

BUILDING PILLARS TO REMEMBER

As we begin this morning I want to share some pictures with you to see if you can identify what these images signify. Are you ready? Let's see how many you can get right.

(Show pictures one by one in the order below as placed in "Against All Odd Images" Folder)

- 1) Historically, the **Statue of Liberty** is important because **she was given to the U.S. by France to celebrate America's first 100 years as a nation**. It commemorates the alliance between France and the U.S. during the Revolutionary War. As a result she has become a symbol of liberty and freedom.
- 2) The **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** is a historic monument dedicated to deceased U.S. service members whose remains have not been identified.
- 3) **Wright Brothers National Memorial**, located in Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, **commemorates the first successful, sustained, powered flights in a heavier-than-air machine**.
- 4) **Alamo**, (an 18th-century Franciscan mission in San Antonio, Texas,) that was **the site of a historic resistance effort by a small group of determined fighters for Texan independence (1836) from Mexico**.
- 5) The **USS Arizona Memorial**, at [Pearl Harbor](#) in [Honolulu, Hawaii](#), marks the resting place of 1,102 of the 1,177 sailors and Marines killed on [USS Arizona](#) during the [Attack on Pearl Harbor](#) on December 7, 1941, and commemorates the events of that day.
- 6) The 911 Memorial, commemorating the lives lost and events that took place on September 11 2001.

As we can see, monuments can be a very powerful reminder of events in the past! They not only celebrate achievements that took place, but they are also helpful in keeping us from forgetting what happened on those occasions. That is why God would often call Israel to establish monuments and or feasts of celebration to commemorate what God had done for them.

Welcome to Week 1 of the third section of our journey through the Bible Series we are calling **"AGAINST ALL ODDS."** It is through this section that we are going to cover Israel's conquest of the Promised Land up to the time David becomes King of Israel. Over these next six weeks

we are going to basically cover all of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel and up to the middle part of 2 Samuel. Just to put this into perspective regarding a historical timeline, when we are through with the next 6 weeks we will have covered approximately 400 years of Israel's history in the Promised Land.

Our goal for today is to see why God commanded Israel to build pillars out of stones taken from the Jordan River and why it is that you and I should consider building our own pillars of remembrance when it comes to God's work in our lives. So if you will find **Joshua 4** I am going to **pray** for us before we begin.

In order to set the context for Joshua 4, Moses has died and the leadership responsibility for leading Israel has now been given over to Joshua. Here is what God said to Joshua.

Joshua 1:1-3 (NIV) **1** After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

Joshua 1:5-6 (NIV) **5** No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

In Joshua chapter 3 God directs Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land but He does so in such a way to show the people of Israel that God is with Joshua just as He was with Moses.

Joshua 3:9-17 (NIV) Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. **10** This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. **11** See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. **12** Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. **13** **And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap."**

14 So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. **15** **Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, 16 the water from upstream stopped flowing.** It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. **17** **The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.**

Does this sound familiar? Just like God had done at the Red Sea crossing, once again God parts the waters so that His people can go through on DRY GROUND. This was on purpose so that Israel would see that just as God was with Moses, He will also be with Joshua. And this brings us to Joshua chapter 4. As we look at our passage this morning there are THREE actions we need to perform when REMEMBERING what God has done for us if we want to really solidify our FAITH!

Action #1 - You need to CONSIDER the MILESTONES you have passed

Joshua 4:1-2 (NIV) 1 When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2 “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”

The way life is sometimes we tend to forget the progress we have made when it comes to the journey of FAITH. Too often our failures and our inconsistencies tend to dominate our thoughts more than the victories. I don't know what it is about life but it always seems that the negative overrides the positive. If we are not careful we can allow defeat to overwhelm us causing us to forget the progress we have made with God. Israel has come a long way through many trials and difficulties but they have finally arrived in the Promised Land. They have come a long way in their faith journey. And the fact that they have is a testimony to **God's faithfulness** and a testimony of **their steadfastness** where they kept striving with God despite setbacks and faith challenges along the way. They need something to help them remember that. Especially when the next faith challenge arrives or when the next failure occurs. When it comes to God all is not lost. God is a redeemer and He is faithful. Remember, the life of faith is a marathon.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Think about it! If you stumble and fall in the 20th mile guess what? You have made it 20 miles. That is no small feat. Don't let a stumble or a failure defeat you. You have made it 20 miles and your almost to the finished line. Get back up and in the race. Let God finish what He started. You are where you are because God is faithful and you have been steadfast to that point. Just press on! But you need to remember the milestone you have passed and be encouraged because **you might not be all the way where you want to be, but you are certainly not where you used to be!** We need to celebrate milestones and we need something to mark them and help us be reminded of just how far we have come. Crossing the Jordan for Israel was a big deal. They had never been there before and they were certainly a long way from Egypt and where they used to be! **Action #1 - Consider the milestones you have passed**

Action #2 - You need to CONSECRATE the GROUND God has carried you to

“Consecrate” means *to make or declare something sacred, to dedicate it formally to a divine purpose*. When it comes to where we are in our faith journey it is important that we not lose sight of why we are where we are. Notice what Joshua calls the people to do.

