

MONUMENTS OR MEMORIES?

By Fritz Klumpp

Monuments were a critical part of the historic city I grew up in. Directions in New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A. were often given to correlate with well-known monuments. Being directional aids became one reason these monuments were considered a valuable asset to the city and its residents. Even more important, however, they were constantly reminding local citizens of their rich heritage.

After visiting the U.S. capital, Washington, D.C. for the first time and seeing its most famous monuments, I reported to the U.S. Naval Academy where enumerable monuments commemorate some of the Navy's and Marine Corps' most famous battles and courageous leaders. It truly saddens me today to see so many of the monuments representing our nation's rich history being removed and torn down.

It seems there are some who hold the belief that by removing monuments, some of which carry memories of dark and troubling times, they can somehow change history. This is happening in some other countries as well, in a vain attempt to cover up or rewrite history rather than to learn from it, good or bad.

While national monuments are being destroyed, it appears that some people are trying to build their own personal monuments. These are not necessarily monuments of granite, metal, and other materials, but monuments to their success, nonetheless. Some "monuments" consist of grand estates, while others are defined by companies, bank accounts, or other signs of material wealth, prosperity, or power.

While men and women are spending their time, talent and treasure on these seductive enticements, their "successes" often come at the sacrifice of relationships. Instead of building memories, they concentrate on building monuments. Ones that, as noted above, can be torn down and destroyed.

Looking back over our lives, my wife and I realize our greatest pleasures are made up of the times we spend with our three children. Since they are geographically scattered, the only way we can meet regularly is via "ZOOM" every Sunday, the highlight of our week. I do not recall a single time that did not focus on memories. Monuments are meaningless, but memories are priceless.

According to the Bible, there are only two things that will last forever: people and the Word of God. Choosing to think temporally, we can waste time, talent, and treasure building monuments. Choosing to think eternally, our time is better spent in building memories that cannot be torn down.

As I reflect on the course of my life, I find that my pleasant memories are all centered on

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relationships. The Scriptures also can be described as God's book about relationships – His relationship with His chosen people, as well as how He wants us to relate to one another. Jesus made this clear:

“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-39). Here He summed up the two most important types of relationships: our relationship with God, and then our relationship with our fellow man.

So, are you thinking temporally or eternally? Are you building monuments or memories?

© 2023. William “Fritz” Klumpp served as a pilot with the U.S. Navy, including numerous combat missions during the Vietnam War, is a former commercial airline pilot, real estate executive, and former Executive Director of CBMC.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

- 1.What do you think of the recent practice of removing or even destroying historical monuments that some people consider representative of bad times in history?
- 2.The idea is expressed that “monuments” can take other forms, such as building businesses, accruing vast material estates, establishing personal prominence and other achievements? Do you find yourself doing that – or aspiring to do so? Explain your answer.
- 3.How can a person shift his or her focus from monument building to the creation and developing of memories? Do you agree that this is a worthwhile pursuit? Why or why not?
- 4.When you think about relationships you have had or those you have right now, which have been most important to you? Why? How might having a strong relationship with God affect the types and quality of relationships we have with people?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Isaiah 43:4; Mark 3:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12