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**Lessons for
Leaders:
Don't Strike
the Rock!**

726-A

Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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Lessons for Leaders: Don't Strike the Rock

This is a lesson for leaders. It has to do with the responsibility that accompanies authority and success. I can all but hear the ripples of whispering from our murmuring multitude, "It is about time," you respond. "We have heard enough about wives submitting to their husbands. We have heard enough about children obeying their parents. We have heard enough about employees honoring their employers. What about those *in* authority? The elders. The deacons. The parents. The bosses. The husbands. Yeah, what about them!" Well, if you are about to shout a hearty "Amen!", you may have missed the point about submission. But at least for today, the worm has turned and the shoe is on the other foot.

This lesson focuses God's close-up lens on the closing days in the life of our Living Legend, Moses. What we see develop is a portrait of the only major error recorded late in his life. But it was an error that carried with it a very high price tag. It serves to remind us that Moses with all of his spiritual credentials, was still a man. As a man, at least on one occasion, he lost his perspective and stumbled. We read that Elijah was a man of like passion such as we are, yet he prayed. So God's greatest were subject to those lapses in fellowship that sometime lead to disobedience. If you are a leader in your home, in your business, in your classroom or, in particular, in your ministry or in your church, this lesson is for you, or I should say for us. It is a lesson for those of us who have assumed, in any area of life, the mantle of leadership. This is not a lesson I expect to enjoy teaching. It has tucked within its context a wealth of conviction and a word of warning aimed at me and at many of you. The title is: A Lesson for Leaders - Don't Strike the Rock.

Our story begins in Numbers 20:

Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.
(Numbers 20:1)

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Now it was the first month of the fortieth year since Israel had been sentenced to wander. In all likelihood the entire adult generation had now died, leaving only the younger generation plus Aaron, Miriam, Moses, Joshua and Caleb. Now Miriam had died. Forty years is a long time to wander. Forty minutes is a long time to wander in *that* desert. But imagine forty years of wandering. It was fruitless, aimless wandering. Forty years of trying God's patience through rebellion. Forty years of murmuring against Moses and Aaron and their leadership. That amounts to over 14,000 days in the sands of adversity. They were there because they chose wandering over possessing. It seems so much easier to wander than it does to possess. But at the end of our years, what a price we pay for wandering.

One interesting sidelight is that the people were now nearly in the same place where they started. That is another characteristic of wandering. The best a wanderer can hope for is to go around in circles. Always, sooner or later, he ends up back where he started, with virtually nothing to show for his time except wasted years behind him. If you have been wandering spiritually, take note of this one fact: there is no future in wandering.

Now we see the congregation gathered together again. Isn't it always good to see a congregation together? That was not necessarily true with this group. At this particular time, Moses and Aaron were grieving over the death of their sister. But the mood of the multitudes was not one of sympathy, but of anger. We read now in verse 2:

And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.
(Numbers 20:2)

So the occasion for this congregational get-together was to discuss the local water shortage. This now was the third time by divine decree that the children of Israel had found themselves with no water to drink. The first time was in Exodus 15:22. There we read that they went three days into the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah they could not drink the water, for it was bitter. Their journey into the wilderness forty years before had begun with this very same test. They found no water to drink. Then when they found water it was like a mirage for the water was bitter and unfit to drink. You may remember, God showed Moses a tree. When Moses cast the tree into the water, the bitter waters became sweet and there God

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made a covenant with His children. That tree was a picture of the Cross, the tree upon which Jesus would die. When cast into the waters of adversity, it would completely transform life and turn that which was bitter into that which was sweet, all because of Calvary.

Again the water supply evaporated at Rephidim in Exodus 17. There we read that all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Zin according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched their tents in Rephidim. There was no water for them to drink. The people chided Moses and demanded water. What had once been a supernatural provision, they now presumptuously demanded. Moses cried to God, and God told him to go to a rock in Horeb. There God's glory was to appear before the rock and Moses was to smite the rock with his rod. God was to send forth water. So Moses did and God did. We saw typified how God would one day, once for all, allow the Rock to be smitten. He would allow His own Son to be slain. The water of the Holy Spirit would spring forth from the smitten Rock and whosoever came to the Rock to drink of that living water would never thirst again.

