Creating a Sacred Space
Preparing An Altar of Remembrance

Throughout scripture we see God’s people creating an altar to the Lord at places where they've had powerful encounters with the Living God. Altars were built by Noah (Gen 8:20); Abraham at Shechem, Hebron, Moriah and Bethel (which means: house of God) (Gen 12:7-8, 13:18, 22:9); Isaac (Gen 26:25); Jacob at Shechem and Bethel (Gen 33:20, 35:7); Moses (Ex 17:15, 24:4); Joshua (Josh 8:30, 24:25-27); Samuel (I Sam 7:12) and many others. As you study these scriptures, note the encounter with God that each person had.

Hebrew: Mizbeach מִזְבֵּ֫חַ
An altar or place of sacrifice; agreements were ratified through the building of altars in OT.

Two noteworthy stories:
1) When the Israelites crossed the River Jordan, each tribe was instructed to take one stone from the river bed and they used those stones to create an altar to the Lord. Joshua himself created an altar in the river bed itself:

So Joshua called together the twelve men he had chosen—one from each of the tribes of Israel. He told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the L ORD your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the L ORD’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”

So the men did as Joshua had commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River, one for each tribe, just as the L ORD had told Joshua. They carried them to the place where they camped for the night and constructed the memorial there. Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day. (Joshua 4: 4-9)

2) After Samuel led the Israelites in prayer, fasting, confession, sacrifice and offerings, leading to their victory over the Philistines:

Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer (which means “the stone of help”), for he said, “Up to this point the L ORD has helped us!”

Now, in a similar way, let us use this simple creative exercise below as a way to encounter God and create a sacred space for our time together:

2. Consider the items on the table(s). Pick up, touch, feel. Ask God to lead you to one.
3. Take the item back to your seat or on a walk with God and ask Him to speak through this item. Remember all he has done through his faithfulness in your life.
4. Once you have spent some time meditating on your item, take it to our altar space and place it as God directs you.
5. As you wait, journal about how God met you and what he is saying to you.
6. Once all have placed their items, look and see how your item relates to the others around it. Do you see something new as you view it within the context of community?