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magazine
February '24

*In the
cleft
of the
Rock*

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Contents

+ featured articles

- 4 **IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK**
- Andrew Roebert –
- 10 **BE FLEXIBLE - KEYS TO SUCCESS
(KEY 9)**
- Andrew Roebert –
- 14 **HELP I'VE BEEN OFFENDED!**
- Andrew Roebert –



IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK

S C R I P T U R E R E A D I N G :

EXODUS 33:21-23

THEN THE LORD SAID, 'THERE IS A PLACE NEAR ME WHERE YOU MAY STAND ON A ROCK. WHEN MY GLORY PASSES BY, I WILL PUT YOU IN A CLEFT IN THE ROCK AND COVER YOU WITH MY HAND UNTIL I HAVE PASSED BY. THEN I WILL REMOVE MY HAND AND YOU WILL SEE MY BACK; BUT MY FACE MUST NOT BE SEEN.'



THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU CLOSE TO GOD



Exodus 33:21

Then the LORD said, 'There is a place near Me...'

Moses had a desire and a request. His desire was to experience God in all His glory and to see and experience the glory of God firsthand for himself.

Exodus 33:18

Then Moses said, 'Now show me Your glory.'

As the Lord began to speak to Moses He tells him, or reminds him, of a place where there was the possibility of knowing the closeness of God. It may have been a place where Moses had often gone to pray or speak with God – the scripture does not give us exact clarity on the location. Perhaps it was a place that Moses was familiar with. The truth of the matter was that there was probably a place or a position, or certain conditions where Moses could experience the closeness of God. The Lord longs to make Himself real to each one of us He has prepared a place for you that is close to Him. He does not desire that we would experience Him as being afar off.

There are things, like sin, which can separate us from God, but there is also a place where we can find ourselves in right-standing with Him, where His presence can be real, perhaps almost tangible. There is a place near to God for you!

GOD WANTS US TO STAND IN HIM



I just love this phrase: 'A place where you may stand...' Years ago, I had the privilege of travelling to Italy. We were able to see some of the great church buildings and enjoy their splendor and magnificence. We came to one building where there was a long flight of wooden stairs going up from the entrance foyer. People were crawling up and down the stairs, praying, crying and pleading with God. They would often stop on a particular step and weep. As I stood watching I was dismayed that people were almost groveling in the hope of moving God's heart towards them.



We had just returned from a conference where we had enjoyed a touch from the Lord and His presence was so real to me. Now to see these many people moving like ants up and down this staircase disturbed me. I realised that in all likelihood they were desperate and would do anything for God to intervene in their lives. As I stood there I just asked the Lord to touch each one and make a way for them in the situation they were facing. In the story of Moses, the Lord tells him that there is a place close to Him where he can stand. Not a place of groveling or crawling around, but a place where he could stand tall because he knew he belonged to God and that God loved him. Sometimes when we are desperate we can also resort to approaches that are not what God intended for His children.

Hebrews 4:16

‘So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.’

Ephesians 3:12

‘Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence.’

There is place for you, near to the Lord, where you can stand and boldly come into His presence



*He places our feet
on solid ground*

EXODUS 33:21

*THEN THE LORD SAID, 'THERE IS A
PLACE NEAR ME WHERE YOU MAY
STAND ON A ROCK.'*

There is a great old hymn with the following words: 'On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.' The solid Rock on which we can stand is Jesus Christ our Lord. The Lord gave Moses a position of security, a rock, on which he could stand secure. The Lord does not desire for us to be standing on sinking sand. Our relationship with God places us on a sure foundation. Sometimes life can drag us down and we can find ourselves stuck or struggling in the miry clay, but HE comes to lift us up and place our feet on solid ground.

PSALM 40:2

*'HE LIFTED ME OUT OF THE SLIMY
PIT, OUT OF THE MUD AND MIRE;
HE SET MY FEET ON A ROCK AND
GAVE ME A FIRM PLACE TO STAND.'*

May you know the ROCK on which you stand. May you know the security of standing on solid ground, and may you realise that the Lord wants to make your way secure.

