

# Lessons from The River Rocks

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**Preparation:** Have a small basket or bucket with enough small rocks, preferably river rock, to hand out to each of the members present. Have each member select a rock before the presentation.

This lesson is derived from this bucket of small rocks taken from a river bottom an example of which you now have in your hand. Study it closely, and then compare it to the one selected from the basket by the others around them. Notice how some stones may be rough or smooth, polished or dull, big or small, cracked or unscathed, rounded or flat. Although you may not believe it based on how different these rocks are from each other, the rocks all came from the same part of the river. However, before we understand the moral of this program, you need to know the story behind the river rocks.

A Group of individuals, including a Freemason took a mission trip to the desert of New Mexico with Habitat for Humanity. They were there to build a new home for a family who had lost their home and all their worldly possessions in a tragic incident. During this mission, the Freemason met many new friends and surprisingly quite a few Demolay, Rainbow Girls and other Freemasons. He had no problem meeting and connecting with people. After building the new home in the blazing desert sun with little shade and frequent exhaustion over 2 weeks, the house was completed and the Habitat for Humanity Leaders held a big feast for all of the workers and the family. There were about 120 missionaries from 3 Christian Churches, a Synagogue and a Mosque.

When the feast was over, a final devotion was given during which the blessings of God were summoned for the house that had been built, for the missionaries, for the owners of the new home and for all of humanity. After the devotion concluded, buckets of rocks were carried into the room; what for, nobody knew. They carried these buckets around the room and told everyone to take a rock from the bucket without looking at it or exchanging it for another, just as described at the beginning of this program. After everyone had selected a rock, the leaders asked them to look at their rock and compare it to that of the missionaries around them. Everyone seemed confused and not yet fully understanding the purpose, they paid close attention to the explanation which was provided.

Brethren, the lesson behind this program is to teach and remind us that just as each rock is unique and unlike all others, so are we as human beings unique and different from each other in many ways. We as Freemasons come from many different walks of life yet we are united as Brethren by our obligations. But the reason why no one was permitted to exchange their rock for another, even if they didn't like the one they chose, is because the life path chosen for us by the Supreme Architect of the Universe is a path that we can't choose or exchange for another; even if we don't like it. For example, we can't choose our parents, what country we are born in, how rich our family is in our youth or who are our siblings. The Supreme Architect of the Universe grants each of us different sets of circumstances and puts each of us on different spokes on the wheel of life, sometimes marred by the casualties of life that may hinder and burden our existence, if not end it by the setting maul which we symbolize in the Master Mason Degree.

Some are born into wealth, power, prestige, and prosperity, while others are born into poverty. These are things we often have no control over in our youth and are often stuck with until we are in control of our lives as adults. Even into adulthood, despite our best efforts, some things remain unchanged and are forever drawn permanently onto the trestle board of our lives. That rock you could not exchange represents those things we cannot change and must accept, even if we don't like what is in front of us. Despite how jealous and resentful we are towards those who are granted better circumstances in life, alas we must follow the instructions of the trestle board that has been written for us.

But all hope is not lost, and that mere river rock you hold is not solely representative of all in life that cannot change. Rivers flow with might and vigor, carrying its rocks downstream over time, forcing rocks to scrape each other causing them to naturally erode, making them change and take on their unique features. Over time, and the more the rocks hit and scrape each other and erode, the rocks will eventually take on a natural and beautiful shine. As exciting and as optimistic as we are about this transition, it takes time; days, weeks, months, and even years of movement, mingling, eroding, and weathering by the elements of our Mother Earth. But we too, like the rocks in the river are carried downstream through life, influenced by events and other people, having life experiences both good and bad, learning from each other, taking in and following the examples of those who we look up to. Hopefully, we are taking on some of those beautiful features that distinguish us as one who can be adored and valued by others. But as it takes time for river rocks to take on their beautiful and adored features, it takes time for us to do the same in our time amongst the living; and for each of us, that amount of time is different.

But you can be assured that the rocks you have in your hand are but rough ashlar, taken from the river in their rude and natural state. They remind us of the life we have been dealt by the Supreme Architect of the Universe. And while there are many things in life that we don't like and wish could be different, we are still reminded by these rocks of what we can change in ourselves to become an example of what a man should be and how one should carry himself. While we know not how long we will live, nor how long any of us will, it should be our hope that in that time we are granted we can turn ourselves with the working tools of life, exemplified by the river, from a rough ashlar, imperfect and rough, into a perfect ashlar, refined and given a new beauty; thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that Spiritual Temple, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.