Now we come to Kadesh and once again God turns off the faucet of His natural provisions to create a need. This need was one that He alone could satisfy supernaturally and thus by meeting the need, declare His glory once again. The Psalmist proclaimed that *when He slew them, then they sought Him*. When God created a need, He got their attention. So it is as well in your life and in my life. God will, on occasion, turn off the valve of His natural provision in your life. In your finances, in your ministry, in your family, even in your worship experiences, your life may turn dry. You may be in a "dry" time right now. But learn to praise Him for the dry times. They have great benefit for the believer. I have listed at least seven of these benefits. Let's look at them now.

1- The dry times develop dependence. Only when you cannot do it alone do you learn to trust Him.

2- The dry times develop gratitude. When there is no water, you don't demand a Coca Cola. You are grateful for a drop of H₂O.

3- The dry times develop sensitivity to that which is spiritual. It is a tested fact that when our physical world collapses, spiritual

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things begin to become more important.

4- The dry times develop your prayer life. Unfortunately many of us never really learn to pray until the well runs dry.

5- The dry times demonstrate the power of God. When no one else can solve your problems, then God has a chance to do things that man in his own energy can never do.

6- The dry times demonstrate His provision. He wants to provide, but until we have great needs, we will never acknowledge where it all comes from, so He can't.

7- The dry times demonstrate His discipline. So often it is only when we are dying of thirst that we will accept the chastisement of God as that which is good.

Now if you have ever been to Egypt, you will know that water in the desert represented their ability to stay alive. On occasions, the One who is the Water of Life had to create a shortage in order to get His children's attention that He might then show Himself strong on their behalf. He never took away their water to harm them. He always and only took it away to teach them that He alone was the Giver of Life. So any time God closes His divine valve of provision in your life, pay attention. Stop murmuring: a miracle is about to take place. Be still. Trust Him, lest in your unrest you miss the reason for it all and thus miss the miracle itself.

So there was no water in the desert. This brings us to part two of our lesson. How did our frustrated friends respond?

And the people chode [chided] with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.

And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

(Numbers 20:3-6)

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Several things jump out at us in these verses, not the least of which is how this generation parrots the attitudes of their parents. They were raised on a diet of boiled rebellion, peppered with the salt of bitterness and covered with a thick layer of presumption. Now given the same set of circumstances Mommy and Daddy had forty years before, their response was identical, even to the wording. They were a generation of murmurers raised in the schoolhouse of parental example. Don't for a minute overlook how much we communicate to our children by our attitude to authority and our attitude toward the circumstances of life. Chances are, given the same set of circumstances, they will respond just as we do. After all, we are their teachers.

Now the picture here is one so typical that it is hard not to see a little humor in the goings on. Having no theater or TV stations in the wilderness, our creative congregation has learned to amuse itself by holding nearly regular meetings at city hall where the party in power, the Mosesites, were to be the brunt of all their jokes and the recipients of all their barbs of bitterness. In other words, when there was nothing else to do, the word spread quickly, "Let's go downtown and toss tomatoes at Moses and Aaron." By now, no doubt, they had their protest placards mimeographed. They might as well have.

The arguments never change. I can just see them now, "Way To Go, Say NO to MO!" or "How Long, Oh, Lord, How Long?" or "Send Moses Back to the Minors, We Will Never Win the Championship With Him as Captain." or "We won't holler, we won't fuss, but where are the grapes you promised us?" You can see them milling around the edges of the crowd clutching their frayed travel folders with the raveled edges that said, "See Canaan, A Land of Promise." Inside were colored photographs of grapes so big that it took two men to carry them. Their fists were clenched in anger as they chanted, "Promises, Promises, We can't live on promises!" If it sounds almost like a carnival atmosphere, it probably was. I can just see the cheerleaders on the sidelines with their big SS on their uniforms for "Sinai Saints". You can just hear them chant, "Down with Moses, Aaron, too. Egypt, Egypt, we're for you!" Or "Are we happy? Moses, No we're sad, sad, sad. Next to you ole' Moses, Pharaoh's not so bad!"

