

EXCERPT

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### ***As I Recall***

*Discovering the Place of Memories in Our Spiritual Life*

April 9, 2019 | \$20, 208 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4652-8

According to pastor and spiritual director Casey Tygrett, 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. In these pages Tygrett explores the power of memory and offers biblical texts and practices to guide us in bringing our memories to God for spiritual transformation.

## Memory Matters in Spiritual Transformation

Why can I remember the hospital transport person who graciously pushed my wife's wheelchair as we left the hospital when my daughter was born, but for the life of me I cannot remember his name? While his name might escape me, his gentleness and candor do not.

I do remember he had a stoop in his stature and a quiet smile on his face as he handed us a homemade CD (yes, back in the day) of songs that he thought best celebrated a new life coming into the world. Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" was the opening track.

That I remember. Sitting at the keyboard right now, however, I couldn't tell you my schedule for tomorrow unless at least one piece of technology in my life decides to ding.

Why is that?

Why can my wife remember all the details of our first date but little about our honeymoon?

Why can I remember with clarity the color of the tiles in the church basement where, during three weeks' time one November, we mourned the passing of both my great uncle and my great grandfather?

Neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran says, "How can a three-pound mound of jelly that you can hold in your palm imagine angels, contemplate the meaning of infinity, and even question its own place in the cosmos?"

I would be content most days with remembering my schedule and Google password.

The real question here is simply why do we remember some things and not others? Why do we hold memories from nearly thirty-five years ago in the vault, while a conversation from thirty-five minutes ago might slip into oblivion?

Is it more than just brain function? Is there something deeper fastening those moments into my mind? What is the purpose of what we do remember?

A step further and we ask this question: does God find anything of value, anything helpful and constructive in our lives of archived memories? Does He work with both what we retain and what we fail to remember? Memories come to us all the time: sitting in traffic, when we take in a certain smell, or when we watch something happen that we are certain has happened before. Déjà vu, they call it, like the black cat in *The Matrix*.



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**Casey Tygrett** (DMin, Lincoln Christian Seminary) is theologian in residence at Parkview Christian Church in Orland Park, Illinois. A pastor, blogger, adjunct seminary professor, and spiritual director, he previously served as teaching pastor at Heartland Community Church and has taught at Lincoln Christian University and Seminary and Emmanuel Christian Seminary. He is the author of *Becoming Curious* and *The Jesus Rhythm*. Learn more about Casey at [caseytygrett.com](http://caseytygrett.com). Follow him on Twitter: @cktygrett.

What role do these slippery scenes have in the very real and deep work of living eternally with Jesus starting here and now? Do they contribute anything to the way of savoring “life and life to the full” (John 10:10)?

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 any and all pastoral work I have done in the last twenty-two years. Helping people 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 and 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 is irrelevant.” Perhaps I would have agreed with these statements before, but today I do believe that memories (and memory) matters. 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 critical to our spiritual growth and transformation.

-Adapted from the introduction

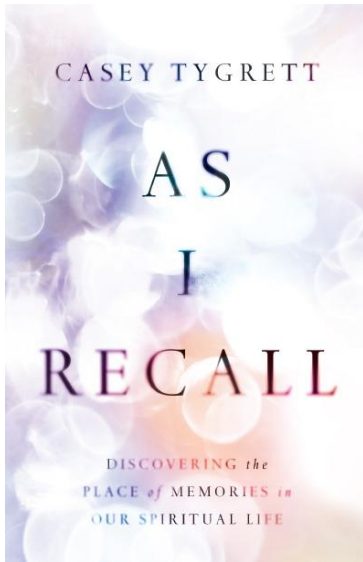


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## Memory Matters

**Why did you decide to write about memories as spiritual formation?**

**Casey Tygrett:** In working as a spiritual director and pastor, I'm often helping people sift through their memories. My experiences in church leadership also suggest that we can understand interpersonal or leadership conflicts best by understanding a person's backstory, the experiences and stories that fill their memories. My motivation was to help give context to and highlight the importance of our memories to both our understanding of ourselves as well as our present and future formation into Christlikeness. I wanted to create an invitation to explore our memories alongside of the stories and themes of the Scriptures to find places where God was, is, and will be at work.

**What need are you addressing in *As I Recall*?**

**Casey:** The need I'm addressing is especially relevant in a world where Google search results rarely go back further than two years. We are a very present and future-focused world, often forgetting that what is happening now has happened in one form or another before. There is nothing new under the sun, as the Teacher says. We have to put our lives and formation into a bigger context and often that context comes from our memories. The need is for us to engage those memories with God, make sense of them, and realize how every memory matters and is a gift to our formation.

**What is the message at the heart of this book?**

**Casey:** There is no formation in Christ without our memories, because our memories are the foundational blocks of the stories and scripts by which we live. Understanding and engaging our memories with Jesus is our best way of being fully formed people within the skin we're in.

**What are some key points you hope to convey to readers in *As I Recall*?**

**Casey:**

- Memories are key to our formation.
- Our memories help define our vocation (Exodus).
- Memories are the raw material for wisdom (Deuteronomy).
- Our emotions rise out of our memories (Psalms).
- Jesus' actions at the last meal with his disciples help give structure to our memories (the Gospels) and hope for our future (Revelation).



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