



HOW TO

# CREATE MEMORIALS AS A FAMILY

KIDS' EDITION

*"I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."*

PSALM 77:11-12

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## WHAT IS A MEMORIAL?

One of the most amazing things about the way God created us is our ability to remember. From the moment we're born, our brains continually take in information from the world around us, process it, and store the data. What we take in creates pathways in the brain to either short-term or long-term memory connections. This often happens without any conscious effort on our part, although there are many times we actively study information in order to retain it. The more we repeat certain things, the more likely they will be stored as long-term memory.

When it comes to memories of past events, think about what triggers those memories. Our senses—sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, operate as keys that unlock memory. A certain scent, the flavor of a particular food, a song, a picture, or the feel of something can instantly take us back to an event or a person from our past. Even if it's been a long time since we've thought about it, suddenly we're enveloped in a strong sense of experiencing that moment all over again. Without these cues to help recall people and events, those memories are lost.

A memorial is a tangible symbol created as a reminder of a person or event. The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor reminds us of freedom and the hope of a new life that immigrants to the United States sought. The Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, were built to honor and remember the lives of two of our most

influential presidents and the important role they played in the history of the United States.

Memorials aren't just created for national events or people. They also represent things that are meaningful to our families and us. We save special things, like pictures, favorite toys, or souvenirs from a trip, because they serve as personal reminders of things that are important to us. So a memorial is any physical object that symbolizes a memory.

The Bible is filled with examples of memorials and the importance of remembering things! The book of Deuteronomy in the Bible is a book of remembrance. As the Israelites were camped near the Jordan River outside of the promised land, Moses recounts their history—all of the things God had done for them as well as His commands for His people.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we read the words that make up the core of the Shema, a daily prayer begun in ancient Israel that practicing Jews continue to recite every morning and evening. The habit of this prayer serves as a reminder of who God is and how we're to love Him by keeping His commands. It instructs people to talk about these truths in every aspect of daily life and instructs parents to teach these things to their children.

Deuteronomy 6:8-9 describes concrete symbols to help the people remember God's instructions.

He says to tie the words as symbols to their hands and foreheads and to write them on their door frames and gates. The Jewish tradition incorporates physically wearing written passages of the Shema in small leather boxes tied to the hand and forehead during prayer and also putting scrolls of scripture in containers on their doorposts and gates.

Depending on the resource you look at, the word 'remember' in all its forms is mentioned about 200 times in the Bible! Remembrance and the creation of physical reminders is an important biblical concept. People remember His promises and mighty work in their lives by constructing memorials for all to see in the present as well as in the future. Many times, these memorials were created out of stone. Stone not only represented strength and resilience, but its use also ensured the symbols would stand throughout time.

Remembering God's powerful presence in our lives through the use of a physical object not only reminds us of His goodness in the past, but it also helps us focus on the fact that who He was and what He did in the past not only gives us strength in the present but also hope in the future. In times of struggle when it feels like God is far away and it's hard to trust Him, a concrete symbol stands as evidence that we can count on His faithfulness.

Creating spiritual memorials with your child is a meaningful way to give them and your entire family a continual reminder of God's personal work in your lives. Because children are concrete thinkers, it's important to connect things they can see and touch with the spiritual concept you want them to remember. It's a symbolic key to unlock the memory of an experience with God that made an impact in the life of your child and the life of your family.

In the following pages, you will find different types of memorials based on biblical truths, questions to get you thinking, and concrete ways to help strengthen your child's understanding of the spiritual foundation God is continually building through the personal displays of His presence in their lives.

Although the basis for each memorial is written for you as parents, don't hesitate to share it in your own words with your kids. Feel free to use these ideas as they are written or as a springboard for your own memorials.

# MEMORIAL #1

## A Mission Statement

### Matthew 22:36-39

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

In the beginning, God created everything for His glory and our good. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” Every tree, animal, mountain, ocean, all of the stars in the sky, and so much more demonstrate His majesty, power, and beauty.

And then, when He created people, He did something incredibly amazing—God made them to be His image-bearers. That means every day, we all have an opportunity to show others who God is by reflecting His character—by loving Him with everything that’s in us and by loving others. It’s not about being good people; it’s about being godly people.

When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment from the Old Testament law, He used words from Deuteronomy as part of His answer. The Ten Commandments, given to Moses, were the basis of God’s law. If we look at just those ten statements, we see that the first four talk about our relationship with God and how to love Him with every part of our being. The remaining six talk about loving others.

