

GOD AS A ROCK

Following is a set of devotions. Included you will find some readings, a prayer, and a guided meditation. Some are personal and some can be used in a corporate way. They all have the common theme of the metaphor of God as Rock.

REST STOP #1: GUIDED MEDITATION

Directions: If you are using this as personal devotions, read this meditation slowly. Try to see the word pictures in your mind. Pause and reflect when the script asks you to. Relax and let God speak to you.

If you are using this for a group (or is it better to say corporately) then have one person read it slowly, pausing at the appropriate times, while the rest close their eyes and visualize the word pictures.

GUIDED MEDITATION:

You are walking in a wood—
a heavy wood with thick brambles and low branches.
You feel a little . . .lost,
not entirely, but you know you're off the path you were just on.
It's darker here
than back there.

But up ahead you come to a clearing.
You have an odd feeling you've been here before,
but you are not sure.
The grass is soft and green,
and although the sky is still dark and gloomy,
there is one spot of sunlight
right in the middle.
Right in the middle on a big rock.

It's a big rock,
big enough to sit on.
And it is an odd shape.
It reminds you of something,
but you don't know what.

Drawn to the rock, you press ahead.
Your shoulders now ache with the weight of your backpack.
There are many things in there—
Packages you carry.
A neat package of unanswered questions,
a bundle of worries, tied tightly,
scars from a broken relationship,
grief.

As you walk, you list all your packages.
In the silence you name them all.

(Pause)

You glance up
and there before you is the rock—
already.
The spot of sunlight still beams on it.
You lay your backpack down,
slowly,
every package
at the base of the rock,
and gingerly, tenderly,
you sit down.

It's warm from the sun.
You lie back. You stretch your arms back behind your head
and you feel the warmth of the sun.

For the first time,
in a long time,
you relax.
Now, you relax.

(Pause)

In one sense, nothing has really changed.
In another way, everything has.
You must get up now,
but you know you will be back.
You are sure you will come back to this same rock.

You pick up your backpack.
It seems lighter now.
You take a few steps, and then,
looking back,
you finally see it.
The shape of this big, sturdy rock
is the palm of a hand.

REST STOP #2: STUBBING MY TOE ON GOD

Directions: Use this reading to guide your thoughts and feelings about God. What new thoughts and feelings do you have? What doesn't feel right? Find a small pebble and carry it around with you for 24 hours. Let it remind you to listen for and look out for God.

STUBBING MY TOE ON GOD:

Rocks are peculiar in their complete non-peculiarity. What is more boring than a rock? I mean, really. There it is—brown or gray, odd-shaped but nothing to write home about, dead. They are very small and inconsequential. You don't go walking around saying, "Ooh look at this gorgeous rock." (Unless of course you are in Yellowstone National Park or the Grand Canyon.) What is gorgeous about the petrified rock on northern Arizona is unimaginably nondescript in the pebble in my yard.

Or can I just not see it?

And rocks are everywhere. They're a dime a dozen. Actually that would be a good price. And sometimes I would pay to have some ten-year-old pick them out of my new garden plot. They are a nuisance. A bother.

They're rocks.

So, in some ways, it's a little hard to appreciate the metaphor of God as a rock. Oh, I know that you can also think of a rock as big and immobile and something that could become a strong fortress for us in times of trouble. And yes, I do want to experience God as a fortress in times of trouble. Of course. I want that mighty boulder that shields me from the wind and the flooding, that massive rock that keeps me high above my enemies.

Yes. Yes I do.

But does God fit the metaphor of a pebble in my shoe? Can God be found in the small, inconsequential parts of my day, the little routines and conversations that are like so many stones along the path? While not taking away from the wonderful imagery of God as a mighty mountain of stone, I wonder if it would help my relationship with God, if God might also be—a small gray stone. Something I might overlook if I'm not careful. Something that at the time might seem completely unimportant. Something ordinary and gray.

Something I might stub my toe on.

REST STOP #3: A PRAYER PETITION FOR GOD THE ROCK

Directions: Use this prayer when you want and need to petition God. Add your specific requests with the words below. Along with praying this prayer, read over the scriptures that helped form this prayer. Are these rock metaphors new or old for you?

ROCK OF AGES:

Rock of Ages,
Throughout history
You provided a refuge for your chosen ones.

Be our refuge now.

When the walls of the world start caving in,
Shelter us in your peace.
When enemies surround us on every side,
Shield us with your love.
When the stones on misunderstanding fall upon us,
Let your face shine on us
Like the sun.

Guide us and lead us
For your name's sake,
That we may become living stones
For you,
The Rock of our salvation.

Amen.

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
Acts 7:55-60
1 Peter 2:2-10

REST STOP #4: ROCKS IN MY AQUARIUM

Directions: Use this reading to guide you as you think about your priorities. What are the most important beliefs in your life? The most important people? The most important things? Do your actions truly reflect what you say you value? Does your aquarium get filled with your big rocks first?

ROCKS IN MY AQUARIUM:

Perhaps you have read Stephen Covey's book, *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy*¹, where he writes about an experiment a professor once performed in his class. He starts with a big aquarium and he fills it with big rocks, until he can't put anymore more big rocks in it. "Is it full?" he asks his class.

"Yes," they say.

Then, with a mischievous grin on his face, the instructor pours in some gravel. "Now is it full?" Their answers are more tentative. "Yes?" Then he pours in sand. This time the aquarium is obviously full to the brim. Not another molecule of sand, gravel or big rocks can fit into it. "Now is it full?"

There are some meek "yes's" and some of the students refuse to answer.

Sure enough, the professor produces a pitcher of water and commences to pour a quart into the tank. He doesn't bother to ask. The tank is now full. But he does ask his wide-eyed students this question. "So, what's the point?"

First things first. Had this experiment started with the water, with the teacher filling the aquarium until it could hold no more, the addition of the sand, gravel and rocks would make a terrible mess. The process just doesn't work in reverse. If you don't start with your big rocks, you just can't fit them in. First things first.

The same principle holds true in our lives as well. First things first. What are the "big rocks" in your life? Do you put them in first? Are do you fill your life with the trivial stuff and find you can't squeeze the big rocks in, not without making a big mess.

What are your big rocks? In your ministry? In your life? Do you give them top priority?

¹ Stephen Covey, and others, *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 88-90.