THE scribe BIBLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING

JOSHUA 4:4-9

4-7 Joshua called out the twelve men whom he selected from the People of Israel, one man from each tribe. Joshua directed them, "Cross to the middle of the Jordan and take your place in front of the Chest of God, your God. Each of you heft a stone to your shoulder, a stone for each of the tribes of the People of Israel, so you'll have something later to mark the occasion. When your children ask you, 'What are these stones to you?' you'll say, 'The flow of the Jordan was stopped in front of the Chest of the Covenant of God as it crossed the Jordan—stopped in its tracks. These stones are a permanent memorial for the People of Israel.'"

8-9 The People of Israel did exactly as Joshua commanded: They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan—a stone for each of the twelve tribes, just as God had instructed Joshua—carried them across with them to the camp, and set them down there. Joshua set up the twelve stones taken from the middle of the Jordan that had marked the place where the priests who carried the Chest of the Covenant had stood. They are still there today.

The Jordan was a raging river when the people of Israel came to it. For most of the year it was a muddy, meandering stream that was easily forded, but in springtime it rushed torrentially down the long valley connecting the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea.

The Israelites were on the wilderness side of the river, standing together as people who had been redeemed out of Egypt, delivered at the Red Sea, and disciplined in the wilderness. They were poised to conquer the land God had promised them. Under Moses' leadership they had overcome similar obstacles, but now he was dead, and an untested leader was in command. As a way of validating Joshua's leadership, God parted the Jordan River much the way he had the Red Sea when Moses had been the leader.

After the crossing was complete, Joshua instructed one man from each of the twelve tribes to take a stone from the riverbed and carry it to the Canaan side. Joshua then took the stones and set them up as a memorial. Earlier, God had told the people the importance of not forgetting his presence, his protection, and his provision when they entered the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 8). So they wouldn't forget, Joshua built this stone memorial to serve as both an architectural witness—"so that everybody on earth would recognize how strong GOD's rescuing hand is"—and an everlasting reminder—"so that you would hold GOD in solemn reverence always" (Joshua 4:24).

*Forgetfulness is one of the great breaches in our relationship with God, for when we forget his saving ways, either in biblical history or in our personal histories, the results are disastrous. Making memorials, whether they are stone monuments or journal entries, is the best way to keep from forgetting how good he has been to us.**

—Eugene H. Peterson

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*From Eugene Peterson's sermon on Joshua 4:21-22, May 23, 1965.

†From *Praying the Message of Jesus*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2017.

Where do you find yourself today? What memorial—big or small—can you take a moment to remember? Where in your day—today or yesterday—did you sense an increase, however small, in your faith, hope, or love? Take a minute to jot it down and thank God for putting that into your day.

PRAYER

Lord, are there ways in which I can take the daily necessities of food and clothing and use them to complement and reinforce my relationship with you? I will begin by giving thanks for them, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.†