



A picture of a white stone. To most, it probably looks like an ordinary white stone. But, to me it is a very special white stone. I have had this white stone for 43+ years. It has sat on my desk for all those years. It is a reminder of the goodness of God.

It was either January or February of 1981. I had graduated from 9 years of high school in the spring of 1980. It took me 5 years of adult school to pass the English requirements to graduate. I had been applying to Christian colleges that spring and summer. I was finally accepted to Fresno Pacific College in Fresno and started classes there in fall of 1980. They had a 1-year

Bible program and that was what I registered for.

The first quarter had finished, and I had failed all my classes. It proved to be a very hard time for me. We were halfway through my second quarter, and I found myself again failing all my classes, when one of my classes took us on a silent retreat at St. Anthony Retreat Center just out of Three Rivers California.

We were halfway through the retreat when I walked down to Kaweah River. I had made my way out to a large flat rock in the middle of the river. There I was spending time praying and wondering why I was not able to do the work in the classes. It was a very sad and depressing time in my life. I saw my goal of getting a Biblical College Education slipping away. It seemed like I was on that rock for hours, just me and my Lord. Questions and doubts running through my mind. My spirit was defeated. My hope for my future destroyed. It was probably the worst I had ever felt.

I was sitting there looking down at the water. It appeared that the level of the water in the river had lowered, and a flat rock appeared right before me. Sitting on the rock was a white stone. The white stone you see in the picture.

The Lord brought Revelation 2:17 to my mind. "...to him that overcome will I give to eat of the hidden manna and will give to him a white stone..." That white stone, this white stone was to be a reminder to me that God is not and will not be limited in using me in ministry based on my education. It was to be a reminder to me that God is magnified and will be magnified in my weaknesses. That I should never let what I see as a handicap ever limit what the power of God can do through any person who surrenders their life to God.

Throughout the Old Testament God had the people erect rocks or other items as a sign of what God had done for them. One such place is found in Joshua 4:3-7 when Joshua spoke these words "And commanded the twelve saying, take you hence out of the midst of the Jordan...twelve stones, and you will carry them over with you...that these stones will be a sign among you. That when your children ask their fathers in time to come saying What mean you by these stones? Then you shall answer them, that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan...these stones will be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever."

We as we walk for Christ through this world should be erecting memorials and monuments of the goodness of God in our lives. It could be a person, an answered prayer, a Bible verse, a place, a retreat, a book or an event. It can be something physical or something just in your heart or soul.

Some of mine are this rock, a place that was on 21<sup>st</sup> street The Solid Rock Foundation, the Kern River where I was baptized, The church that asked me not to come back if I could not dress better, The parking lot of Young's Market where I slept in my car when I was homeless, the first church I pastored, First Baptist church both downtown and when they moved to Olive Drive who allowed me to minister before I learned to read or write, Pastor Bill Taylor who never gave up hope in me. Countless Bible verses. And probably one of my favorites is my Book of Prayer that lists those I pray for.

So, what are your memorials and monuments that you have? Things, places, people, verses that remind you of the greatness of God's love and goodness.

Now back to God's gift of this white stone. When we returned to campus from the retreat a friend's sister was sharing with me about a lady who was in charge of the Fresno Unified School District special education department. It just happened that this lady also had an office on the campus of Fresno Pacific College. She took me under her wing and ran test after test to try to find what my disability was. It came to pass that I had a very complex learning disability. One that they came to the conclusion that I would most likely never be able to learn to read or write. It was so severe that I came under the protection of the American Disability Act.

I returned to Bakersfield with my white rock. Returned to volunteer ministry with First Baptist Church. A few years later I met the most wonderful young lady, Glynda. We have been married for 42 great years. She and along with God saw to it that I got my college education. Degrees in Bible and Doctrine and a Degree in Ministerial Studies from Berean College. I became a credentialed minister in the Assembly of God.

With my white rock on my desk, I learned to read through many tears. I learned to read because I wanted to read God's Holy Word. I learned to read by going through the King James version of the Bible. I still use the King James version not because I think it is better than other versions but because the King James Bible is one of my memorials I keep, reminding me that God is greater than all our weaknesses.