**THE LORD WANTS US TO
EXPERIENCE HIS
PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES**

EXODUS 33:22

'AS MY GLORIOUS PRESENCE PASSES BY...'

HE PLACES OUR FEET ON SOLID GROUND



THE LORD WANTS US TO EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES

Here the Lord tells Moses that His glorious presence is about to be revealed to him and that he will see and experience the glory of God passing in front of him. There is another old song with the following words: 'Reach out and touch the Lord as He passes by. You will find He's not too busy to hear your heart's cry. He is passing by this moment your needs to supply. Reach out and touch the Lord as He passes by.' The truth of the matter is that God and His presence is always ready to pass by. As we look back in history and in the Bible we see how God's presence became a reality to so many people. With the coming of Jesus, His presence could become more than just a passing glimpse, but rather it could become an ongoing experience or reality in our lives.

MATTHEW 1:23

*LOOK! THE VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE A
CHILD! SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON,
AND THEY WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL,
WHICH MEANS 'GOD IS WITH US.'*

Today, God is with us. He is with you, and He wants you to experience His life-changing presence in your life.

THE LORD IS YOUR SAFE SPACE

EXODUS 33:22

*'I WILL PUT YOU IN A CLEFT IN THE ROCK
AND COVER YOU WITH MY HAND...'*

There are times in our lives when we need the protection and the hand of God to be very present in our lives. In this verse we see how God takes Moses from the rock on which he was standing and places him in a cleft in the rock.

The Lord is your safe space

A cleft in a rock represents a place where the rock has split or broken open so that there is a place you can go into where you can be protected and secure. It is in this place of shelter that God can give us a sense of security and protection so that we can focus on God's goodness and presence in our lives. Jesus Christ is the One Who was broken so that we could find our lives in Him. Our Rock was torn and scarred so that we could find our safe place in Him. Think about what He went through, so that we could find a safe hiding place. He is that safe space where we can know the closeness and the protection that only His hand can supply.

COLOSSIANS 3:3

*'...YOUR LIFE IS NOW HIDDEN WITH CHRIST
IN GOD.'*

Let Him place you in that safe space that He has prepared for you and let Him cover you with His hand of protection and provision.



*THE LORD WANTS TO BE A LIVING
REALITY IN YOUR LIFE*

EXODUS 33:23

'I WILL REMOVE MY HAND AND YOU WILL SEE...'

Moses had this awesome moment when God passed by right in front of him and he could see some of the glory and wonder of the living God. In a world where there is so much negativity, wickedness and despair, the Lord wants to make Himself real to us so that we will see things from a different perspective. There is another song with the following words: 'Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, Open the eyes of my heart, I want to see You, I want to see You. To see You high and lifted up, shining in the light of Your glory. Pour out Your power and love, as we sing holy, holy, holy.' I tell you, when His presence and the light of His glory is real to us, all the darkness is dispelled, and we are changed. In that moment, His Holy Spirit comes to make Jesus real to us so that we are changed and can begin to reflect His glory into a dark and troubled world.

John 1:14

'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

MAY YOU BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE LORD AND BEGIN TO 'SEE' HIM EVER-INCREASINGLY IN YOUR LIFE. MAY HE BECOME MORE REAL TO YOU THAN THE PERSON SITTING NEXT TO YOU. WHEN YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN IN HIM, IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK, HE WILL BECOME THAT LIVING REALITY THAT YOU SO LONG FOR IN YOUR LIFE.



BE FLEXIBLE!



KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL LIFE (KEY 9)

BY: ANDREW ROEBERT

Change is one of the unavoidable aspects of our lives. The dynamic of life is based on this unknown. We know the past and we know the present but we know little or nothing about the future. For all we know it may not happen. Each day presents us with new and different challenges. To be flexible is to have the capacity and ability to adapt to new, different, or changing requirements. The new, the different and the things that are changing, are things we cannot escape. Our ability or our readiness to be able to make the adjustments quickly and effectively is a key to success in life.

