

Your Stones of Remembrance on This Memorial Day

Some movies stay with you forever. *Schindler's List* is one of those movies for me. And the emotional pull did not stop when the closing credits ran. The movie ended with the various actors, paired with their real-life counterparts, filing past Oskar Schindler's actual burial site. Each person stopped to leave a stone of remembrance on the grave.

The practice of using memorial stones goes way back to biblical times. In the book of Joshua (4:20-22), we read: "Joshua set up in Gilgal those twelve stones that they took from the Jordan. He said to the children of Israel, 'When your children someday ask their parents, "What do these stones mean" then you shall explain to your children, "Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground!"'"

Today, many continue to follow the Jewish custom of leaving small stones at a loved one's grave site to show the deceased is remembered.

All cultures have traditions of remembrance. It might be the setting of an annual holiday or a practice of exchanging gifts. Some cultures remember the past by re-enacting historical events or dressing in period garb.

This month, Americans celebrate Memorial Day. "Celebrate" might not be the best word to describe this holiday, though, because it's a day set aside to remember those who died in the various branches of the armed forces. Sadly today, the day is more associated with the unofficial beginning of summer than it is with the memorializing of those who gave their lives for their country.

Christians also have traditions of remembrance. We celebrate annual holidays such as Christmas and Easter. We also

celebrate a regular practice of sharing in Communion, also called The Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. By sharing in Communion, we fulfill Jesus' command to "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

So what are we remembering? Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

We're remembering Christ's sacrifice for us 2,000 years ago. And we're remembering His promise to return someday. Every time we celebrate communion, we look back *and* we look ahead.

This Memorial Day, look back in honor of those who gave their lives in defense of our nation, and look ahead in gratitude for the life they protected.

And the next time you celebrate Communion, do the same: Look back in honor of the one who died for you, and look ahead to the day He will return for you.

We don't always need stones of remembrance, but we do need to remember.

How will you spend Memorial Day this year? {eoa}

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