

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

By Rev. Dan Heuer

[For study guide helps, click on the *Quarterly* icon at www.lwml.org or contact the LWML office.]

Opening

“Between a rock and a hard place” is usually described as a very uncomfortable place. A sense of dread could easily come over us. Many people in the Bible found themselves between a rock and a hard place. Can you name a few? (We’ll look at a few of them in this study.) What about in your personal life?

Prayer

Gracious Father God, You are my Rock and my Fortress. You are a place of safety. Thank You for Your never-ending love for me. You give me exactly what is needed for me to grow spiritually. Teach me through the hard times in this life just how much You love me. Thank You for being a Rock of refuge and hope. Lead me now in the study Your holy Word. In the strong Name of Jesus. Amen!

Part 1 Introduction (10 minutes)

If you are studying this in a large group meeting you may want to break into smaller groups and take a quick look at one of the Bible passages below and ask some of questions about the hardship experienced. If you are studying this alone, you may want to choose one each day and use it as a devotional thought.

- Did Adam struggle when Eve gave him the forbidden fruit? Caught between God and his wife? (**Genesis 3:1-7**)
- What about when God came looking for Adam in the garden and he again was caught between God and his wife? (**Genesis 3:8-21**)
- Did Noah like it when God asked him to build an ark? What would the people of town think? Would he obey God? (**Genesis 6:13-18**)

- What about Nathan when God asked him to confront David regarding his sin with Bathsheba? Nathan could get killed either way! (**2 Samuel 12:1-13**)
- What about Esther when Mordecai asked her to speak to the King on behalf of the Jews? Her life was on the line. (**Esther 4**)
- Did Peter hesitate when Jesus asked him to walk on the water? Caught between his Rock and a liquid hard place. (**Matthew 14:22-33**)
- Hosea, when he is asked (told) by God to buy his prostitute wife back: You've got to be kidding, God! (**Hosea 3**)
- What about Jesus on the cross? What is His rock and hard place? (**Matthew 27:27-54**)

There are obviously many, many more examples in the Scriptures about human beings in hard situations where it seems as if there is no way out and we are being crushed. You may think of some of your own situations or those of a friend even now. How have you reacted when feeling squished between that rock and that hard place?

The money runs out before the end of the month.
Your six-month-old twins are out of diapers.
You can't afford your medications but can't live without them.
No chocolate when the pastor comes to visit!

Part 2 A Specific Example (15 Minutes)

The rock and the hard place close in: **Exodus 5:1-13**

What is the plight of the people?

What makes the struggle even harder?

In the struggle where does it seem that the people look?

The rock and the hard place settle in: **Exodus 5:14-21**

Just when you think it can't get any worse — it gets worse! What do the people do now?

Is the frustration and anger justified?

What distractions do the people have?

The rock and the hard place collide: **Exodus 5:22-23**

Is it all right to question or blame God?

The Rock rescues: **Exodus 6:1-2**

Who wins in the battle of the rock and the hard place?

What about you? Have you ever been stuck feeling like there is no way out?

Have you ever been looking inside of yourself and just become more frustrated?

Have you questioned God? Blamed God?

Who promises to come to your rescue?

Part 3 The Rock (10 - 15 Minutes)

Matthew 26:36-46, 52-54 (or Matthew 27:27-54, 28:5-10)

[Each person should read this Bible passage silently — then consider each statement with the group at your table.]

Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane praying to His Father to have the atonement happen some other way? Is our Rock (Jesus) weak?

Who does our Rock (Jesus) connect with?

What distractions are there?

How does our Rock (Jesus) meet His hard place?

Jesus is our Rock! Yet at the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, our Rock meets a hard place. We are in the middle. Gethsemane literally means “oil press”. Olive oil comes from — you guessed it — olives being squished between a rock and a hard place. Jesus pours out Himself to His Father. His Father responds, “This is the way. These are the people. Through You I will show My love for them. Through You I will show my grace for them. Through You I will crush their sin once and for all. Through You it will be accomplished.”

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” **(2 Corinthians 5:21)**

God uses those squeezing, squishing times between a rock and a hard place to cause us to depend on the only One who could withstand the “oil press” — Our Savior, Jesus.

Take a few moments to contemplate God’s strength, His love, and mercy displayed in Jesus, and thank Him.

Part 4 Praise and Prayer (As long as you want!)

“Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me” (*LSB* 716) (*LW* 513) (*TLH* 649)

“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” (*Songs for Disciples* 31)

“My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” (*LSB* 575) (*LW* 368) (*TLH* 370)

In your prayers, honor God for the depth of His love shown to you. Thank Him for being our Rock. Praise Him for the victory He gives us.

For additional study: Psalm 102, Psalm 55

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