

Pebbles in the Moneybag

Dan Miller, in his book *No More Dreaded Mondays*, tells a delightful story about a farmer many years ago in a village in India who had the misfortune of owing a large sum of money to the village moneylender.

The old and ugly moneylender fancied the farmer's beautiful daughter, so he proposed a bargain. He would forgive the farmer's debt if he could marry the farmer's daughter. Both the farmer and his daughter were horrified by the proposal, but the cunning moneylender suggested that they let providence decide the matter.

He told them that he would put a black pebble and a white pebble into an empty moneybag. The girl would have to reach in and pick one pebble from the bag. If she picked the black pebble, she would become his wife, and her father's debt would be forgiven. If she picked the white pebble, she need not marry him, and her father's debt would still be forgiven. If she refused to pick a pebble, her father would be thrown into jail until the debt was paid.

They were standing on a pebble-strewn path in the farmer's field. As they talked, the moneylender bent over to pick up two pebbles. The sharp-eyed girl noticed that he had picked up two black pebbles and put them into the bag. He then asked the girl to pick a pebble.

Imagine: If you were the girl standing in the field, what would you have done? If you had to advise her, what would you have told her?

Careful analysis would produce three possibilities: (1) the girl could refuse to take a pebble, but her father would be thrown into jail; (2) the girl could pick a black pebble and sacrifice herself in order to save her father from debt and imprisonment; or (3) the girl could pull out both black pebbles in the bag, expose the moneylender as a cheat, and likely incite his revenge.

Here is what the girl did: She put her hand into the moneybag and drew out a pebble. Without looking at it, she fumbled and let it fall onto the pebble-strewn path, where it immediately became lost among all the other pebbles.

"Oh, how clumsy of me," she said. "But never mind. If you look into the bag for the one that is left, you will be able to tell which pebble I picked."

Since the remaining pebble was black, it would have to be assumed that she had picked the white one. And since the moneylender dared not admit his dishonesty, the girl would have changed what seemed an impossible situation into an extremely advantageous one.

(more)

Don't we all love stories where the good guy uses his or her wit and cunning to defeat a villain? It may disturb us when a villain uses that same wit and cunning, but all of this is a reminder of the need for trust in our relationships and the integrity with which we treat one another.

Jesus talked about that ...

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much (Luke 16:10 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter