

# Speed Bumps, Stepping Stones,



## and Rock Walls

By Gael McInnes

**D**o you know what speed bumps, stepping stones, and rock walls have in common? They all have something to teach us about the challenges of life.

Recently, I took what I thought was a short cut across town and drove down a street that had nine speed bumps on it. Nine speed bumps! Not such a short cut after all.

Sometimes we come across frustrating 'speed-bumps' on the road of our everyday lives. How do we respond to these? Do we curse the people who put them there, stop and go no further, or even turn around and go back? The 'road that seems right' may offer us many options and require few sacrifices. Easy choices, however, should make us take a second look. We can ask ourselves: 'Is this solution attractive because it allows me to be lazy, doesn't ask me to change my life-style, or requires no moral restraints?' Often right choices require hard work and self-sacrifice. Be careful of short cuts; they can lead to trouble.<sup>1</sup>

At times we might need to slow down, look back to see where we have been, check out decisions we have made, and perhaps get a new perspective on our situation.

Stepping stones are similar to speed bumps. I have done a lot of bush walking and tramping over the years, and I loved to challenge myself jumping from stone to stone over streams. I would eagerly start out stepping on stones within my stride, until suddenly I would approach one that was just too far away. This made me stop, survey the stream, and sometimes

backtrack to find another route. Other times I slipped on slimy stones in my eagerness.

There are many ways to get to our destinations in life. It may mean stopping, reviewing, 'recharging our batteries', and perhaps moving in a totally new direction. Life's like that. Sometimes we jump too quickly to conclusions about situations and people that can lead to lost opportunities, ruined reputations, and broken friendships—even divided families. Don't be too quick to rush into the unknown.<sup>2</sup>

Have you ever tried rock climbing? It's challenging, scary, fun, and yes, I've done it: not on an artificial rock-climbing wall, but up a real rock wall out there in the mountains. There are many ways up a rock wall. You have to keep three limbs attached at all times. Even though you are hooked up to a safety harness, the challenge is to reach the top safely.

You carefully survey the rock wall, looking for protrusions to either grasp with your fingers, or anchor with a foot. Sometimes that protrusion is just out of your reach, but you stretch until your body feels as though it's going to split, and then you grasp it. Now splayed against the rock wall, gasping for breath and with every muscle twitching, you have to do it again, and again, and again, until you reach the top. The reward? The view, a great sigh of relief that you made it, and of course, the exhilaration of abseiling down.

Whatever your life challenge is at present, take heart from a man named Paul. This early follower of Jesus Christ was persecuted, flogged, and imprisoned several times for his Christian faith, and even shipwrecked once. He survived the 'storms' that life threw at him and made the most of every situation he was in.<sup>3</sup>

Paul would 'take stock' and look around. When thrown into the dungeon, he didn't get disheartened. No! He looked around to see how he could be of use to his fellow prisoners. There was another way to look at his

life and circumstances. Paul also looked back. He looked at the way he had negotiated failures in the past, and realised he was now able to encourage others in similar situations. And Paul also looked ahead. He knew there was life after death—eternal life with his Saviour—so he wasn't afraid to die.<sup>4</sup>

We can take heart from Paul's example. There is no peace like the serenity you can have when you know your future is secure.<sup>5</sup> Paul's faith was not in his circumstances, his many friends and associates, or even in himself. He was able to look back without regret, look around without fear, and look ahead without doubt, because of his trust in his Lord.<sup>6</sup>

There is no growth in life without challenges, and there are no challenges without change. I challenge you to use the 'speed bumps' in your life to slow down and reflect on where you are, the 'stepping stones' to pause and look for direction, and the 'rock walls' to strive to reach higher goals in life, as you become the person God intended you to be.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 14:12

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 19:2

<sup>3</sup> Weirsbe, Warren W., *The Bumps Are What You Climb On*. Baker Books, Michigan, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> John 3:16

<sup>5</sup> John 16:33

<sup>6</sup> Proverbs 3:5



Gael McInnes, a retired nurse and midwife living in South Auckland, spends one day a week as the School Chaplain at a local

primary school. She can be contacted at [gaelmcinnes@xtra.co.nz](mailto:gaelmcinnes@xtra.co.nz).