THE ROLE OF CHANGE!

Constant change is here to stay. It is one sure thing in life. I remember some years ago I was in the army. It was a dynamic, changing environment in which we never really knew what would happen next. Information was never given to us and everything was on a need-to-know basis and it seemed we never needed to know. We would wake up in the morning and have no idea what would happen next. To add to this there would be many rumors. The rumors would cause the troops to fly from insecurity to anxiety to anger. My friends and I soon discovered that by simply making a statement we could start a rumor and it would spread like a wild fire and cause havoc. It was easy to see those who had learned to be flexible. Those who did not have the ability to be extremely flexible cracked. Life may be slightly more predictable but the same principle still applies. The greater your ability to embrace the new, the different and the changing, the greater your likelihood of success. I once read the following quote: 'A mind once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original proportions.' This 'stretching' is the flexibility. When someone is stretched, when they do not have the capacity to be stretched, it is destructive. But when the flexible are stretched, the sky becomes the limit!





BLESSED ARE THE FLEXIBLE!

I once heard someone say the following: Blessed are the flexible for they will not be broken. It sounds like it comes from the Bible but it doesn't! It does however contain an element of truth. There is special grace for those who are flexible. When we are flexible God can get our attention. When we are flexible we are ready and able to embrace change. Lack of flexibility is often caused by pride. Proud people are often stubborn and inflexible. Humble people are generally teachable and flexible.

Proverbs 13:10

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

THE ONE CONSTANT

In all this change that so surrounds every aspect of our lives, we often long for something constant. I was speaking to a lady the other day. Her life had been on a bit of a roller-coaster ride. She said how she longed for her life just to plateau out. Although we long for progress and forward movement, at the same time we seem to want things to stay the same. This is because within each one of us is a longing for the constant. This longing can and should only be satisfied in our relationship with God. God is the only constant that we can hold onto.

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

John 8:58

Jesus said, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. The challenge is to live with flexibility in our hearts while holding onto the One who never changes!



DESIGNED TO CHANGE!

You and I were designed with the innate ability to change. We may be creatures of habit, but we have the ability to make decisions and change.

Matthew 3:2

Repent (think differently; change your mind, regretting your sins and changing your conduct), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Preconceived ideas and stubbornness make for a potential breakpoint.

God is at work in our lives. He is pruning, disciplining and leading.

Proverbs 3:12

For whom the Lord loves He corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.



As a result we are constantly adjusting, co-operating with God, becoming what He wants us to be.

Proverbs 15:10

He who hates correction will die

ADJUSTING YOUR SAILS

As a teenager I used to windsurf. I grew to love the sport and learned some valuable skills. At the same time I learnt many life lessons. I learnt that if you do not adjust your sails you will not have much joy. You have to constantly adjust your sails to take best advantage of the prevailing winds within your ability and strength. There were times when I felt stronger than the wind and inevitably I would be thrown off. Sometimes in life we are like this. We constantly want to challenge the prevailing circumstances. Then we wonder why we are being thrown around. The skill is in the ability to adjust our sails effectively. To be able to realise which things we can handle and those things we cannot.



BE FLEXIBLE!

When I would windsurf I would often teach others how to do it. The first thing that a novice would do was to adjust his/her sail perpendicular to the wind. The sail would suddenly fill up with air and whip the person into the water. They would always respond and say with shock: 'what did I do wrong?' In our desire to be flexible we need to learn to adjust our sails. In the process we can take on enough to facilitate progress but not so much that we land ourselves in trouble.

