



Article Title— "Rocks!"

Article Category— Practical Christianity



Rites of passage mark notable milestones in a person's life for any transitional stage from one status to another. Some of them mark the transition from childhood to full inclusion into a tribe or social group. They can also include things like puberty, high school, college, marriage and death. For people of faith, ceremonies like baptism, confirmation and B'nai Mitzvah/B'nos Mitzvah are important rites. For anthropologists, rites of passage reveal what social hierarchies, values and beliefs were/are important within a given culture.

Rites of passage have been practiced on our planet ever since God's Day-6 creation of the first people. Throughout history, people have recognized that it takes a lot more than physical growth for boys to move from their dependency mindsets of boyhood to the productivity mindsets of manhood. The resulting rites were designed to appropriately shift the male psyche for the ultimate benefit of a community. While certain aspects of such rites have remained consistent throughout time and culture they have *evolved* in most societies. On at least one south Pacific island, though, the traditional rites have remained static for eons:

Tribesmen of Pentecost Island are renowned for a death defying Rite of Passage. It's called land diving: The young men of each village invest up to seven weeks to build their own respective 90-foot-tall wooden platforms on steep hillsides during early Summer. They climb to the top of those towers and jump! For "safety," they attach vines to their ankles. The vines must be long enough to make sure the hair of the young man jumping will actually touch the ground! Sorry; no bungee cords allowed! (I'd want to grow some really, really long hair! You?) And there's no "on-a-curve" grading, either! Older men determine whether a given dive is "pass" or "fail." A "pass" yields all the benefits and responsibilities of manhood within the island culture. Those who "pass" feel pretty good about themselves afterward. Whew!

But marking the transition to manhood is far from the only Rite of Passage that is somewhat common among global cultures. There are Rites of Passage that commemorate a sailor's first crossing of the Equator, too. Sailors who've crossed the Equator are nicknamed "Shellbacks." Sailors who haven't crossed the Equator are nicknamed "Slimy Pollywogs." Sea captains know that the Shellbacks have proven their ability to handle some of the roughest seas that exist on Earth. Better to recruit more Shellbacks, then, and fewer Slimy Pollywogs for a potentially difficult voyage.

Many Rites of Passage are documented on paper. That includes certificates of marriage, school diplomas and other elaborate documents to confirm that a person has earned an advanced degree. Some certificates document the fact that a person has been inducted into a given hall of fame, etc. Scouting organizations commemorate various levels of achievement with merit badges and such.

I once read of an interview with a high rise steelworker. The interviewer asked, "What do you like about your job?" The steelworker replied, "At the end of every day, I can look up and actually *see* what I've accomplished and feel proud."

That's pretty much what Rites of Passage are all about...being able to *see and reflect* on the circumstances, times and places of "special" events and accomplishments. During Old Testament times, God often instructed the Hebrew people to stack ROCKS to make altars. Why?

A. So they'd remember it:

Every time those who had benefited from a given miracle would walk near that stack of rocks, they would be reminded, again, that God had done what only God could have done and that they had been the very fortunate beneficiaries of it.

B. To make sure others would hear about God's trustworthiness, too:

Decades later when someone would ask, "Why is that stack of rocks over there?" they would inevitably hear the story of God's awesome compassion, power and faithfulness.

Was that just for people in the Old Testament? Might there be an equally important application for New Testament believers?

I was a successful Bible teacher for a LOT of years—big sanctuary classes.
I knew what my denomination believed and that's what I taught.
Yes, I should've checked it out to make sure it was true.

So why didn't I do that? Well, maybe I didn't do that for the same reason that you haven't really checked out what your denomination teaches.

"In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second hand, and without examination." —Samuel Clemens



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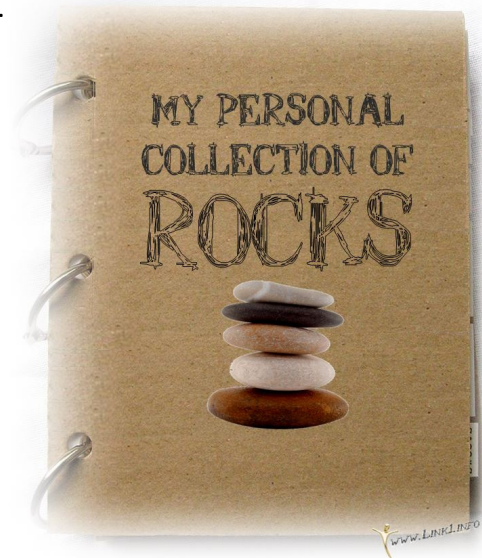
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God knows human nature (i.e.: the Sin nature) well. He knows that memories of bad times linger forever in our minds and that the memories of good times fade quickly...unless there are visible "stacks of rocks" to make certain we don't forget. Will that work today?

Yes! And it's as easy as one, two three. Try this when you need help:

1. Trust God and pray, believing.
2. Gather some rocks.
3. When God works your miracle, say thank you and then stack up those rocks you gathered earlier.

Rocks? Really? Rocks? Well, not *necessarily* rocks. But you can start a personal prayers-answered journal today. You might even title it "My Rocks" or something like that. In that journal, describe each "before" circumstance. Then write the date, time and nature of God's newest answer to your prayers. You might want to start that journal by writing about every time God has come to your rescue in the past—those times you can remember.



The next time things aren't going your way, human nature (the sin nature) will prompt you to feed the misery by recalling many other times when things didn't go your way. But then your eye will catch a glimpse of that little "My Stack of Rocks" book. You will open it and begin to read what you've written. Tears will form in your eyes. You will have been reminded that God is trustworthy. Pretty soon, you'll be building yet another stack of rocks!

That little journal can help you change the way you think:

- > "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your MIND, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Paul, at Romans 12:2
- > "Let this MIND be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." —Paul, at Philippians 2:5

It can change what you think about, too!

- > "Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK on these things." —Philippians 4:8

Why so much emphasis on using your MIND instead of your HEART...especially when things aren't going well for you?

Here's why:

- > "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool..." —Proverbs 28:26
- > "The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?" —Jeremiah 17:9


Would you like to build a worthy legacy for those you love? Leave that little journal out for your children and others to see. They'll ask about it. (Even after you're gone!)

- > "[Be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that ASKETH you a reason of the hope that is in you..." —1 Peter 3:15

—T. C. Newsome 

PS: Comments? Questions? Scriptural rebuttals? They're all welcome! www.Link1.info/contact-us.

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