In addition to thinking about why God created people in general, it’s also important to understand how He created each person uniquely. Psalm 139 is a passage we talk about often in relation to how God knows everything about us and made every part of us. God put every part of us together before we were even born. He knew everything about us. And during our lives, He

sees and understands us completely no matter what.

So how do you put these concepts into a more concrete form as a memorial to help your children and your family make it part of your lives? Coming up with a family mission statement to express who you are as a family and how you live your lives as Christ-followers is a wonderful place to start. It doesn’t have to be long to be effective; it just needs to communicate who you are in Christ and how you show Him and others your love. Involve your children in coming up with ideas.

Children learn through repetition, so this statement is something you can say together every day to memorize and think about the words. Connecting a symbol to each part makes it more tangible for your kids as they learn to understand it. Additionally, you can create a special statement for each child by adding godly character traits you see in them like generosity, compassion, wisdom, creativity, etc.

### Here’s an example of a mission statement:

We believe God created us in His image to love Him and love others. This means we:

1. Obey Him in everything we think, say, and do
2. Talk with Him and listen to Him
3. Share our time and money generously
4. Take care of people who are hurting

Making a poster with images to hang in your family room is a great way to connect each line with a visual reminder. Here are ideas:

1. A stick person with arrows pointing to their head, mouth, hands, and feet
2. Praying hands and a set of ears
3. A clock and a few coins
4. A bandaid

To help kids remember the words in addition to repetition and illustrations, have them act out each idea and hold a real clock, coins, and bandages, or whatever you come up with for your own family's mission statement.

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Why do you think people were God's most special creation?
- What does it mean to be created in God's image?
- How can we show our love to God and others through our words and actions?

## **ADDITIONAL MEMORIALS TO CREATE**

- Take individual pictures of each child in your family. Let your kids take your picture. Put them into a frame with multiple spots for photos or stick them to a heavier piece of poster board. Have your children add the words, "God Created Each of Us to Love Him and Others," and decorate it. Put the finished project in a place where all of you will see it and talk about it often.
- Purchase hand-held mirrors for each of your kids. On the mirror with a permanent marker, write "God Made Me in His Image" around the edge. Talk to them about it. Tell them that every time they look into that mirror, they can be reminded that God created them uniquely.

## MEMORIAL #2

### Remember When God...

#### Psalm 77:11-14

*I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds. Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.*

Genesis 28:10-22 tells the story of Jacob as he traveled to Haran, the place his father had told him to go to find a wife. One night, he found a place to sleep and selected a stone to rest his head upon.

As he slept, he had a vision from God that left him in awe. When Jacob woke up, he looked at where he was and saw it in a whole new light. It was no longer just a place to sleep; it was now the place where He experienced the presence and promises of God in a new, powerful, and personal way. He took the stone that had been beneath his head and set it up as a memorial to remember what God had done. Jacob renamed the place Bethel, which means “house of God” to honor the Lord meeting him there.

In Joshua 4, we read the story of the Lord instructing Joshua to create a memorial to remember when he parted the waters of the Jordan River so the Israelites could cross as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. The people followed the directions of Joshua as he followed what God had said. Just like God told Moses to raise up his staff on the banks of the Red Sea and parted the waters as the Israelites were fleeing Egypt, God showed His power to do the miraculous in the same way in this passage. Instead of a staff, God used the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of His presence going before them in crossing the Jordan.

The memorial Joshua and the people created in accordance with the Lord’s instructions weren’t only to serve as a reminder to them of what God had done but also as a symbol for parents to teach their children about God’s miraculous power.

The Philistines were perpetual enemies of the Israelites, and the history of conflict over land and beliefs between the two people groups spans many years. In 1 Samuel 7, we read that the Israelites had been following other gods like the nations around them, and we see them doing away with their false gods and returning to following the Lord only.

Samuel instructed them to meet at Mizpah for a time of repentance and intercession. When the Philistines heard the Israelites were gathered in one place, they prepared for attack. The Israelites were afraid and asked Samuel to continue crying out to the Lord on their behalf. Samuel did so, and the Lord put the Philistines into such a panic that they fled in retreat. Israel won the battle not by their own hands but by God’s power. Samuel set up a stone and named it Ebenezer, which means “stone of help,” to remind the people that the Lord had won the victory for them.

There are many more times in the Bible when God instructed His people to remember, to talk about what He’s done, and to think about who He is. God shows us that He is our provider by taking care of our needs. He demonstrates He is a God of miracles when we see Him do things that would be impossible for people to do but very possible for the Creator of all things. When we’re in trouble or worried or afraid, He is our victory. He told His people to mark these things by creating a memorial, like these stones, or a yearly observance like Passover.

