

Memory. It's an odd thing. We rely so much on what we remember, but memories are so fragile, so easy to lose or even change.

Therapists can easily convince people to change their memories using simple techniques.

I have a great memory. Just ask my wife. Or on second thought, don't. I tend to forget important things, and remember only those trivial things that tend to be meaningless to most people, but really come in handy when you're playing Trivial Pursuit.

As humans, we all forget things. That's why we do special things to remember the important stuff; tie a string around your finger, write a note, make a list, whatever.

Another way we remember things is to talk about them over and over. This is how the Bible we have today came to be; the histories were told from generation to generation and written down by those who could read and write. But the key to the whole thing was remembering and sharing. Deuteronomy 6:4 starts out with "Hear, O Israel", and that's the key to remembering, hearing and repeating.

Another key to remembering is seeing something over and over. In Genesis 9:8-17 we see God setting up a sign so humans will remember when He destroyed the world by water, and that He'd never do it again.

Genesis 9:8-17

8Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you— every living creature on earth. 11I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

12 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: 13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. 16 Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

17 So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

So, God made this sign in the sky, a rainbow, to remind us of His love for us, and also His Justice.

We also set special days so we can remember things. A great example of this is in Exodus 12:14-20. God tells Moses to institute the festival of unleavened bread, or Passover, so the people of Israel will remember God's rescuing them from Egypt.

Exodus 12:14-20

14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance. 15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. 16 On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do.

17 "Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 18 In the first

month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. ¹⁹For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel. ²⁰Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.”

God’s not the only one who sets special days so we can remember things. Tomorrow is Memorial Day, a day set aside by our government for us to remember those who died protecting our freedoms in this country.

Memorial Day started out as Decoration Day. On May 5, 1868, General John A. Logan, commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic - the organization for Union Civil War veterans - issued a proclamation that "Decoration Day" should be observed nationwide every year. It was observed for the first time on May 30 of the same year. To quote General Order 11 which instituted Decoration Day,

“Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring-time; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.”

We also set aside places and build monuments to help us remember things. Washington DC is practically littered with monuments and memorials; the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the WWII Memorial, the Viet Nam Memorial, I could go on and on. We build these monuments and memorials so we’ll never forget those people or events.

God understands our need for this kind of reminders, and He used them to commemorate the entry of the Ark of the Covenant entering into the Promised Land in Joshua 4:1-7

Joshua 4

¹When 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, ³and 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.”

⁴So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,⁵and 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, ⁶to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’⁷tell 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.”

There’s lots of similar examples of stone memorials, and they all serve a similar purpose. “What do these stones mean?” or “Why did they build that?” So we don’t forget.

There’s another memorial we have so we don’t forget. It’s similar to the one I mentioned from back in Exodus. In fact, it was instituted the same time of year as that one. The Passover meal was a foreshadowing of God’s plan for salvation. A sacrifice of a lamb so His wrath would pass over us and take away the punishment we truly deserve.

We've all heard the verses from 1 Corinthians 11. I find it interesting that Paul shares this with us, even though he wasn't there. Paul explains it by saying he received it from the Lord; God showed him what happened, probably through seeing it time and time again after his conversion from chasing down Christians where ever he could find them.

Let's take a look at 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

1 Corinthians 11

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

It's really a simple thing; it's borrowed from the Passover Seder meal. Paul (or Saul) was no doubt familiar with the Seder. He understood the three pieces of unleavened bread that were prepared for the meal, and the lamb that was prepared for the meal. Before the meal, one piece of unleavened bread was broken, and the larger piece wrapped in cloth and hidden until after the meal; that piece of bread is called the afikoman, and even today the children are sent out after the meal to search for the hidden bread. This is the bread Jesus took and broke for his disciples.

After the afikoman is shared, there's a blessing that's read or recited. Here's the English translation of that blessing, sort of like saying Grace after the meal.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, master of the universe, Who nourishes the whole world in goodness, with grace, kindness, and compassion. He gives bread to all flesh, for

His love endures forever. And through His great goodness we have never lacked, nor will we lack food forever for the sake of His great Name. For He is God, who nourishes and sustains all, and does good to all, and prepares food for all His creatures which He created. Blessed are You Lord, who nourishes all. Amen.

During the Seder meal there are four prescribed cups of wine. Two are drunk before the meal, and two after. The cup directly after the meal, after sharing the afikoman, is the Cup of Redemption. This is the cup that Jesus says is His blood. The Mishnah, the writings of Jewish Rabbis compiling all their rules they put in place and their understanding of God's law, says that the Cup of Redemption during the Seder meal "... recalls the shed blood of the lamb that was applied to the doorposts in Egypt, causing the plague of death to pass over."

So, where am I going with all this information? Well, let me sum it all up for you. God knows we're broken, weak, and that we fail. He does things for us that are good for us, so we can remember who He is, and why He's done so much for us; because He loves us. He wants us to love Him back, to worship Him, and He wants to make it easy for us to remember everything He's done for us; why we should be thankful for His love.

Memorial Day is a great day for our country to remember the sacrifices that were made for our freedoms; but we celebrate a different kind of Memorial Day every Sunday, every first day of the week, so we can remember a better sacrifice that was made for better freedoms.

John 15:13,14 says this: (and this is Jesus talking)

¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

How about you? Do you think that Jesus would count you as one of His friends? Do you obey Him?