BE READY

We need to be ready for whatever changes life may demand from us. We do not know what will happen next and this is why we need to be flexible and ready to change. This readiness is primarily an attitude. If we have the attitude: 'This is how it has always been and this is how it always will be and we will not change', then change will demolish us when it arrives. If, however, we say, 'Lord I entrust my life and my future into Your hands. I cannot see the future, but You can and I trust You to help me through', then we will be able to flow with the change and go from strength to strength.

2 Timothy 4:2
Be ready!





LIFE - A SERIES OF SEASONS

Life is a series of seasons. Winter gives way to spring, and spring gives way to summer. Summer gives way to autumn and autumn gives way to winter. Each season calls for a different approach. If we do not approach winter with a different strategy we may be ill prepared. In South Africa, where we live, summer is the time when we expect the rain. It is however not guaranteed. Sometimes summer can come without rain and this leads to drought. In this way we constantly adjust ourselves to the changes. In life we must do the same. We must be able to identify the different seasons we may be in and adjust accordingly. Seasons change! This is important to notice. We were not designed to live in winter forever. We were meant to enjoy spring and summer as well!

2 Timothy 4:2
Be ready in season and out of season.

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HELP, I'VE BEEN OFFENDED!

By: Andrew Roebert





WHAT IS AN OFFENCE?

We need to start with an understanding of what an offence is. Once we know what offences are, we can understand the influence they have in our lives. Here are several definitions:

1. Offence is a state of being angry, hurt or displeased.
2. Wounded, especially ones feelings.
3. Offence occurs when we become outraged at something or when we are insulted.
4. Offence is the act of stumbling! (Miriam-Webster's Dictionary)

Definition number 4 is the one that should interest us. The moment we allow an offence into our lives we set ourselves up to stumble and fall. It is for this very reason that we need to be so aware of picking up offences, so that we can avoid stumbling.



OFFENCES ARE PART OF LIFE!

Offences are part of life. We can be offended by our friends, family, colleagues, church, work and even God. There is hardly a day that passes in life when we are not confronted with the possibility of picking up an offence. We speak about 'picking up' an offence. This indicates that often we actually take on an offence. It is a deliberate action that often takes place moments after we are affronted, hurt or challenged. We must learn to recognise offences and deal with them before they get a hold on us and become a stumbling block in our lives. Offences are the bait of satan. The devil uses the offences of life to bait us so that we will fall into the snare and be destroyed.

OFFENCES CAUSE DAMAGE

Offences have a way of infiltrating our lives and bring destruction as a result. This damage can effect us in many ways:

1. Hurt & Bitterness.
2. Sickness & Weakness
3. Breakdown in relationships.
4. Hatred, Revenge & violence

THE DOWNWARD CYCLE

The process that begins with offence is a downward spiral. Offence that is not dealt with will lead downward to something worse. What started as a simple offence can end with disastrous results. Offence can lead to hurt, hurt can lead to bitterness,

bitterness can lead to hatred and hatred can lead to murder. It may not go the whole way, but all along the way there is damage. The answer is not to get into the downward spiral to start with. We can do this as we deal with offences before they deal with us.

EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLE

There are two examples I would like to highlight.

The first is Zacharias. (Luke 1) He was a High Priest in the Temple. He and his wife Elizabeth had wanted children and prayed and asked God for a child. Many years passed and they did not have any children. One day as Zacharias was ministering in the Temple the angel appeared to Zacharias and told him that his wife Elizabeth would have a child. However, Zacharias was offended and his offence can be seen in his response. He reacted and said: 'How can this be?' He went further to tell the angel that this was not possible as his wife was old. Luke 1:18 Zacharias said to the angel, "But this is impossible! I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years." The angel responded and said that because of his unbelief, he would be dumb until the child was born. For four months he could not speak, until the child (John the Baptist) was born. Zacharias was offended because God had not answered their prayer.

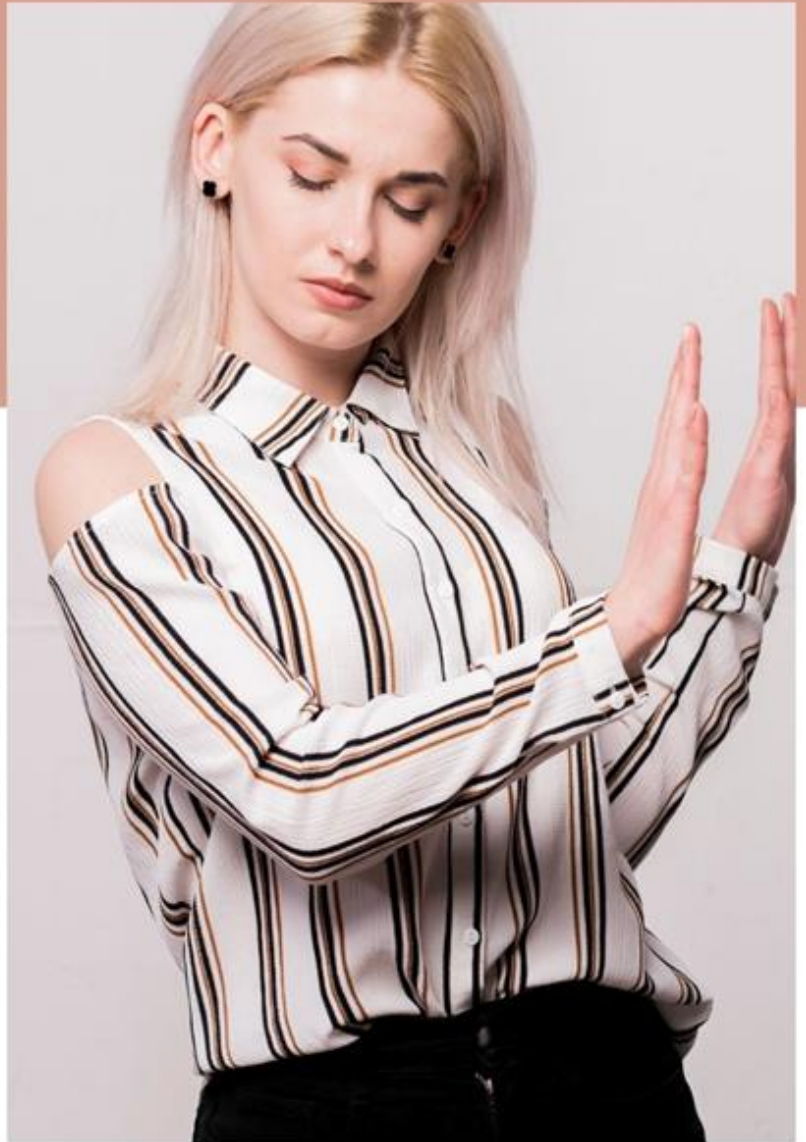
The second is John the Baptist. John fulfilled a great role. He was the forerunner of Christ and even baptized Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus continues His ministry and John ends up in jail. Perhaps he had anticipated something different, but here he sits in jail. He begins to question Jesus and sends a message to Jesus to ask Him if He is in fact the Christ. Jesus responds and says: "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." (Luke 7:23)

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

It is interesting to see that both Zechariah and his son John the Baptist were offended. Like father like son. The circumstances were different but the similarity between the two was that both become offended. When we become offended it rubs off on those around us. If we allow offences to take root in our lives we can be sure that our children will also readily pick up offences. As a result the scourge of offences can be passed from one generation to the next. It is time to break the chain of offences that effect generation after generation.



EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO OVERCAME OFFENCE



There are two examples I want to look at and both come from the Old Testament. The first is Joseph.

Joseph was his father's favourite son. His father had even made him a special coat of many colours. His brothers were offended and attempted to get rid of him by throwing him in a pit. Then they pulled him out of the pit and sold him into slavery in Egypt. Here in Egypt he was falsely accused and ended up in prison and even those people in prison forgot all about him when they left the prison. There was plenty of reason and opportunity for Joseph to become offended. Yet he did not become offended! As a result when the day came, God could lift him from the prison to the throne and God could use him.

