



grow. pray. study.

May 26, 2024 What Do These Stones Say: Leaving a Legacy

Scripture: Joshua 4:1-7 (CEB)

The importance of remembering

MONDAY 5.27.24 Exodus 24:3-4, 1 Chronicles 16:1-4

As in our Sunday worship Scripture reading (cf. [Joshua 4:1-7](#)), ancient Israel at times used stones (not carved or sculpted statues, just “stones” *) to remind them of important experiences. By King David’s time, they also used music as a significant vehicle to sustain their memories of how God had led and guided them. The power was neither in stones nor in tunes, in and of themselves, but in the way those tangible clues could trigger the power of human memory.

- Moses set up “twelve sacred stone pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel” (Exodus 24). Exodus 23:24 said God told Israel to “smash to bits the sacred stone pillars” of Canaanite nations, which stood for the “gods” those nations worshiped. Moses’ pillars were not to worship, but to remind the tribes of Israel of their covenant with the only true God who delivered them from slavery. Why does it matter to worship, not memorials, but the God whose acts memorials remind us of?
- 1 Chronicles, written **after** the Israelites’ exile in Babylon ended, reviewed Israel’s history as the nation rebuilt the Temple and its worship. It told what King David did many years before, and explained the purpose the worship elements served. “The musical service of the Levites before the sacred chest includes singing about God’s deeds (remembrance and thanksgiving) and God’s attributes (praise).” * Why is it important to see worship music as more than concert performance?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as I worship, let all the visual, verbal, and sonic reminders of your presence draw my attention to you, not just to the reminders themselves. Amen.

* “In the Negev and Eastern Sinai some 142 independent sites of standing stones have been found, most with origins dating thousands of years before Israel’s appearance.... These were unformed stones and should be distinguished from the carved stelae found in Egypt and Hazor.” Richard Hess, comment on Joshua 4 in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Old Testament), Volume 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009, p. 27.

** Melody D. Knowles, study note on 1 Chronicles 16:4 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 645 OT.

When memory fails, memorials can lose meaning

TUESDAY 5.28.24 Genesis 28:11-19, 1 Kings 12:26-29, Luke 11:47-48

Fleeing his angry twin Esau (cf. [Genesis 27:41](#)), Jacob slept alone in the wild, with a stone pillow. He had a dream in which God gave him great promises. He made the place a sacred memorial—Bethel. Centuries later, the king of the 10 northern tribes who had left the Israelite nation used that memorial site to worship alternate “gods” (a golden calf, no less—cf. [Exodus 32:2-8](#)). Jesus called out leaders who claimed to venerate the ancient prophets yet rejected his own prophetic message.

- King Jeroboam clearly wanted Bethel’s ancient link to the patriarch Jacob to cloak his political agenda (“I don’t want MY kingdom’s people worshiping God in Jerusalem”) in a religious guise. It didn’t work. His nation wandered ever further from their covenant with Israel’s God until Assyria conquered them in 722 B.C. How does their tragic fate remind us of the need to serve the God our religious memorials remember, not just their human founders or locations?
- The “scribes” Jesus rebuked were not just religious nitpickers. “It was a matter of an agenda which focused on the law as the charter of Israel’s national life, on the one hand, and [Jesus’] agenda which demanded repentance, turning away from Israel’s headlong flight into national rebellion, politically against Rome and theologically against God.” * Memorials to prophets meant nothing if used to uphold an agenda alien to the prophets. What can we learn from Jesus’ strong words?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep my heart open to your kingdom agenda. Guard me from trying to use your name and memorials to uphold my wishes if they do not match yours. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (New Testament for Everyone Book 4) (pp. 145-146). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. Kindle Edition.

Food saved “for future generations”

WEDNESDAY 5.29.24 Exodus 16:11-15, 31-33, Hebrews 9:3-5

Imagine being there when Indiana Jones found the Ark of the Covenant! (Okay, that was Hollywood fiction. No one has ever found that sacred gold-covered chest.) You’d likely have known the Ark held the Ten Commandments (“stone tablets of the covenant”). But you might not expect a “gold jar containing manna” (miraculously preserved or all dried out?). Yet God told Israel to keep that jar in their most sacred work of art, along with the commandments, for the sake of “future generations.”

- We still sometimes call an unexpected positive development “manna from heaven,” alluding to how Israelite history said this food just appeared in the desert after God promised it. The name was a Hebrew pun. “Manna” echoed the phrase “*man hu*,” which meant “What is it?” (or even “What is this stuff?”). When has God sent you something you needed in a way that surprised, or even puzzled, you? Why is it worth remembering and sharing those times?
- Surely no one would ever forget food appearing every day. Yet God told Moses to keep some manna to remind “future generations.” Israel needed that reminder. In [Numbers 11:4-15](#) we read that the Israelites whined so much about the manna that Moses asked God to take his life. How can you help “future generations” recall the good things God has done? (Spoiler: “things were better back in my day” rarely helps.) How can you and your church nurture future generations?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the ways (often through your caring people) you have sent “manna” into my life. Help me effectively share those stories with future generations. Amen.

