

Reminders

As we drove out of our street towards the next meeting, the conversation went as follows:

He: 'Have you got your hearing aids in?' She: 'Yes'.

She: 'Have you got your teeth in?' He: 'Yes'.

It's not long before that other frequent question arises...
'Did I lock the front door?' Answer: 'I don't know – didn't you check?' 'Should we turn back?'



Checking and reminders are a vital part of ensuring that life goes according to plan. When so many of our regular actions are done automatically and without thinking, it is easy to have no recollection of having locked the door...etc...

It's not that we have a failing memory – it's just that the brain sees no reason to hold on to recent information when the act is complete and the cerebral files are already bursting to overflowing.

Jane Austen was fascinated by memory, seeing it as integral to the miracle of human nature. Her works frequently explore the complexities of memory and forgetfulness, how it shapes our understanding of ourselves and the world, often highlighting how memory can be a powerful force bringing back both happy and painful experiences. She examines how people construct their memories, sometimes idealizing the past or using it to justify present actions. In Mansfield Park, Jane's heroine, Fanny Price, a shy reflective young girl, observes to a friend,

"If any one faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient; at others, so bewildered and so weak; and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond control! We are, to be sure, a miracle every way; but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting do seem peculiarly past finding out."

For some people, who live with impaired memory, making sense of the world is challenging. Old memories tend to stay fixed, new experiences are increasingly difficult to recall. Yet this does not impact on our personhood. For all that we ever experience shapes the person we are, whether or not we remember. We remain, in God's eyes, as complete a person as ever. And if we struggle to locate a word or name, we are blessed with many other ways of communication – in smiles, touch, hand movements, facial expressions, and shared photographic memories.

Jesus assures us: 'The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.' *John 14.26*