

## 67. Icons and Idols

About me is a shell from Fiji, a small pyramid set from Egypt, a brass cross from Germany, a wooden Kokeshi doll from Japan, and other items like these- all of which hold memories.

The shell reminds me of the church of Fiji and the needs of Christian schools in the Pacific islands. The pyramid recalls the Coptic Christians suffering persecution. The cross speaks of the valiant small churches trying to influence Europe to turn to God, and the doll of the huge task of evangelization that faces us in Japan, which has so resisted the faith.



We have an inveterate propensity to turn objects into idols or good luck charms. Without our favourite well-handled Bible, we might feel less comfortable when ministering, but it contains the same words as the pew Bible that is accessible to us. Without our cross on a chain about our neck, we may feel less spiritually complete. And we know this to be untrue.

Yet there is something within us that is drawn to objects, and they have power to prompt us to remember spiritual principles. The Israelites were directed by God to pile up stones as a reminder, the tabernacle and later the temple contained items of significance to promote memory. The tabernacle was not just an enclosed empty space.

So long as we don't imbue the objects like a crucifix on our wall, with power and overly esteem them, they can be powerful means of ushering us forward into prayer and recall of God's faithfulness. Dr Sheila Cassidy was imprisoned and tortured by a brutal regime in Chile. She looked to the intersections in the mortar and bricks, and drew on them as her cross on the wall in her degrading and horrid circumstances. The intersections did not give her the sustaining power, any more than would a crucifix in her home, but she used them to press into the presence of God in an environment of horror.

Just as a wedding ring reminds a spouse that fidelity is required in a time of temptation, we can use items as icons to prompt us to respond in God's best way across our days. We are called to remember, (2 Tim 2:7-9) and appropriate objects can assist us in doing this and living more powerfully as a result.

### *References*

*Joshua set up in Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones*

mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God." **Joshua 4:19-24**

*Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,*

[1 Chronicles 16:14-16](#)

*Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,*

[2 Timothy 2:7-9](#)

*Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,*

*Lk 24:6*

*The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth*

*Gen 9:17*

Cassidy, Sheila (1977). *Audacity To Believe*, Collins, London. [ISBN 0-00-211858-0](#).

### **A Cross in My Pocket**

*By Mrs. Verna Mae Thomas*

I carry a cross in my pocket, a simple reminder to me of the fact that I am a Christian, no matter where I may be.

This little cross is not magic, nor is it a good luck charm. It isn't meant to protect me from every physical harm.

It's not for identification for all the world to see. It's simply an understanding between my Savior and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket to bring out a coin or a key, the cross is there to remind me of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me, too, to be thankful for my blessings day by day and to strive to serve Him better in all that I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder of the peace and comfort I share with all who know my Master and give themselves to His care.

So, I carry a cross in my pocket reminding no one but me that Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life if only I'll let Him be.