Remembering for the sake of the future

THURSDAY 5.30.24 Psalm 71:14-19

It's easy to think in purely financial terms about "legacy" (and our level of economic resources shapes that part of it). But beyond money or property, we also leave a legacy by the faith we share. God's people have always valued teaching. In Israel, the focus of teaching was not to satisfy random human curiosity, but to pass on the knowledge of God's powerful acts to future generations. They knew that God wants us to develop our own minds and those of others faithfully and well.

- Psalm 71 was not like investment ads that picture our "senior" years as a non-stop, luxurious vacation. The psalmist's "bucket list" was a lifelong calling to share God's love and power: "Even in my old age with gray hair, don't abandon me, God! Not until I tell generations about your mighty arm, tell all who are yet to come about your strength." Whether you're 21 or 81, how are you (or how will you start) building a legacy to tell future generations about the God you love and serve?
- "In Psalm 71, the expressions 'all day long' and 'forever' and 'always' recur.... Three times, then, the psalm talks in terms of 'always' (no psalm makes more use of this word). In the past, 'my praise has always been of you.' In the present, I need you to be 'a shelter to which I can always come.' In the future, 'I will hope always.'" * How can seeing and sharing the ways God's goodness has touched all parts of your life shape a powerful legacy of trust and faith to pass on?

Prayer: Lord God, I want to live a life with the big picture aim of helping both present and future generations know your strength and ultimate righteousness. Please guide and shape me. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1–72*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013, p. 221.

God calls people in all ages and stages

FRIDAY 5.31.24 Jeremiah 1:6-8, Joel 2:28-29

Often great artwork (like [Michelangelo's "Moses"](#)) shapes our view of who God works through. That can lead us to expect God to work mainly through older figures. God has done that, calling aged Abram (cf. [Genesis 12:4](#)) or Moses, age 80 when he set out to deliver Israel from slavery (cf. [Exodus 7:7](#)). But God didn't accept Jeremiah's protest that he was too young to be effective as a prophet. The lesser-known prophet Joel pictured God pouring out God's spirit on people of all ages and all status.

- Scholar John Goldingay said we don't know exactly how old Jeremiah was: "just a young man—maybe in his twenties, maybe even younger. A culture such as Israel's recognizes that wisdom lies with people more senior." Except not always: "God isn't constrained by the way things usually work." * Are you ever tempted to discount someone's testimony because you think they are "too young" (or "too old," for that matter)?
- Joel's message (which the apostle Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost—cf. [Acts 2:12-21](#)) showed God's desire to work through people of all ages and social standings. "God's call to Jeremiah is not meant as a model of God's call to believers in the sense that we should all seek an experience with God like that of Jeremiah.... God does not call all believers to be prophets." ** What has helped you (or might help you) develop a clearer sense of God's calling on your life?

Prayer: Calling, commissioning God, sensitize me to the ways you pour out your Spirit on me, and on the ways your presence calls me to serve and bless others. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *Jeremiah for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015, p. 10.

** J. Andrew Dearman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Jeremiah, Lamentations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002, p. 52.

God's salvation not just for you, but for future generations

SATURDAY 6.1.24 Ephesians 2:4-7

“God is rich in mercy.” “You are saved by God’s grace.” That was the beating heart of our faith, said the letter to the Ephesians. God saved us FROM a broken, self-seeking way of life. But that wasn’t the end of the story; it was just the beginning. What Jesus called “the kingdom of God” aims to restore not just individuals, but this whole broken world to God-given wholeness. God didn’t save any one person just to do something nice for that person. Ephesians said, “God did this **to show future generations the greatness of his grace.**” If God’s saving grace hadn’t had that future focus, no one alive today would ever have heard of it! So that future focus clearly calls us to respond, not just by gratefully accepting salvation (which is the essential starting point, of course), but also by determining to play a role in showing future generations how good God is.

- The United Bible Societies’ guide for Bible translators worldwide said of Ephesians 2:7, “What God has done now will for all time to come be a demonstration of his great grace. The meaning may sometimes be expressed by “for generation after generation” or “for days that never end” or “for years that no one has ever yet thought of.” * If you grew up with Christian ideas (whether you accepted them early or late), it’s easy to just assume that they were routinely “there.” But the only reason we know about Jesus is centuries of faithful work by countless nameless Christians. “By the sixth century, an illiterate Europe had no libraries left. Thomas Cahill relates in *How the Irish Saved Civilization* how monastic communities copied every ancient text they could get their hands on. For many centuries, monasteries were the only institutions in Europe for the acquisition, preserving, and transmitting of knowledge.” ** It’s your turn. How will you join in God’s purpose of “showing future generations the greatness of his grace”?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for all that you have saved me **from**. Guide me day by day into a way of living that carries out the purposes you saved me **for**, now and in the future. Amen.

* Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1982, p. 46.

** Ortberg, John. *Who Is This Man?: The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus* (p. 65). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Prayer Requests – [cor.org/prayer](https://www.cor.org/prayer) Prayers of peace and comfort for:

To **Shonna Bartlett** following the death of **Edwin “Ed” Bartlett** (Husband), who died 11/13/2023.

To **Deborah Sheffield** following the death of **Annette Rich Horton** (Mother), who died 5/10/2024.

To **Chip (Renee) Robertson, Melanie (Clif) Christopher, Melissa (Bob) Klaus, and Libby (Brad) Bergman** following the death of **Pat Robertson** (Mother - Founding Member), who died 5/20/2024.