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I don't know about you, but the older I get, the more I seem to forget things. At home, I often forget where I placed my mobile phone, so when I want to make a call, I would retrace my steps around the house until I found it. Nowadays, I just ask my smart speaker, "Where's my phone," and the phone begins to ring, helping me to locate it by hearing its sound. That works well unless I had the phone on silent, and then I return to the prior method of searching each room in the house.

Based on your experience, what are some of the other most commonly forgotten things? ...

Before getting alarmed at your brain's inability to remember, recent brains studies have discovered that some parts of the brain are designed to forget.<sup>1</sup> Doing so helps us get through each day. Just imagine if you remembered every single experience every day. The brain would be overloaded, so with time, the brain sifts through information no longer needed and deletes it. That's why we may have difficulty remembering someone's name after not seeing them for many years. Or why we can't remember a password that we haven't used for a long time.

The process of forgetting also helps us move beyond painful experiences, helping us rebuild our lives after a tragic event or after a relationship falls apart. It may take a while, but gradually the memories and the pain begin to dissipate as the brain forgets, helping us begin again.

Forgetting isn't a recent phenomenon, for Psalm 106 referred several times to God's people forgetting. The beginning of the Psalm encourages listeners to remember that God's love endures forever, but then the words turn into a confession of forgetfulness—forgetting God's love, forgetting how God rescued those enslaved by the Pharaoh, forgetting how God helped them escape, forgetting how they worshiped a golden calf soon after God had rescued them.

It might have been good to forget some of those painful events in order to move on, to rebuild their lives, but in doing so, they also forgot about God's love. They soon began to act like everyone around them, behaving in ways that did not reflect God's love. God became extremely disappointed in how they treated one another, angry that they harmed each other rather than embracing one another in love.

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As I have watched the destructive images appear on my television screen about the war between Hamas and Israel, I imagine God feels a similar way today—angry when one group of people slaughters another group. Sad when bombs begin to fly and destroy homes and cities.

The hostilities in that part of the world have been rumbling for thousands of years, and neither side has been able to forget the past. Resentment and anger have seeped from one generation to the next, with feelings of hostility passed on like an infection.

It's in these times that I wish everyone could forget the past and could discover the goodness within people in Israel *and* Palestine. They all long for homes in which to live. Meaningful work. Places of worship. Creating memories with their families. Water to drink. Electricity for lights and cooking. Going to school and learning.

Gali Hampe, an 18-year-old girl from Houston, now living in Israel, describes what her life is like as she goes in and out of a bomb shelter throughout the day: "It's a little scary. I have a constant pit in my stomach of just not knowing where things are, or at

any moment you could be woken up in the middle of the night to run to the bomb shelter." Phone connections are not consistent, so when she can't reach her friends, she worries that something has happened to them. When asked if she has considered going back to Texas, she replied that her service is more needed where she's now living, helping in any way she can.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes it's in the midst of a crisis that we finally remember—we remember who we are—humans created to help one another. When life is calm and easy going, we sometimes forget that God intends for us to connect to one another with compassion. We forget that God's love endures forever and includes our enemies. We forget that Jesus invites us to work toward reconciliation with those we don't like. We forget that we have made mistakes and that God has forgiven us when we have messed up our lives.

When we forget these things, violence lurks around the corner, just waiting for someone to do something wrong, waiting for someone to pounce on the situation, unleashing a barrage of unkind words

3

with raised voices, which can lead to more violent outbursts.

These events become embedded in our memories, echoing for decades or centuries, waiting for another opportunity to unleash more acts of violence.

I wish we could just forget. To let go of the painful past. Maybe we need global amnesia, the inability to remember any acts of violence from the past. But in doing so, would we forget how God has offered us hope? Would we forget how much God loves us?

Maybe what we need is a bouquet of forget-me-nots, those beautiful, tiny flowers, most often blue in color, growing in many flower gardens. In an ancient legend, a couple was walking beside the River Danube.

They saw the beautiful blue flowers that this plant had growing on an islet in the middle of the river. The man leapt into the water to get the blue flowers for his love. Although the current was strong, the man crossed the river safely and got the flowers. However, on his trip back to his sweetheart, he was swept away in the rapids. Before he completely disappeared, he threw the bouquet of forget-me-nots to his love and shouted forget-me-not. She wore these flowers in her hair until the day she died and never forgot about him.<sup>3</sup>

Maybe that's what we need: Flowers that remind us that even in loss, love survives. I suspect that's what the psalmist was striving to record through words, that in the midst of our forgetfulness, in the midst of pains, in the midst of loss, God's love endures forever. Even when you find yourself forgetting the location of your phone or anything else, remember that God's love endures forever.

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<sup>1</sup> "The New Science of Forgetting," *Time*, April 28, 2022, <https://time.com/6171190/new-science-of-forgetting/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.khou.com/video/news/local/interview-18-year-old-houstonian-in-israel-during-war/285-ff461df3-389c-4245-bf68-8d106dec1fac>

<sup>3</sup> <https://skonson.com/story-behind-the-name-of-this-flower-forget-me-not-myosotis/>