. Most people do not realize how much they actually complain. Now I’m sure there is someone here today who is defensive about their complaining. You’re thinking that’s the way you want to be and you’re not gonna change and you have a lot to complain about. All I can say is complainers aren’t very fun to live with and they don’t make great memories. So we have to choose what kind of person do we want to be.

Did you read in the news last week that a man pushed his brand new BMW in a river. The car was a birthday present from his parents. But he was angry because he wanted a Jaguar. His parents though couldn’t afford a Jaguar so they bought him a BMW, and he pushed it in the river. That guy was unthankful, and unthankful people never make great memories. They make the other kind of memory.

People say “Life is hard” but of course the question is “Compared to what?”

1 Thessalonians 5 verse 18 says “Give thanks in all circumstances.” Not for all things but in all circumstances. The Bible is saying even in hard times there are still things to be thankful for. There are still things that you are lucky to have.

Negativity smothers a potential great memory occasion. Complaining shuts down the joy of an event. But being a good-finder and a positive person releases good memories to happen. There’s laughter. People have fun. But not with a complainer. They smother potential great memories.

So what are you thankful for? What are your great memories? And what about great memories at Compass.

I think a form of self-abuse is to take good things for granted. When you do that, you miss the joy of being thankful. Thankfulness is a joy producer. It’s a joy habit. Taking things for granted is a drab habit.
• Summarize in your own words the point of that quote. How is it going against the thinking of most people?

• Underline the absolutely most important sentence and say why?

• Honestly, what 3 things are you thankful for, and make one of them something about Compass?

Pray

Memory: “Give thanks in all circumstances”. 1 Thessalonians 5:18
The themes in this sermon were life changing when I learned them a few years ago. Actually it was in the process of grief over my son’s suicide that I grabbed this ‘rope’ that pulled me out of grief to live again. I hope you learn to apply these principles as I have!

1. Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. List the bad things Paul has endured.

   • What does he mean when he says “We know sorrow BUT our joy is inextinguishable”. How does he pull that off?

2. Consider the following:

   Until further notice, celebrate everything. That is what Tim Hansel’s doctor told him. We were Young Life leaders together at Stanford. He was a friend and a terrific athlete. After graduation he started teaching people how to climb vertical cliffs. One day he fell 100 feet and landed on his back on a rocky ledge. It shattered his back.

   After several surgeries his doc said, “Your back is shattered permanently. You will be crippled the rest of your life and live with constant pain. BUT….” Bite the bullet. Until further notice, celebrate everything and live to be a hundred.

   St Paul did that. He was stoned in city after city, betrayed, lied about. But he summed up his life in one sentence: “We know sorrow but our joy is inextinguishable.”

   The takeaway for the lives of Paul and Tim Hansel is this: If you want security, you are on the wrong planet.

   Bad things happen to everyone. Don’t think life is picking on you. Sooner or later everyone takes hits. Many become grim and gloomy. Haley’s Comet appears about as often as they smile. Know anyone like that?

   Grimness is not a Christian virtue. It is actually a sin against God because it is unthankful.

   There are 2 kinds of people. Yankee fans and Red Sox fans. 49’er fans and Raider fans. In-Shape people and couch potatoes. People who count their blessings and people who count their complaints. Neither is mandatory. Both are choices. Which kind of person have you chosen to be?

   It might surprise you that God says we don’t celebrate enough. God actually made mandatory 3 celebrations a year in Jerusalem for every Jew living in Israel. Each remembered how good God had been to them and each revolved around feasting.

   In fact the first miracle Jesus did was to turn water into wine at a wedding in Cana. The worst imaginable thing happened -- the wine ran out. That was a huge social failure. But Jesus saved the celebration by turning the water in 6 stone jars into the best wine the steward had ever tasted. Each jar held 30 gallons of water. So Jesus’ first miracle was turning water into 180 gallons of top-shelf wine, not grape juice. That would be almost 1,000 bottles of wine.

   Unfortunately many people turn wine into water with their attitudes, don’t they.

   I believe one of the most under-preached facts of Jesus’ life is that He was accused by the Pharisees of this: “Jesus came eating and drinking (celebrating) and they say, “He is a glutton & drunkard.’” (Matthew 11:19)
Jesus was neither. He was sinless but His enemies regularly lied to destroy His moral authority. Grimness is not a virtue: It is actually a sin against God.

The Bible says “joy” is actually the best evidence we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Even in hard times….UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE find things to celebrate.

- Underline the most important sentence and say why it is vital or why you disagree.

- Honestly, underline what is the HARDEST to do. Oh, easy to talk about it, but hard to do. What will you underline?

- Why is this so hard for us? Why is what you underlined so often resisted by Christians who would rather have a pity party than a celebration. In fact, do you celebrate the good a lot or no? Do you need to step it up?

3. Consider the following radical quote from the message.

So what does it mean to celebrate? First, laugh! Laugh! Some people hardly ever laugh, which means they are not much fun to be around.

God is the biggest comedian you’ll ever meet. My proof is this: take a look at the animals God has created. God made monkeys and apes and then one day He said “I’ll make one with a pretty red face. And then God made an aardvark. And all the angels laughed till they cried. And then God made a Tarsier. How can you not laugh when you see him? Grim people manage not to laugh.

Norman Cousins proved the Bible right when the Bible says laughter is the best medicine. He was the editor of the magazine The Saturday Review, when he developed a deadly disease. He was given only a few months to live.

