

## The Ebenezer Stone

The Israelites had been on a long journey, full of trials. They had come to the end of the journey and Samuel gathered a stone. He put it up and designated it the “Ebenezer Stone,” which means “stone of help.” They had endured many trials but each time they had trials God saved them. Samuel wanted them to see the Ebenezer stone and to realize all the times God had lifted them up and helped them. It was placed as their journey came to an end. They would look at the Ebenezer stone and see their trials and their own missteps and remember that God had been with them on the journey. I can look back and see the times God gave me strength and hope for the journey. He lifted me up, reassured me and opened my heart. Life is not easy sometimes. We have all suffered loss. God put people in my path that encouraged me, inspired my faith, loved me. When I had fallen from a top student to one failing and really did not care about any of it, a teacher said to me, “What do you want to do with your life.” A teacher who had been a hinderance to me turned out to be the one who would motivate me and show me I had choices. The problems in my life did not define me and I could overcome them. And I did that. I became an A student and found friends. Teachers began to have me tutor others and show me I had worth. People and Pastors at church encouraged me and counseled me. I graduated and left home and began a career in Nursing and married. I began to see how God was in my life. He led me through my wilderness. Then when I was 50, I found a lump. I faced Breast Cancer and my faith grew. Then another problem was in my path as it was found the cancer had spread to the lymph nodes and required 9 months of chemo. I only asked God for one thing, that if it was his will, that I see my children settled with someone they loved and who saw what I saw in them and loved them in return. God gave me that. Then my daughter was pregnant, and I wanted to hold that precious granddaughter. I did that and God then gave me two more to love as my daughter had another daughter and my son had a son. Everyone as precious as the first. Now two of my three precious grandchildren have given me three Great Grandchildren to love and adore. Then my husband of 63 years had developed Alzheimer’s, another problem. God once again put people in my path who helped and encouraged me. God walked with me and got me out of bed on days when I felt that I could not face another day and he sent friends to give me hope and purpose. He gave me friends in church who helped my husband while I prayed with others. People who helped him in and out of the car, who retrieved the car for me, who hugged him and talked to him. He sent helpers when he passed out, a record I’m sure, 4 times. Then would come my guardian angels from the pews, from the narthex and from the sound booth to help us. Before I could ask, an ambulance had been called, his pulse checked, and I was comforted. God has given me an Ebenezer Stone to show how far I have come and with that sure knowledge I know God will be with me always.

1 Samuel 7:12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying “Thus far has the Lord helped us.”

Lord, we thank you for your presence in our lives, for all the times we lean on you and you do not disappoint. We ask Lord that you be with those who are ill and those who are grieving. May they feel you with them and be comforted. Be with those in our world suffering through war and devastation, we pray Lord that they are saved from the horror they are going through. Be with our country Lord, heal us and help us to feel safe in our stores, our theaters, our churches, our streets, our homes. Be with our church Lord, may we honor you with our actions. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and grant him safety. Be with our Staff and Leaders, give them wisdom and perseverance. May we as a church truly be the hands and feet of Christ. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

Grace Epperson