At any rate, the weekly "down with Moses" rally was in full swing. They turned on their pre-recorded messages which were a generation old. They cried, "Would to God we had died when

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our brethren died. Why did you bring us here, Moses, to kill us? Where are the fig trees and the vines and the pomegranates?" Lastly the cries came up from the throng, "And now the city water board has let us down again. Woe is we Moses, woe is we." Fortunately, Moses and Aaron had a pre-programmed response as well. They went to the door of the tabernacle and fell on their faces. These guys by now must have been pug-nosed. They had been falling on their faces for forty years. But that is what God was waiting for and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The people responded as they always had and Moses responded as he always did. Now God responds, as He always does. He met the need He created in a way that would give Him glory to His name. Let's read,

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. (Numbers 20:7,8)

God said in essence, "Moses, I have allowed them to get thirsty again for a reason. I want you to take the rod, that speaks of My authority. I want you to gather the flock, that speaks of My ownership. I want you to speak to the rock, that speaks of My word and My response to prayer. I will give them water from the rock." Moses was to be the vessel. God was to be the provider. The water was to spring forth from the rock in response to the Word. Now Moses had been given more difficult instructions on occasions, to be sure. What God was saying was, "Moses, so you have another water shortage in the desert. Big deal. There is no problem in the heavens, Moses. I have not run low on water. I am not out of clouds, Moses. I have allowed this shortage so that you will have to ask, so that *when* you ask, I can provide. As I provide, I can remind My people that the I AM is the source and sustainer of life." Oh, the mercy of God. He wants to give and give and give if only we will give to Him the glory due His name.

Now if the story is not familiar to you, you may be imagining Moses' perfect obedience and God's intense joy at His servant's godly response once again. Negative. This time the story has a different ending.

And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

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And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

(Numbers 20:9-13)

So the amazing sequence of events look like this:

1- Moses took the rod just as God had commanded him.

2- Moses and Aaron gathered the people around the rock, just as God had commanded them.

3- Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses spoke to the people. He did so in anger and in condescension. He said, "You listen to me, you hard-headed hypocrites." God never asked him to deliver a sermon. God wanted him to deliver His people.

4- He shared the credit for the water that God was about to send. He said, "Must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" He inferred impatience on God's part, then he used "we" rather than "He" to denote the source of the deliverance. Then he used the word "fetch" to indicate that it was the work of over-worked man that was to be their deliverance.

5- The greatest sin of all comes in verse 11 as we see Moses dramatically raise his hand and twice strike the rock that God told him but to speak to, indicating that it was by his might, not God's, that the water came forth. In so doing, Moses crumbled into a million pieces the portrait Jehovah had painted for His people of the coming Messiah who would be smitten once for the sins of the world and who never, no never could be crucified again. Moses was but to speak to the rock and salvation was theirs. For the rock had been smitten in Exodus 17. Now all men had to do was ask and the water of His Spirit would flood into their lives and satisfy their thirsty souls. It was finished. The rock could not be smitten again. But Moses, in a fit of anger, rebuked the people, stole God's glory and destroyed God's testimony of

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salvation by grace. The amazing thing is that God sent forth the water anyway. His provision was not predicated upon anything Moses did. For it is *“Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”* (Titus 3:5a). Moses had nothing to do with providing the water. It was God’s people, God’s rod, God’s rock and God’s water. Moses was being given the privilege of being a vessel through which God would glorify Himself. God was not dependent on Moses for the water. He never is. He blesses us by using us, but never for a second think that He is limited by us. He Himself is all He needs.