But he rejected that verdict. He fired his doctor and left that hospital which he described as a culture of defeat.

He checked into a hotel and watched funny movies and TV shows day and night. The Marx Brothers and Candid Camera and funny comedians. He watched anything that made him belly laugh.

In the hospital he was in such pain he could not sleep. But he had read that laughter triggers endoenzymes. Laughter actually activates the body’s immune system. It actives the body’s natural killer cells that attack disease cells including cancer. He found that after an hour of laughing, he could sleep peacefully for 2 hours.

He kept laughing. And he was healed from what the docs said was terminal. Laughter saved his life. He wrote a book called The Anatomy of Illness and said laughter saved his life!

The medical school at UCLA brought him on staff. They wanted him to teach about the power of laughter. His classes were jammed. Future doctors were learning there’s more to healing than drugs. Until further notice, celebrate everything. It’s healthy!

- What did Cousins discover that UCLA Medical School hired him to teach?

- Is that hard to believe? Why or why not?
  Do we undervalue laughter? Think about the movies people watch. Thrillers, action…. Where have all the funny people gone? Robin Williams, Bill Murray…..
4. Write out in your own words these verses:
   - Psalm 9:1
   - Ephesians 1:15-16
   - 1 Thessalonians 5:18. (It is a command; not to is sin)

5. Consider the following:
   The best thing we can teach our children and grandchildren is to be thankful. Why?
   Because it is thankfulness that produces joy even in hard times.
   I am CONVINCED that...the hardest math is counting our blessings one by one.
   What about thankfulness for Compass? What are you thankful for? Do you know that
   every day, 8 churches die in America and permanently close their doors?
   But Compass is thriving. In the videos that last few weeks we have seen that God has
   brought us so far. In the 80’s we were declining. Worship was less than 300 people. But
   changes were made and soon we outgrew the sanctum of the red brick church.
   We moved 1 service to the gym which seated more than 600. And in a year there were
   no empty seats.
   So we looked for land to build. We made a deal for 100 acres on Highway 68 at
   Reservation Road.
   But some of us had a check in our spirit. We believed God wanted us to be a church in
   the city, not a church in the hills.
   We turned down the deal even though there was no place to build in Salinas...and then
   God did a miracle. One day the owner of the old Carpeteria building contacted us and said
   that he was thinking of selling. We took a tour of the building and knew immediately that we
   could turn it into what Main Street is now. We bought it.
   I’ll never forget the night we dedicated it. That night we took markers and wrote names
   of unchurched friends on the walls and floors that we prayed would one day become
   Christians in this church. Some of your names are on the walls and under the carpet.
   Compass has always been about saving the unsaved and repairing broken lives.
   Then the building next door came up for sale. We bought it to turn it into children’s
   Sunday School. Scores of people in the trades volunteered to turn it into Kids Central
   Marina was growing but it only had tiny churches. An opportunity to take over the old
   VFW building came. We grabbed it because there was a vast growing population of
   unchurched there.
   The fact is the city was not approving new churches. But we said to the city we will turn
   a bar into a place of worship.
   Another miracle. We were approved and scores of volunteers turned a bar into
   children’s classrooms and a worship center. So many volunteers worked hard to turn that bar
   into the church we now have in Marina.
   Compass is now 1 church at 3 locations plus 5,000 people watching on live view in
   prisons and hospitals and all around the country plus those who watch our worship services on
   TV and listen to the sermons daily on radio. The impact of our ministry is all the way from
   King City to Santa Cruz to San Jose.
   Underline the most important or challenging sentence for you.
• On a scale of 1-10 how often do you thank God for Compass in your prayers?

• What 3 things are you most thankful about with Compass?

• What difference does it make if you are thankful for Compass or not? How does it matter?

6. Consider this from the message:

There is one more thing celebrating means. It means giving thankfully. 3 summers ago I was taking a class on English fiction at Oxford University in England. Only 11 of us were in the seminar but there was one person who day after day ran down the church and Christianity. And then finally on Monday of the 3rd week, she started on the church again. She said the church was of no use. Churches just take money and make no difference. And finally I couldn’t stand it anymore and stood and said, “You ought to get out more. You live too sheltered a life. Come to my church in California and you’ll find hundreds of marriages that have been saved because of my church. Families that have been reconciled. Parents with grown children reconciled. Let me show you how Celebrate Recovery has broken chains of addiction including anger. Let me show you Divorce Care which has repaired broken lives and how our youth groups have saved youth. You’ve lived too sheltered of a life. You ought to get out more.

Let me show you our Jail Ministry. Let me show you the letters I get from prisoners in Soledad. Letters from people whose families have been saved because of the ministries of Compass.

By the way, what are you doing for prisoners and for saving marriages and what are you doing for shut-ins?” Come to my church and see the difference a church can make.” And then I said “I frankly am offended by your uninformed criticism of churches.” She said nothing the rest of the week. But others in the seminar came up to me and asked me to tell them more about Compass because they had never been to such a dynamic church.

Are you thankful?
I can’t name everything. There’s just too many things at Compass to be thankful for. It is time to spend money on her so she can be repaired.

• Underline the most important sentence and say why.

• The measure of how thankful we are is how often we invite someone to meet us in worship. If we never invite anyone, that says something about our view of the church. Are you happy at the level you are at in inviting people or do you think you could up your game?

• What is the best way to invite someone? What is persuasive in your opinion?

Pray for each other.

“A cheerful heart is good medicine but a grim spirit dries up your bones.” (Proverbs 17:22)