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” When we’re in the midst of a struggle, we often forget the “today and forever” part of that verse.

It’s easy to convince ourselves that God won’t show up. Because of this, we need to be continually reminded that who God has been and what God has done in the past means we can trust Him to be and do the same in the present and in the future. Memorials are a way to continually refocus our hearts and minds on Him.

## FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When have we seen God do great things in our lives?
- What have we learned about God in those times?
- Why is it important for us to remember today and in the future the things God has done for us in the past?

## MEMORIALS TO CREATE

- On the outside of a see-through jar, write “Remember When God ...”. Every time you recognize God’s help in your lives, put a stone inside the jar. If you have small rocks in your yard, have your child pick the rock. As you add more and more to the jar, you’ll have a visual reminder that God is with you and takes care of you over and over. To make this more personal for your child, make a jar just for them. Help them look for God-moments in their lives. When they’re scared or worried, point them back to the jar to see and feel all of the times God has already helped them.
- Make a “Remember When God ...” chart. Have your child draw a really large shape on a poster board and add the heading. Mark the start date on it. Each time they see God at work in their lives in any way, they can add a sticker to the inside of the shape and watch it fill up. When the chart is full, mark the end date. Keep it to look back on and start a new one!

## MEMORIAL #3

### *My Prayer for You*

#### **Ephesians 3:16-21**

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*

Paul was born into a Jewish family who was also Roman citizens. Because of this, Paul grew up practicing the Jewish faith and was also knowledgeable in Roman customs and beliefs as well as the Greek language. As a Pharisee, he was a strict observer of the law, and an expert in both the written Jewish law and the traditional law passed down through generations. He opposed Jesus' teachings and persecuted Christ's followers. And then his life was radically changed on the road to Damascus.

Of the many things we can glean from the life of Paul, his example of prayer for others is an important one. The Lord uniquely gifted and chose Paul to share the gospel among the Gentiles (anyone not born a Jew). Through Paul's missionary travels and his letters to the churches he helped establish around the Roman world, we see how God used him in a mighty way to teach and influence these early churches (and us) in living out the Christian faith.

There are 13 of Paul's letters recorded in the Bible. Almost all of them open with a prayer for

the recipients. His prayers are rich, deep, personal, and give glory to God. Reading them gives us a great example to follow in praying for our kids.

Sometimes it's hard to know what and how to pray for your children. If you didn't grow up in a home where prayer was a regular part of your family's life, it could feel like a foreign concept. Maybe you grew up in a church-going home in which prayer didn't play a major role in your family, so it doesn't feel like it comes naturally. In both circumstances, there's not an example from personal experience to follow. We know prayer is important because it comes up so often in the Bible, and yet, it can be a difficult practice for us to develop for so many reasons. One common reason is that we don't know where to start.

Thankfully, God hasn't left us to figure out prayer on our own. The Bible offers so many examples of prayer as well as verses to use when praying for our children. The book of Psalms provides entire chapters you can personalize, one example being Psalm 23. Jesus taught his disciples to pray by giving them an example to follow, including the themes of God's holiness, provision, strength, and forgiveness. And Paul's prayers for the churches that he helped established give us words to pray specifically for our kids—prayers of thanksgiving for them, prayers for them to have wisdom and knowledge, prayers for God's peace in their lives, prayers for them to be strengthened in their faith...the list is long.

It's a parents' responsibility and privilege to pray for their children and over their children. Your kids benefit from knowing you pray for them and hearing you pray for them regularly. It's a spiritual investment that is both beautiful and vital in the lives of your children.

## FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is prayer important to our family?
- How does it make you feel when you know people are praying for you?
- What things would you like me to pray for you?

## MEMORIALS TO CREATE

- Since many families and kids pray at bedtime, make a reminder for your child to rest upon...literally and figuratively. Using a plain pillowcase and some fabric markers, write "My Prayer for (insert child's name)" and add some of the things you are praying for them. Feel free to use words, phrases, or entire verses from the Bible. Tell your child that every time he or she goes to bed, they will know you are praying God's best for them.
- Choose a special container for your child and an object that represents something you are praying for them. Present them with the container, show them the item inside, and tell them what you are praying for. Encourage them to open the container to see and hold the item often so they can be reminded of your special prayer. For example, if you are praying for them to have wisdom, select an owl figure or a little book as a physical symbol. From time to time, pick a new object to give them.