God said, “Moses, your sin is two-fold. First, you did not believe Me.” God knew Moses’ heart, and in that moment in anger, Moses didn’t really believe that God could do it without him. Secondly, God said, “You did not sanctify Me in the eyes of the people. Moses, you shared My glory. I created a need and met that need so that the spotlight of My glory would shine only on Jehovah, the only One who can handle glory. Moses, you crowded into the spotlight. You said in essence, ‘Wow! Me and God, what a team!’ Moses you are not anybody without Me.” God didn’t stop loving Moses. God didn’t stop using Moses, but for several reasons God had to take from Moses the mantle of authority to lead the people into the land. Aaron, Moses’ silent partner who never spoke out in God’s defense, by virtue of his silence, received the same shocking sentence from God.

As we shall see at another time, Moses took it very, very hard. You and I in our immaturity might be prone to grumble to God, “That is unfair, God, after all that Moses has done for You!” Negative. That is the least God could do after all He had done for Moses. Considering the nature of the offense and the office of the offender, God really had no choice at all. Was God unfair to Moses? As we mentioned in the last lesson, it is impossible for God to be unfair and still be God. So scratch that idea before Satan begins to work with it and foolishly apply it to your own life. Not only is God fair, but His grace so abounds that the issue of fairness is totally submerged in example after example of how He refuses to treat us with only fairness. If He treated us “fairly”, we would all perish. God is more than fair. God is love.

Why, then, could Moses not enter the land? Why were all those years of faithfulness dashed to pieces on that rock at Kadesh? We will never know all the reasons until we get to heaven, but here are a few that we can know here and now.

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1- God had to punish Moses because the nature of the offense demanded it. Moses toyed with the glory of God. By inference, he crucified Christ afresh. When he said “we” instead of “He”, he robbed God of His glory before the whole nation. The nature of the offense demanded discipline.

2- God had to punish Moses because the nature of their relationship demanded it. Jesus said in Luke 12, *To whom much is given, much will be required.* Few men ever knew God as Moses did. God said that He had prophets to whom He spoke in visions and dreams. But not so with Moses. “He is faithful in Mine house,” God said; “With him I speak mouth to mouth.” Moses had seen the glory of God as few men before or since. That vision of His holiness gave Moses a greater level of accountability, never to infringe upon His righteousness by elevating himself into a position of co-leadership with God. God had to punish him. The nature of their relationship demanded it.

3- God had to punish Moses because the nature of his position demanded it. Here is an important lesson for the man or woman who longs to be a leader. The higher the position, the greater the accountability. Your example demands a higher level of expectation. It is why Paul demanded that church leaders be blameless, men of unblemished integrity. The man or woman who leads must be willing to be judged by a higher standard and measured by a more sensitive set of guidelines. Everything he or she does is mirrored in the faces of those who follow. The more responsibility, the more accountability. Moses had to be punished. The nature of the infraction demanded it. The nature of their relationship demanded it. The nature of his position demanded it.

Ah, but in the overall plan of a sovereign God cannot you see the Master weaving even the threads of this act of disobedience into the tapestry of His will for His people? Even this He worked together for good. At least four things come to mind as we think of Romans 8:28 as it applies to this situation. God worked it all together for good in these four ways:

1- The people needed a new leader anyway. Forty years of rebellion and two generations had hardened their hearts to this man's leadership. A whole new challenge lay ahead of them. Perhaps Moses would not know when to step down. Most men don't. They needed fresh leadership. God gave it to them.

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2- They needed to establish God as Lord. Moses had become a visible substitute for Jehovah for so long that only a changing of the guard would remind them that men come and go but the eternal I Am was their only leader.

3- Moses had already trained his replacement. Moses disciples Joshua, line upon line, precept upon precept. So in one way Moses did enter the land. He transferred his life into this man. In the spirit of the one he disciples, he entered the land. A man's life goes on even after he is gone when he pours it into another man's life.

