



The Stench Behind the Stone

Dr. Jon Chasteen

Focus Before we ever do battle on the outside, we will first have a battle on the inside. The battle within reveals the issues of our hearts. And more than anything, God wants our hearts.

Fun Have each member introduce themselves by stating their name plus one truth and one lie about themselves. After each person makes their statements, allow for a quick open conversation where everyone questions each other on their two statements. The goal is to convince the other members that your lie is actually a truth while guessing the truths and lies of the others. After the questioning period, vote as a group on each member's statements. Points are awarded for each lie guessed right or for stumping other members on your own lie. This exercise helps you get to know your group members better through interactive fun!

Review Key Scriptures: Joshua 5:9; John 11:38–41; Jeremiah 17:9–10

1. Stone of Reproach

In Joshua 5:9, God declares, "Today, I have rolled the reproach of Egypt from you." Reproach represents our issues or the scorn, shame, and disgrace that we carry around with us. However, God declares to the people of Israel that this is the day He will roll away their reproach. We are all going through a battle and we all have issues in our lives, but God wants to roll away the shame that keeps us from fully surrendering our hearts to Him.

2. Battle Scars

Before the people of Israel could enter into the Promised Land, God commanded them to circumcise themselves. God removed the Israelites from Egypt, but 40 years later, He needed to remove Egypt out of them through circumcision. The idea here is that God wanted them to cut away the pain and

shame that held them back. God wants to take the cover off of our hearts, to prepare us for battle. Like a great physician, God will cut away things from our hearts that keep us from Him and hinder us in our next battle. All of us have a great battle to fight, but today we have issues to deal with.

3. The Stench

Dead things are placed in a dark, stinky place. For Mary and Martha, the pain of their loss and the stench of what remained was too great, so they put it in a dark place and rolled a stone in front of it. But God wants to visit your place of pain. In John 11, Jesus said, “Where have you put him?” God is asking us, “Where have you put your pain? Show me where your faith ended.” God wants us to be involved in the healing process. He asks us to do what we *can* do, and then He does what we *can’t* do. Today is the day God wants us to show Him our pain so He can roll away our reproach.

Group Dynamics Idea Share one or two ways God has answered a specific prayer request this past year—it can be something simple or big. Now take time to celebrate together and give thanks to God for answered prayers.

Discuss

1. What do you think Dr. Chasteen meant when he said, “Before every battle is a bigger battle—the battle within.” What does this make you think of?
2. In Joshua 5, the people of Israel consecrated themselves to the Lord before entering the Promised Land. Why do you feel like God had them do this? And why was it significant?
3. God wants to circumcise our hearts. What does this even mean, and how would it look in our modern lives?
4. Do you agree or disagree with Dr. Jon Chasteen that we all have issues? Why or why not?
5. Do you believe it is necessary for us to be honest about our issues? Why is it sometimes hard for us to trust God with our issues?
6. Take a moment and ask yourself, “What are the areas or issues in my life that I have kept hidden from God?”
7. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this message? Take a moment and ask God into the areas of your life that feel like dead places or places of pain that you have kept hidden behind a stone. Invite God to roll away the stone so you can be set free.

Take Home As we conclude, remember the following:

- God wants to have our hearts.
- God wants to roll away our reproach and shame.
- God wants to loosen us from our pain so we can be free.

Prayer Heavenly Father, thank You for being such a good Father to us. Thank You that You not only want us to be Your children but also You want us to be completely set free from our pain and shame. Help us to trust You with our issues and our pain. Help us to invite You into every area that we have hidden in the dark. Thank You for loving us and setting us free. In Jesus' name, Amen.

New Leader Tip Now is the time to identify people in your group who might be good leaders for next semester. Many leaders step into that role because somebody believes in them, encourages them, and asks them. Be intentional about calling out leadership gifts in people.