

Five Smooth Stones

Winner, Semifinal Contest, World Championship of Public Speaking: This is a speech that connects. The speaker talks to us, one-to-one, from beginning to end. He uses examples we understand. He builds clear pictures. And he shows us how, with careful thought, an hilarious, yet relevant, Twist can be designed and delivered, winning audiences hearts and judges scoresheets.

by Jock Elliott (www.jockelliott.com.au) (August 2006)

There were giants in the earth in those days ... according to Genesis six, verse four.

And you might suppose, after all this time that those giants exist no more.

But, Madam Contest Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, you'd be wrong.

Giants walk the earth in every day and age, and you'd be surprised who they are. They might even be you!

Do you remember the giant Goliath? And how David went out to fight him, naked and alone, as are we all, armed only with five smooth stones which he took from a brook.

Now David chose five stones to do the job, but with all those stones at his feet, why do you think he chose those particular ones?

Well, I think that he chose them not for their qualities of smoothness but for their qualities of greatness.

Less for their giant-killing power and more for their giant-making power.

Because, having fought and killed Goliath, David became the new giant, the champion of the Israelites, a great man.

Now imagine the river of life, sometimes raging, wild and destructive, sometimes quiet and peaceful. And shaping the course of the river and being shaped themselves by the river as it flows, are all the stones which represent the qualities of humanity.

Think of all the virtues and vices of humanity. For each there is a stone. For greed and lust and corruption, there are stones. For mercy and humility and love, there are stones. And if, like David, we wish to kill giants, to become giants, then we must choose these five stones:

Vision to see all the possibilities and opportunities,

Wisdom to know what we might be...

Courage to choose the right path, often the hard path.

Strength to endure. No matter how high the hurdles, how fierce the opposition, how tired we may be.

And finally, **integrity** that we may be true to our vision and to ourselves.

And with these stones in our armoury, we can become giants.

But whether we choose to be a giant on a world stage like Churchill, Napoleon, Caesar, or a giant of industry or the arts or sciences, or just a giant to our friends and family; well, that's up to us.

The nature of the giant which is within all of us, the shape of the person we are, lies in the stones we choose.

So which stones would you choose? And which would you discard?

Let's see what David did. After he became king, he saw and lusted after Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, naked in her bath. And David took her, and got her with child and sent Uriah the Hittite into the forefront of battle, so that he was killed.

Now just about everyone has at some time or another seen someone of the opposite sex unclothed and not closed their eyes. That's the stone called curiosity.

And most of us have taken a fancy to someone who was not ours to fancy. Jimmy Carter did that, and that's the stone called fantasy.

And then he talked about it on national TV and that's the stone called stupidity.

And his wife heard about it, and that's called catastrophe.

And some of us may even have taken things to their logical conclusion, as Bill Clinton did, and that's the mill-stone called Lewinsky.

David looked and touched and took and killed so as to keep what he had taken. Which is the absence of the stone called integrity.

To do as David did, to discard his integrity, is to become less than a giant. All the greatness that was David's, his vision and courage, his wisdom and strength were fractured and flawed without his integrity, and David's greatness was forever diminished.

Think of all those stones at your feet and pick five of them for yourself. That's as many as most of us can hold. Now think if you had to drop 1, or 2 or 3 or even 4 of them ... which would you drop first and which last and which would you keep above all others.

I would keep integrity, because that is the glue that holds all the others together. With it we may become giants. Without it, we diminish and betray ourselves.

I believe that for all of us, the qualities of humanity which we choose for ourselves and our lives can be many and varied. But at the last, the most intangible and yet the greatest by far is... integrity. Because...

There are giants in the earth in these days too.

The essence of ourselves shines forth in everything we do.

If a giant in this world is the wish you have for you -

Choose five smooth stones - and unto yourself, be true.

798 words

Jock's After-Notes: The speech took about ten years to write, or rather, it was written on and off over that period. I like it very much and it is very powerful even though it has five examples, but they are as much stepping stones towards the point of "Integrity" as they are valuable qualities in themselves.

I arrived at my choice of the particular qualities of the stones by surveying about twenty people on their choice of desirable human qualities. I believe that it's important for me to say what I think matters, but it helps if everyone starts out on the same page so that I don't have to spend valuable and limited time in persuasive argument.

Originally, I had five smooth stones as props but that was too hard to handle easily so reverted to simple gestures and pointing to eye, head, heart, fist, and body core.

Brian Woolf's comments: I love this speech. I heard Jock deliver it in Washington, DC. Jock, with his avuncular style and Australian accent gives an inspirational - yet entertaining - speech with a strong US current political flavor (two US Presidents) in the city of US political power. How apt.

But not just that, it made me think as he took us from a lack of integrity in old Biblical times to a lack of integrity in today's political center. He reminded me of what has always been a critical element in of a life well led. Integrity.

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