4- Moses didn't need to see kingdom, Moses had seen the King. He wasn't deprived of a thing. We see His provisions to learn of His grace. Moses knew a God of grace. We see His victories to learn of His power. Moses already knew a God of power. A God of mercy through judgment spared this 120 year-old man of the grueling strain of the conflicts ahead. Moses couldn't enter the land; God's judgment demanded it. But beloved, he didn't *need* to enter the land. God's heart of mercy understood that as well.

The greatest truth, however, that we can learn from this lesson is the truth that leadership carries with it certain responsibilities. The pages of Scripture and history are stained with the memories of God's great men or women who under great pressure and great responsibility fell in disgrace or humiliation by allowing their exalted position to rob them of their perspective. Elijah lost his perspective under the pressure of persecution. Having just been exalted, he couldn't handle one woman's threats. David lost his perspective under the pressure of moral temptation. Job stood like a giant among men when he lost all he had worth losing; then he lost his perspective under the pressure of personal rejection. Peter claimed to be the one to never let the Lord down; but under the pressure of having to stand alone, he crumbled into a pile of weakness. Solomon lost his perspective under the pressure of financial success. Moses lost his under the pressure of spiritual success. Lot folded under the pressure of worldliness. Abraham folded under the pressure of personal danger. Aaron fell under the pressure of dissension in the ranks. This is why you need to pray for those in authority over you. The pressures are great. The conflicts are intense. Satan knows that when a leader falls, followers follow.

Many of you are in positions of spiritual authority. You

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may be in authority in a church, in a Christian organization, in the home or in a personal ministry. The Scripture teaches us “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (I Corinthians 10:12). I believe that there are at least 8 lessons that leaders can learn from this Living Legend of Moses in Numbers 20. If you are not a leader, you may be some day. Either way, these lessons for leaders may help you to more intelligently pray for those who lead you. Let's learn in advance the lessons of leadership.

1- Learn never to take liberties with the Word of God. Whether we are teaching or preaching or counseling or witnessing, we must count the word of God for what it is — everything. To add to it, to build doctrine upon doctrine or treat any doctrine more central than Christ did, is grievous. To use it as just another resource is even more grievous. To take from it and teach or counsel only the parts that the hearer desires to hear is equally blasphemous. Moses added to the word of God and his ministry was sorely affected.

2- Learn that the people you serve are not yours, they are God's. He can take them, move them, and remove them if He chooses. God is not in the numbers game and neither should we be. When you begin to build a wall between your people and the rest of the body in order to hold onto them, your ministry is in its first stages of decay. Moses assumed, at least for a moment, ownership of the flock and that is stealing from God.

3- Learn that of your own self you can do nothing. Moses knew that, but the abrasive sandpaper of rebellion and the fleeting symptoms of success entered in and he turned the “He” to a “we”. It is very subtle but at the pinnacle of our spiritual success, we are no less capable of helping God or no more capable of helping God than we were the day we were born into the kingdom. We are simply the recipients of more grace. The more God uses us, the more amazed we ought to be.

4- Learn that you have no right to tell God what to do. Your job is to speak to the Rock. His job is to provide the water however and whenever He chooses. It is *His* ministry, not yours. If you begin to smite the Rock to tell God how to run His kingdom, to be so overcome by the smell of success or the mirage of numbers, you will become presumptuous with God and you will fail. The Rock has been smitten once on our behalf. We have no right to

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strike the Rock. We ought to be so humbled at spiritual success that we fall on our faces before God in awe that He can use us at all.

5- Learn that He will bless our people with or without us. I doubt if it ever entered Moses' mind that the nation would possess the land without him. It isn't that Moses was proud; he was the meekest man in all of the earth but, eventually, the patterns of being needed and used leave the marks of being indispensable. Beloved, whenever a man becomes indispensable to a ministry, the ministry itself becomes expendable. God will, if need be, raise up stones to take your place or my place. The people we serve are His and His alone. He can bless them any way He chooses. He plans to do so with or without us.

