

Rock Collecting and Matthew 18

Ephesians 4:32

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Introduction:

- I. Dr. Carney Looney has said that most of us carry around what amounts to a sackful of rocks. Each rock represents a bitter resentment, an unforgiven grudge, an unresolved conflict with people. We save these, polished and ready, for just the right moment. Here is how they work ...
 1. A husband and wife come home from a party "How could YOU say such a STUPID thing?! I was mortified!" (She just lobbed a rock at him).
 2. "O yeah! What about that AIR-HEAD remark you made at church?" (Now he has just reached inside his sack and tossed a retaliatory rock.).
 3. Not to be outdone he reaches and pulls out the prize rock, "Okay, YOU asked for it! What about that time 15 YEARS AGO that you ..."
 4. And so it goes on until the battle is over and they are emotionally exhausted and beaten. But they still have enough energy left to go around and pick up the thrown rocks and put them back into their sacks (and now they have a few extra to add!) Ready for the next round.
 5. How do you think they feel? Carrying around a sackful of rocks, all day, every day? Miserable I'm sure. Bitter, I'm positive. The burden of unresolved conflict, of unforgiving spirits weighs them down!
 6. Matthew 11:28 – Here is the point. Jesus offers us "rest." But without forgiveness our lives will be exhausted, and a fatiguing succession of battles will never be won!

- II. One of the greatest disappointments in the Lord's Church is the inevitable conflict that is present.
 1. Some conflict is good it helps us grow and change (1 Corinthians 11:19).
 2. However, most conflict has the deadly potential of breeding bitterness and nursing hurts and fostering an unforgiving spirit.
 3. Our failure to resolve conflict will cause us to have a bitter and unforgiving personality. This is wrong and will send anyone to Hell regardless of how justified they may feel (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

Body:

- I. The forgiveness principle stated (Matthew 18).
 - A. Jesus teaches that there is a two-way forgiveness principle" that directs our lives.
 1. First, we are forgiven by God; then we extend forgiveness to others.
 2. Peter's question to Jesus brought this principle into clear focus. The religious standard of the day was to forgive three times and then no more. Mr. Nice Guy! But Jesus says we are to forgive again and again and again! (18:21-22).
 3. Jesus told a parable to illustrate the two-way forgiveness principle.
 - a. One man owed the equivalent of the tax revenue of all Palestine for twenty

years! There was no way the debt could be paid. The debtor begged for more time.

- b. Incredibly the King forgave! Not only the interest but the principle a total erasure! Imagine the man's feelings liberated; unburdened; set free! Like making the last payment on an auto, home, or big debt!
 - c. The incredible twist comes as the man is leaving the King's palace. Relieved of his huge debt he sees one who owed him a few cents. He demanded immediate payment.
 - d. When the King heard of the servant's action he became furious. What really burned the King was the servant's failure to show mercy.
- B. Matthew 18 – That is how God responds to our sins and that is how God responds to our small-hearts when we refuse to give forgiveness. God's forgiveness has conditions that most ignore ...
1. God fully forgives all wrongs (Hebrews 8:12).
 2. God expects us to extend the same mercy (Matthew 5:7; 6:14-15; James 2:13).
- C. There are two strong reasons why we should give up our "rock collections" after studying Matthew 18.
1. The grateful heart causes us to offer forgiveness just as Jesus extended it to others.
 2. The fear of God's wrath because of His mercy I am saved from wrath (Romans 5:9), but He will not show mercy to the merciless. I do not want to be found outside of God's mercy (Hebrews 10:31).
- II. So we will not continue to collect "rocks" and fuel the unforgiving spirit that will condemn our souls, let me propose four resolutions.
- A. **Resolve to be peaceable, not quarrelsome.**
1. The wisdom of Proverbs has nothing but scorn for the person who is easily provoked and because of hurt feelings, constantly quarrels with others. "Chip on the shoulder" (17:19; 20:3; 26:21). A truism for today: *"One who throws 'mud' at another only loses ground."*
 2. Quarreling never opts for forgiveness it always chews on the wrongs, slights, and grievances.
 3. The chief culprit PRIDE (Proverbs 13:10). Some think the world, church, etc., all revolves around them and they get their feelings hurt when they are not pampered. Consequently they become bitter and unforgiving.
- B. **Resolve to accept your responsibility in the conflict.**
1. It is hard to admit wrong. Some do it in a way that prevents them from admitting personal responsibility, "I MAY have done some things wrong, BUT he should have overlooked those mistakes."

2. Some are so controlled by selfish pride they cannot acknowledge any personal blame.
3. Admitting personal blame is essential to resolving conflict (1 Corinthians 6:7; Jas 5:16).

C. Resolve to accept each other "as is."

1. Accepting another's quirks and silliness is so frustrating. It is hard to do!
2. Romans 15:7 — We are bound to extend the same grace to others that God gave to us.
3. When you expect others to fit exactly your idea of how they ought to be, unforgiveness will occur!

D. Resolve to be generous in forgiveness.

1. Think of God's mercy toward you. Think of His attitudes toward the unforgiving person.
2. A forgiving attitude – allowing others to make mistakes that really hurt you – will open doors to resolving conflicts.
3. Jesus is pretty clear (Matthew 5:23-24). Forgiveness is NOT an optional extra — it is essential!
4. Remember — if you want generous forgiveness from God, you had better be generous in forgiving others!

Conclusion:

- I. Back in the late 18th Century, a Delaware Indian chief named Tedyuncung was told of Christ's "Golden Rule." He found it hard to accept. "It's impossible. It cannot be done," he said. Then he added, "If the Great Spirit that made man would give him a new heart, he could do as you say, but not (otherwise)." Conflict is inevitable but with God working with in each of us, inwardly renewing us (2 Corinthians 4:16), we can have new heart power — power to love, accept, and forgive; power to work past "MY WAY" of selfishness to "OUR WAY" of resolutions and peace (Ephesians 4:32).
- II. "One cold wintery day I came upon a woman trying to get her car off an icy spot in a drugstore parking lot. Her rear tires were just spinning in place. One fellow was already behind her car and pushing. I joined him and we pushed, but the car went nowhere. Within minutes 6 of us were pushing and still nothing was happening. Finally someone thought to ask, "Lady is your emergency brake on?" Sheepishly she released her brake and drove off. Finding yourself locked in a repeating conflict cycle is like trying to move forward with the emergency brake on — lots of commotion but no motion. Others can advise, encourage, or push but until we release the brakes we will get nowhere. The brakes may be our pride or fear or anger or just poor habits of resolving conflict" (K. Durham, *Speaking From The Heart*).