The second example is David.

David was a man who served his king. He would play his harp for the king and the king would throw his spear at him. Eventually his life was threatened and he had to go into hiding. He was hunted down for years like a common criminal. This went on for years and yet he was able to keep his heart tender and free of offence and ultimately God could use him and he became king.

God can use those people who will not allow offences to take hold of them.

DEALING WITH OFFENCES

Offences happen! But God wants us to deal with those offences. We cannot simply ignore an offence and think that it will just go away. It will fester like an infection and lead to great harm.

Hosea 5:15 I will return to My place [on high] until they acknowledge their offense.

Notice the following aspect: 'Acknowledge their offence' We have to get to the stage where we can admit and say yes we have been offended. Jesus said that there was a blessing for those who were not offended. Jesus knew how destructive offences can be and warned us in His message to John the Baptist. Are you ready to acknowledge your offence and ask God to forgive and release you?

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH OFFENCES?

Here are a few simple steps to help us deal with offences:

1. The first step is to acknowledge your offence.

Hosea 5:15 I will return to My place [on high] until they acknowledge their offense.

This means to admit that you have been offended or have picked up an offence.

2. Confess this to God.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

3. Ask God to forgive you.

4. Forgive.

Unforgiveness indicates that we are still holding onto our offences. We forgive, not because those who caused the offence deserve it, but because we deserve the freedom that forgiveness can bring us.

5. Release and let go of that offence.

6. As we extend grace and mercy to others, God's grace and mercy can be extended towards us and we can be free of the offences we have carried.

GOD IS WAITING

In a sense God is waiting for us to deal with the offences in our lives so that He can bless us and bring about His purpose in our lives. When we become offended and hold onto our offence, it is as though God steps back and waits. It is for this reason that, in the depth of our offence, God can seem far from us. It really does not matter what caused the offence or how justified we were to be so offended. We may even be offended with God! Until we can find it in our hearts to deal with the offence, we cannot really move forward into what God has for us.

Hosea 5:15 I will return to My place [on high] until they acknowledge their offense.

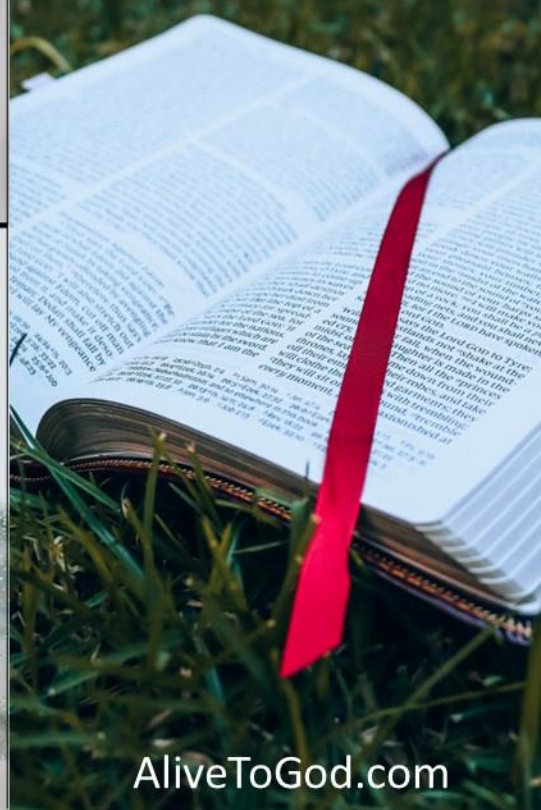
We must deal ruthlessly with offences on a day-by-day basis so that nothing will get in the way of what God has in store for us. God wants each one of us to be free from every hindrance, so that we can step into His purpose, plan and destiny for our lives.

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