

HAPPY NEW YEAR! - 2018

It is January, the beginning of a new year. Yay! New beginnings. New hopes for the future. Predictions for the coming year are made. Everybody is asking everyone if they have made their new year resolutions. Yes, even my instructor in the gym posed that question. Two students shook their heads and yes, yours truly is one of them. It is not that I had never made a new year resolution. I did – for a few years. Then I realised that I do not have a habit of sticking to it and I would usually forget what was the particular resolution I had made in the earlier part of the year. Even if I had jotted my new year resolutions down, I would forget where I had placed them. Knowing how forgetful I am of the past and present, I decided to stick to something more practical – build memorial stones, something that was practiced even in the olden days and still going on today.



From time immemorial, man has been using stones to mark significant life passages – from birthstones to gravestones, diamond rings for engagements and weddings, monuments to great people...just to name a few. Have you wondered why stones are such perfect materials for the job? They are durable, which symbolises a sort of permanence that reaches beyond our short human life spans. They are beautiful too. Even when years have passed and the stones are weathered, there is still beauty in them.

Joshua 4:5-7

“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, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 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.”

God knows that we do need tangible reminders of our encounters with him. No matter how life changing an event may be, our memories are imperfect. We can even forget to pass it on to our children, our mentees or the next generation. That is why God instructed Joshua to build a memorial of stones, to be a visible reminder that He would lead His children across a sea of obstacles for generations to come. In Deuteronomy 6:12 Moses issued a final warning to Israel just before they entered the promised land, *“be careful that you do not*

forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” It is important that we do not forget and allow the secular world to dictate our values.

Reflection

Instead of making a new year resolution, I invite you to join me in building our memorial stones. We can start by recalling an instance in which God miraculously cleared the way or showed His presence. Next, think of what memorial ‘stone’ you can put to remind yourself of God’s work. It can be a literal rock, a photograph, a dent in your car or a note from someone. Then build your memorial rock somewhere, on your desk or display shelf, to serve as a reminder of God’s power to intervene in your life. Share your story. Keep a clear memory of what God did for you. Keep on sharing your stories so that you never lose your own sense of awe and wonder of what God has done in your life. Maybe through the sharing, God may be glorified in ways we could not see and a spiritual heritage is passed on.

If you are currently facing a challenge, look at the memorial stone you had made and ask God, the one who parted the deep and flowing waters, to reveal His presence and power. I pray that you too, can draw strength and encouragement from your memories of God.

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