

REAL WORLD GOD 5: ROCKS IN THE WAY

Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. (Isaiah 62:10, NIV)

AS MUCH AS I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO BE, I was not there the day my friend hit his wedge into the rock-guarded green at the par-5 near home. The hole is funky enough without these many jagged obstacles, some several feet high, all embedded along a small trench fronting the two-tiered green.

But on this day, funk was in my friend's favor. His woefully short shot landed hard against one of the rocks, normally a recipe for disaster. This time, though, the ball careened high in the air, landed on the green, and made its way to the hole. In a moment, a downcast golfer had been transformed into an eagle-celebrating champion!

Rocks of almost any size conjure up pictures of strength. It was David's small stone that felled Goliath and it's the Rock of Gibraltar that stands as a worldwide symbol of immovable immensity. But rocks on the golf course can strike fear—or at least careful planning—into the heart of a golfer. We'd almost certainly all agree that the game would be a lot nicer, if not as challenging, without them. It's likely, though, that they're not going anywhere.

Thankfully, this same dilemma is not true of the rocks that can stand between a person and faith. There are any number of these, from sin to science, but they have the same effect; they cause a person to say of Jesus, "He's not for me." And they go on living in unbelief (or perhaps more closely, suspension of belief).

What if you and I set about to remove the stones that hinder faith—ours or others'? The apologist Ravi Zacharias has said of his venerated predecessor C.S. Lewis: "Lewis was a master at communication; he basically disarmed the reader, coming to where they were and gently dismantling barriers to belief." If only we could communicate like that!

Faith is something not as firm as rocks. It needs reinforcement. Thus, I have often found myself saying that apologetics—the discipline of reasoning and arguing for the veracity of God and his Word—is vital for believers and unbelievers alike. The enemy will drop rocks in our way. By effort of mind and spirit, we must seek to remove them and to fly in their place a banner of assurance that God is the enduring victor of our souls.

Opening questions You're in charge of your course for a day—where would you take the bulldozer to move a bothersome obstacle? • What hinders you from seeing God with full eyes of faith?

READING 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Isaiah 62:10-12, Matthew 16:13-18

To communicate like that (1 Corinthians 2)

What disciplines would be necessary to be a strong communicator on behalf of Christ? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this training? And prayer?

How big the message (Isaiah 62)

What stones might you work to remove in helping others investigate Jesus? What lines from this passage inspire you to herald the Lord?

Rocks of faith (Matthew 16)

Why is implied when we call someone "a rock"? How might you become this kind of person in your faith, so others may rely on your wisdom and leadership as they came to do with Peter and the apostles?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. This study is accompanied by a 5-minute video here: <https://youtu.be/Pm2kF8mSIXo>.