Joshua 4:4-7 (NIV) **4** So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, **5** and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, **6** to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ **7** tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

Everything God is doing in our lives has a divine purpose. If we forget that, chances are we will become tempted to take for granted the place where we are and misuse it for selfish reasons or for selfish gain rather than for God’s glory. It has to be about God’s glory! It has to be about His story! Just as we are to set our lives apart to God we should also set our achievements and our milestones apart to Him. We must give Him thanks and we must give Him credit!

Colossians 2:6-7 (NIV) **6** So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, **7** rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Milestones or monuments of remembrance become opportunities for us to share with others the testimony of God’s greatness and His goodness. Let’s not fool ourselves into thinking that what has been achieved is by our human ability or sure will power, but is evidence of God’s power and grace in the midst of our lives. This in essence, when done with the right heart motive and to give God glory can become an act of humility. It is also a great opportunity to glorify God and testify of His goodness and faithfulness by showing others they can trust Him also.

Joshua 4:8-9 (NIV) **8** So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the Lord had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. **9** Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.

Every time Israel would see those stones they would be reminded of God’s faithfulness and power. It was a reminder that God was with them and God was for them. It would also give them courage to know that no matter what they face ahead God will go before them. **Action #1 - Consider the milestones you have passed. Action #2 - CONSECRATE the GROUND God has carried you to.** And that leads us to Action #3.

Action #3 - You need to CONTINUALLY remember where God has BROUGHT YOU

God's word calls us to REMEMBER **240 times** throughout the Bible. Unfortunately, it seems all too often we have short memories when it comes to remembering God and His faithfulness. When it comes to life the IMMEDIATE and our FUTURE plans tend to take precedence in our lives over REMEMBERING the important things. Life comes at us pretty fast and we can often forget the significant events in our past. Therefore when it comes to remembering the important stuff we need to be intentional. That is why we need to have something to help us continually remember. Those 12 stones taken from the riverbed became a continual reminder of God's faithfulness to Israel. When it comes to our journey of faith we need reminders of how God has been faithful to us in order to have the courage to trust Him for our next step of faith. When God calls us to remember it isn't passive, instead it is an intentional action that brings the power of Jesus into our lives. As we remember what He has done, **it enables us to stop focusing on the impossibility of a situation and instead focus on the ONE who does the God of the impossible.**

Joshua 4:21-24 (NIV) 21 He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' **22** tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' **23** For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. **24** He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God."

If God is the one calling you, then the situation is never impossible. That is why it is important to remind ourselves often of what God has done in our lives.

SO how do we do this?

- 1) **First we need to practice HUMILITY.** Eliminating pride where we are just focused on ourselves places us in a position where we can see what God is doing. Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, it is thinking about yourself less.

Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV) 1 Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- 2) **Calendar or document breakthroughs and victories that God has accomplished on your behalf.** Journaling or setting anniversary dates is a practical way to do this. Develop a spiritual scrapbook. Life can be hard on our faith. The ability to remember victories bolsters and encourages our faith when we recount what God has done.

Jeremiah 30:2 (NIV) "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.'

1 Chronicles 16:12 (NIV) "Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,"

The life that counts blessings discovers it's yielding more than it seems. - Ann Voskamp

When we can count our blessings and name them it really does protect us against the slow drip of negativity that Satan wants to bring into our lives to erode our faith. But if we are not intentional we will soon forget or those blessings will become overshadowed by the daily negative drip of life's challenges. So let's **Consider the milestones we have passed.** Let's **CONSECRATE the GROUND God has carried us to.** And let's **CONTINUALLY** remember where God has **BROUGHT US.**

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation:

What do you need to REMEMBER this morning? (Let's pray together!)

In fact, here is my challenge for you this week. **Make a list of spiritual milestones you have accomplished** (Steps of faith taken/Decision to follow Jesus/Baptism/ etc.) **Recount the ways God has shown up for you along your faith journey.** (Victories/ Answers to Prayer/Miracles/ etc.) And let's write them down and set for yourselves reminders so that you can celebrate them as a memorial to the fact that God is FAITHFUL! Let me just tell you, you can't build a pillar if you're constantly throwing your stones away! If you do, over time your faith will erode.

If you are here today and you don't have any spiritual milestones because you have not been walking with God. Would you begin your journey today? Your first entry in your list or journal needs to be that "**TODAY I decided to follow Jesus!**" and your second entry can be **NEXT week I am going to make it public through BAPTISM.**