FALL 2025

Living Stone Prison Church

Mike Durfee State Prison - Springfield, SD

Freedom's Gate Church

4800 S Tomar Rd, Sioux Falls, SD



'GOD REMEMBERS TO FORGET'

My memory is truly a crazy thing (Pastor Jason). For instance, I still remember my childhood phone number even though it's been invalid for well over 30 years, but I can't remember where I put my sunglasses last Saturday. (They'll turn up….I hope) There are many things that I wish I could forget and as many other things that I wish I could remember. I wish I could forget the lyrics to "Achy Breaky Heart" but I'm afraid those words will only be one earworm away all the days of my life. I wish I could remember every ounce of wisdom my grandparents tried to pass onto me when I thought I knew it all.

Thankfully, I believe the Lord has washed my memory of some difficult things I've endured given some recent evidence. I've written before about having the distinction of starting my prison career as a corrections officer. This has led me to some interesting conversations with current and former inmates that have attended our two congregations. That was the case with Craig who was fresh out of prison. He walked into our Thursday evening Bible study, and I knew that I knew him, but I just wasn't sure where from. Thankfully, he also knew that he knew me, but he knew exactly where we had met. You see, I ran the cell hall where Craig had been held during his incarceration about 25 years ago. When he introduced himself, my memory was jogged, and I recalled him residing on the South side of tier 3 in the prison, and I even remembered who his cellmate was.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR TO COME WORSHIP WITH US EVERY SUNDAY NIGHT AT 6:00

Please call Lauri at 712.470.4165 to set up a date to come worship with the men at Mike Durfee State Prison! **Visitors are always appreciated!**

Would you be willing to make a meal and worship with us at Freedom's Gate? Please call or text Ruth at 605.366.3624 to find a date that works for you or check our MealTrain link on our website.

Check out our updated website for the calendar of open dates.

Craig listened intently during the Bible Study. Afterwards he explained that he was tired of the way his life had been over the last 25 years and was ready for a change. The former inmate then apologized to me for all the nasty things he called me when I was his Corrections Officer. It was an apology I accepted, even though I DIDN'T REMEMBER HIM ever calling me anything but Officer Wiersma.

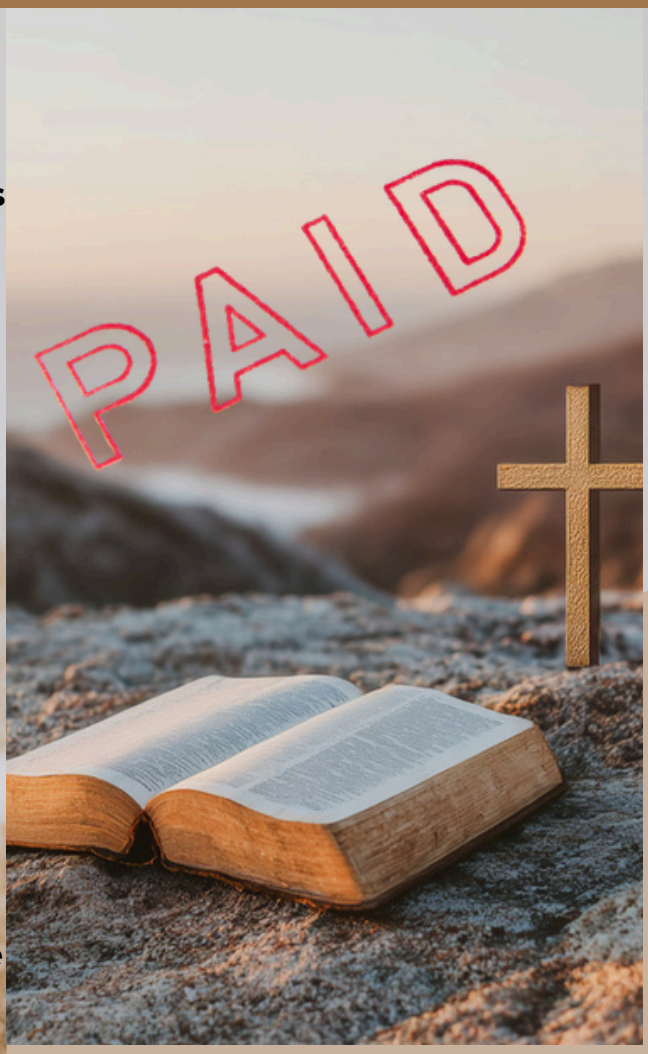
I found it easy on that day to forgive him for things I didn't even remember him saying. That reality got me pondering on scriptures like Isaiah 43:25 where God makes this declaration; "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." Three of the words that jumped out at me from that verse are "for my sake". You see, God recognizes that forgiving others for the way they've hurt us is beneficial for the one who extends the forgiveness even when (or perhaps especially when) it's undeserved. God models the type of forgiveness that He asks us to practice.

The big difference between God and I on this subject is that I forgot about Craig's behavior because I have a bad memory (with some things), but He forgets our sins intentionally. Because of Jesus and the cross He bore, God looks at His people and says, "What sin?" He remembers to forget our sin, which means that He doesn't hold our rebellion against us because Jesus paid for it on our behalf!

The intentional forgetfulness of God is great news for people like Craig who want to make a new start. He can now rebuild his life on the firm foundation of the forgiveness of Christ instead of the slimy pit of sin. God remembers our sin, but he also remembers to forgive and forget the consequences of that sin out of the love He has for us made ever so clear on the cross. What a blessing it is to be forgiven by God who chooses to forget our failures because of Jesus' success, and then, in turn, He chooses us!

Thank you for all of your support for Living Stone Prison Church and Freedom's Gate as we seek to see people freed by forgiveness and desiring to build a new life in which God is glorified. You may be like me and forget a lot of things. But never forget how much you are loved and forgiven through Jesus. Now if you will excuse me, I'm going to go look for those sunglasses

IN CHRIST'S LOVE,
Pastor Dan Ebbens (Living Stone Prison Church)
Pastor Jason and Ruth Wiersma (Freedoms Gate)



All contributions can be made payable to Living Stone Prison Church and sent to our treasurer:
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