

# Friends of the Center

## Stories of Remembrance: The Theology of Community Memory

When I think about the intersection of theology and community, I often begin with memory—with the stories we tell and the ways we keep them alive. For me, remembrance isn't just a mental act; it's a sacred discipline that binds our faith to our history and our history to our hope.

In my family, remembrance takes on the shape of a name. My full name—Sarah Frances Rina Farmer—carries within it the memory of four generations before me. “Rina” was my great-great-grandmother, an enslaved woman who once tried to flee bondage. When she was caught, the man who enslaved her planned to punish her through violence. But the story goes that Rina prayed through the night, asking God to intervene. That same night, the wife of the enslaver had a dream warning her not to harm Rina. Because of that dream, the punishment was stopped.

That story has been passed down for generations. When I named my daughter Acacia Justice Rina, I did so because I wanted her to remember—not just her ancestor's courage but also the God who hears, who sees, who delivers. I want her to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but also the God of Rina.

This, I believe, is where theology meets community: in the practice of shared remembrance. Our stories, especially the ones marked by divine rescue or quiet endurance, are living memorials. They tell us who God has been among us. And when we pass them down, we are shaping how the next generation will see God moving in the world.

Scripture is full of memorials—stones, songs, names, and feasts that anchor people in God's faithfulness. In Joshua 4, after Israel crossed the Jordan River, God instructed them to gather twelve stones from the riverbed and set them up in Gilgal. The purpose was clear: *“In the future, when your children ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over.”*

These stones were not souvenirs; they were signposts. They told a communal story—a testimony that *“the living God is among us.”* Each generation was meant to remember and retell that truth so that, as Psalm 145 says, *“one generation commends your works to another.”*

Theology, at its heart, is not only about right belief—it's about faithful memory. It's the story of God carried by a people. It's how we keep faith alive when we tell what God has done among us.

Theologically, remembrance is an act of faith. It is how we resist the temptation to see our lives as disconnected



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moments. When we remember, we re-member ourselves—literally putting the pieces of our story back together within the story of God. It is how we remind one another that our personal deliverance is part of a larger redemption, that God’s faithfulness did not begin with us and will not end with us.

But remembrance is not merely backward-looking. It fuels courage for what lies ahead. When David faced Goliath, he drew strength from memory: *“The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine”* (1 Samuel 17:37, ESV). Remembering gave him courage to face the future. So it is with us. The stories of God’s faithfulness—whether in Scripture, in our family histories, or in our communal life—become sources of power and perseverance for today.

It matters how theology is lived out—in classrooms, in churches, and in communities. Telling our stories, and listening for the echoes of God’s presence within them, is itself a theological act. It is how we practice hope. It is how we stay connected to the living God among us.

So perhaps the invitation this month is simple: Take up your own stone of remembrance. Recall a moment when God met you—in comfort, in provision, in rescue. Write it down. Tell it to a friend. Share it with your children or grandchildren. Let it be a witness, not just to what happened, but to who God has been.

In doing so, we help one another remember that the story of faith is still unfolding—here, among us, in community.

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