

17th November 2021

Memory

“I’ve a grand memory for forgetting, David.”

R L Stevenson, Kidnapped

In an episode of the US sitcom, *Frasier*, the principal character, Frasier Crane, and his brother, Niles, are discussing Niles’ estranged wife, Maris. Niles reports: “She’s been thrown off the cast of *Cats* because she couldn’t remember the words of *Memory*.” I liked that line! It’s a clever way of highlighting the significance of memory, just as Robert Louis Stevenson did in the quote from *Kidnapped* above, a hundred and fifty years before.

Memory is important. We’re familiar with the effects of memory-loss in dementia. I once worked with a young man who struggled, as did his loved ones, with Early-Onset Dementia. Loss of memory was a big part of that. There’s a lot of research into this issue, and new techniques are being developed to enhance our memory and even stave off dementia in our later years. Keeping the mind active, being engaged in lively conversation, reading widely, all have the effect of enhancing our memory.

My granny had an excellent memory. She placed a bet on the horses every day and could figure the winnings from a 6/4, 15/2 and 100/30 accumulator bet without recourse to pencil and paper. *There’s* a way to keep the mind active. She could also recall things from eighty years before, though none of these memories were every recorded when she was alive. Perhaps it’s up to me to write them down now before they’re gone forever.

If precious memories matter, shouldn’t we commit them to paper before they’re lost? And could there not be a benefit from writing down our *own* memories, trivial and insignificant though they may seem? We might need them even more if our own memory starts to fade.

The 18th/19th century Irish musician and songwriter, Thomas Moore, wrote this in one of his “National Airs”, *Oft in the Stilly Night*:

*Oft, in the stilly night, ere Slumber’s chain has bound me,
Fond Memory brings the light of other days around me.*

Let’s not lose the light that “fond Memory” brings, so that those “other days”, and people, and places, and circumstances are not lost, but are kept around us where they should rightly be.

A prayer for today

Memories of your faithfulness sustain me, loving God – even when I forget them! Amen