

EDITOR'S NOTE

I don't know when it was exactly that I forgot what happened on July 8, 1994, but if I had to tell you what I did that day, I couldn't. It has blended in too thoroughly with July 7 and 9 of that year, with the whole of that summer. If you let me look back at an old journal entry from that day, everything (ok, some things) might come rushing back. That sort of writing, it would seem, would be an aid to my memory.

When I stop to consider the relationship between writing and memory, I can't help but think of Plato. In *Phaedrus*, Plato's star philosopher, Socrates, criticizes writing as a way of enhancing memory. Socrates sets the stage by telling the mythical story of Theuth, a prolific inventor, who came up with the idea for writing. But when Theuth displayed his invention to the Egyptian king Thamus, he didn't receive the feedback he expected.

"...Theuth declared: 'Here is an accomplishment, my lord the king, which will improve both the wisdom and the memory of the Egyptians. I have discovered a sure aid for memory and wisdom.' 'Theuth, my paragon of inventors,' replied the king, 'the discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it. So it is in this case; you, who are the father of writing, have out of fondness for your offspring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of on their own internal resources. What you have discovered is an aid for recollection, not for memory.'"

Of course, this story is rather ironic, appearing as it does in a written work. As much as Plato may have worried about writing diluting memory, it was the only way to preserve his ideas for future generations. Even if writing isn't a boon to memory, it's certainly an effective way to preserve a memory (or an idea or a message) and to transmit it to others.

At this point, you may be asking, who cares about Socrates and Plato and memory and writing? I think there is reason for all of us to care, whether we enjoy writing or philosophy or not. As



A younger Christine Spicer, remembering not to forget

individuals, our memories are bound up closely with our identities and with how we perceive ourselves and our relationships and our world. Preserving and reflecting on our memories can help us trace God's Hand in our lives. Memories can help us value what we have and the sum of our experiences – both joys and trials. Additionally, as Christians, transmitting our beliefs, preserving the stories and memories of God's faithfulness, and passing on what we know and what we have learned are acts that have value. If writing can help in this process, I'll gladly pick up my pen (or clatter away at my keyboard).

Sincerely,

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Correction: In the last issue, it was reported that Distinguished Achievement Award recipient H.B. London received an honorary doctorate from Claremont Graduate School of Theology. It should have read California Graduate School of Theology.