6- Learn that greater responsibility calls for greater humility. The flesh reverses that law, but God refuses to bend the principle. He exalts the humble and He humbles the exalted.

7- Learn that greater responsibility means greater faithfulness. Satan's lie is that when God begins to bless a man or a ministry, the faithfulness to the details of life become less important. The opposite is true. The more responsibility you have, the more responsible you are to be faithful to the word. You need to be on your knees as you pay attention to the tasks, even the menial tasks, the daily tests of our level of faithfulness.

8- Learn that greater responsibility makes you more accountable for the secret sins that destroy men's souls. Men of great stature in the kingdom often are deluded into thinking that God is so impressed with their work, that He will overlook their secret sins. However, God holds the leader *more* accountable when the lights of acclaim go out, for what he thinks and how he lives.

You say, "Then who would want to agree to be a leader?" Anyone who has learned the joy of following must be available to the task of leading. The plus is this, that the more responsibilities He gives you, the more grace He gives you. You and I must learn that leadership is no license for disobedience. It is a calling from God to greater humility, to greater obedience, to greater servitude, to greater faithfulness, to greater worship. The first rule is always, don't covet leadership; learn instead to follow, for the danger of becoming a leader is that in the heat of the battle as a leader, we lose our perspective as to who THE leader really

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is. In the flush of success, we begin to become presumptuous with God and strike the Rock.

We strike the Rock whenever we accept the glory for what He has done. We strike the Rock whenever we entertain thoughts that either we or our work are indispensable. We strike the Rock whenever we begin in our success to play God and pretend to know the will of God for everyone else. We strike the Rock when we divide the body of Christ by limiting His power to those who see things the way we see them. We strike the Rock when we set up our plans and our programs and our progress as His measuring stick for someone else.

We can strike the Rock as a church, too. The more God blesses a church, the more humble we ought to be. Then we must speak to the Rock more quietly and gratefully. We must recognize that all the rivers of blessing we enjoy as a fellowship come from Him and Him alone. The church is only what God makes it. Your ministry, my ministry, anyone else's ministry is only what God makes of it. If we covet success by numbers, then we have failed. If we boast of our giving or boast of our living or boast of our teaching or boast of our preaching, we have missed it. What have we to boast of but of Him? Romans sums it up:

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to
whom be glory forever. (Romans 11:36)

Perhaps the most crucial principle of all in this lesson is that the sin of presumption and the sin of condescension that so characterized Moses' response on this occasion are not reserved for a chosen few. If you have written this lesson off as solely a message designed for a handful of Christian leaders, then its deepest truth has escaped you. The problem of spiritual pride is not reserved only for leaders. It is a subtle, but lethal spirit that steals ever so gently into the human soul the first time you give your testimony and others are impressed. The first time the change in your lifestyle is noticed by your unbelieving friends and they build you up as though you have done something, you are dealing with spiritual pride. It spreads like a silent disease when other Christians use you as an example of faithfulness or meekness or godliness. It begins to take root when you are asked to speak or sing or perform in a Christian setting and believers heap mountains of praise upon you that you were "using your talents for Him." Your talents? Ah, the subtlety of the lie.

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If you join a Bible study and others are impressed with your knowledge, spiritual pride has its beginnings. If you counsel a friend and they are impressed with your wisdom, spiritual pride has its beginnings. Oh, how so gently there moves into your life that twinge of spiritual self-centeredness, that tiny spark of the flesh that hangs onto a tiny bit of glory as though God wouldn't miss just a little. But the glory syndrome won't be satisfied with a little, so you begin to "perform" for Jesus. Your goal is to serve Him, yes, but now you begin to feel that He needs you and surely He will bless your life, look what you have done for Him. Then when the rain of testing falls into your life, a bitter spirit emerges, for you had presumed upon God's grace and designed a better lot for yourself than this. Like Job, a subtle self-righteousness resists correction and without even knowing it you have developed a pattern of striking the Rock.

