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MEMORIAL STONES

Several gathered together here a few weeks ago as witnesses to the renewed vows of commitment of love and loyalty between Andy and Tiffany before God, and rejoiced to see our brother and sister not only rekindle the memory of their vows but renew an even stronger commitment to their pursuit and obedience to their vows. The beautiful ceremony and exchanging of renewed vows has been on my mind and has brought several thoughts of how encouraging it is to see this Godly couple renew their commitment to each other and serve as an example for all of us who have exchanged vows of loyalty as well as those who are about to. When Israel crossed the Jordan river miraculously on dry ground with the ark of the covenant, a memorial of stones was to be arranged in the middle of the Jordan to keep the

memory of that great event vivid in their minds whenever their children would later ask about them. *"Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.'"* Similar memorial stones have been arranged upon a ring on Tiffany's finger to serve as a constant reminder of the sacred covenant which exists between Andy and Tiffany and our Father in Heaven which no doubt have summoned the inquisitive curious statement from their own children and others in their lives, "What do your rings mean?" Today, we revisit the memorial stones of

that great marriage covenant to rekindle it's memory.

1) The memorial stones of rings exchanged between Andy and Tiffany represent the vow of total and complete commitment to one another as a result of being joined together by God as one flesh.

"Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." As Andy and Tiffany spoke such beautiful words of renewed commitment to one another in marriage, I couldn't help but think to the strong vow of commitment uttered by Ruth. *"Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD*

do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." Ruth 1:16-17.

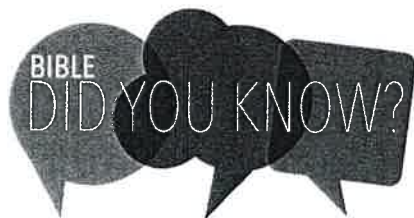
2) The memorial stones of rings exchanged represent the vow of a life-long commitment of mutual love and affection towards one another. Tiffany's love demonstrated in her total and complete willingness to submit and obey the leadership of her headship and husband Andy in service to him as a faithful helpmeet in obedience to the will of the Lord. Andy's love demonstrated in his total and complete willingness to place Tiffany's desires and affections above his own as he leads her cherishing her as part of his own flesh in obedience to the will of the Lord. This is such a passionate expression of deep loyalty for one another it brings to mind the level of love expressed between the couple so deeply in love from Song of Solomon. *"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. For my love for you is as strong as death, my jealousy for you is as severe as the grave; it's*

flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Many waters could not quench my love, nor can rivers overflow it. If a man were to give all the riches of his house in exchange for my love, it would be utterly despised.” Song of Solomon 8:6-7.

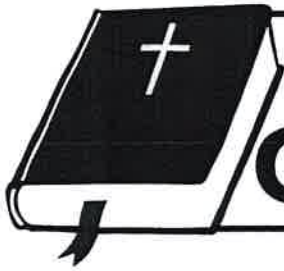
3) The memorial stones of rings exchanged represent a mutual vow of commitment between Andy, Tiffany, and God of their willingness to submit and obey the word of the Lord, not only in regards to His Law of marriage, but to all of His commands and ordinances. As Paul pointed out to the Galatians, one who seeks to obey a part of God’s Law is under obligation to keep all of it. A part of their vow of love towards one another is the mutual commitment to serve and obey God’s will and to help each other be faithful and get to heaven. Let us all mutually reflect on the vows of commitment the stones of rings exchanged between husbands and wives carry within them. The echoes of our words have been etched

into the precious stones upon them, serving as a daily reminder of who we belong to, and the One who gave us the blessing and gift of marriage. Let us cherish this blessing and be reminded of our vows that we may continually give ourselves in devoted loyalty to our spouses, praising God for the marital blessings and gifts he has given us and provided us with. Our prayers continually go up for Andy and Tiffany for many more years of happiness and joy together and for all husbands and wives to be continually blessed in their union and relationship to the Lord.

– Daniel Ruegg



***“Stolen water is sweet;
and bread eaten in secret
is pleasant.’ But he does
not know that the dead are
there, that her guests are
in the depths of Sheol.”
Proverbs 9:17-18***



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Bible Reading Challenge

Ephesians 3:4-5 *"By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit."* It is amazing how simply by reading the word of God we can have the same insights and understanding as the apostles! That means that when we read, we can have the same level of faith and courage and patience and strength as the apostles as well! This month the challenge is to read as many new testament books in their entirety as you can. By reading the whole book, you will be able to see a fuller context which provides a richer meaning and bring a stronger level of understanding to gain all the insights into spiritual wisdom they had. What a blessing! Start reading and see how much your understanding grows!

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

John 10:7-17

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.'"