Maybe you have been elevated in the Christian community ahead of your time. People are raving over your spiritual potential. Don't get caught up in listening to your rave notices. Fall down before God in awe. Maybe you have been disciplined and thus have grown very quickly. Be careful, because one of the few perils of discipleship is that we grow in our knowledge beyond our understanding. In a few short months we try to assume a position that only years of maturity can develop.

Give yourself an attitude check. God owes you nothing more today than He did the day He saved you. You did not deserve His grace then and you do not deserve it now. Neither do I. No matter how loudly the echoes of acclaim ring in our ears, the plaudits of the crowd which sometimes accompany spiritual growth ought to but drive us to our knees the more to confess our unworthiness.

So never smite the Rock, my friend. Never allow Satan to convince you that you have become so essential to the kingdom that God is in heaven awaiting His next orders from you. Never fall into the trap that He is so grateful to have you on His team that He will put up with just about anything you do just to keep your talent or your experience. He doesn't need either one. Speak to the Rock, beloved. Speak humbly, expectantly, gratefully. Read and re-read those last four chapters of the book of Job. They will help you keep your perspective. Ah, the secret of it all is that the higher He chooses to place you on the ladder of leadership, the more humbly you ought to speak whenever you speak to the Rock.

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DON'T STRIKE THE ROCK

So God has blessed your ministry
And you've been quite impressed.
And you're convinced He's set you up
Ahead of all the rest.

So useful are you in your mind
That God must need you so,
That you have taken liberties
Because of what you know.

"Now God and I," your spirit cries,
"Together we're a team!
And, oh, how great I'll be for Him."
So Satan lets you dream.

Don't strike the Rock, Beloved,
Be careful of your place.
He does not need your talent,
Your work is all of grace.

Don't strike the Rock, Beloved,
Don't think, "But God needs me!"
God will not share His glory
Nor lend His praise to thee.

Speak to the Rock, Beloved,
Speak quietly, humbly in trust.
It's only that God uses weakness
That He's chosen the likes of us.

Give to the Rock all the glory,
And you'll find in due time it is true
As you speak to the Rock, He'll flood your world
With the Water of Life through you.

Don't Strike the Rock!

For Focus and Application

1- Try to imagine the frustration of wandering for an entire generation and ending up back where you started, with nothing to show for it but the death of your parents. At what point do you think the children of Israel forgot that they were reaping what they had sown, and began to think that God just didn't deal fairly with them? Consider your own life. How often do you blame God, when the circumstances you are angry about are only the natural results of the decisions you made?

2- How do people today respond to water shortages? Why do we fail to see *every shortage of God's natural resources as a chance for God to get our attention?*

3- Moses became presumptuous with God. What part do you think the fact that this had happened twice before and God had taken care of it played in that presumption? How likely are you to be insensitive to God's provisions when faced with a situation He has delivered you from before?

4- Why can't we learn to praise God for the "dry" times of life? What are we likely to do during those times? Review the seven benefits of life's "dry" times on page four of your transcript. Doesn't the first reason really explain the other six? Why do we struggle so over being "dependent"? How does the world view dependence? Who is the source of an independent spirit? Is that not the real battlefield of life?

5- Do you think the unrest and ingratitude of the multitudes helped to spawn Moses' desire to steal some of God's glory? Could he have been glorying in his very position? Have you ever done that?

6- In one paragraph, write down the principles Moses violated by striking the rock. What two things did God accuse him of?

7- Review pages 11. God had to punish Moses. Consider why. Even this mistake worked together for God's glory and Moses' best interests. Meditate once more on Romans 8:28 and apply it to your life.

8- If you are a leader or aspire to leadership, take the eight principles on pages 13 and 14 and find verses of Scripture to validate these truths. Then memorize those Scriptures.

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9- Make a list of ways that you tend to “strike the Rock”. Ask God one by one to forgive you and teach you through the living legend of Moses.

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