

THE STONE FROM THE STREAM

The story is told of an old woman who lived in a cabin in the mountains. One day, while she was out foraging for berries and herbs, she came across a beautiful, precious stone in a stream. She took the gem home and placed it on the sill of her window.

Days later, a hiker knocked on her door. He was hungry, tired, and in need of shelter. The old woman agreed to his request for assistance, and welcomed him into her home for as long as he required rest. She shared what little she had with him, and told him stories about the land and the history of the people of that region.

The hiker's attention was soon drawn to the evening sunlight coming through the window, illuminating the beautiful stone.

"What's that?" he asked.



"A little treasure I found in the stream over yonder," the old woman replied.

"It's so beautiful," the hiker commented. "Are there more stones in that stream? I would love to have something like that."

"I don't know," replied the woman. She handed the stone to the hiker. "You can have this one, if you like."

The hiker couldn't believe his luck. He knew the value of such a gem and was certain he could become a very rich man if he were to sell it. He thanked the old woman for her hospitality, and left the cabin with the stone tucked securely in his pocket.

As he continued on his journey, he thought about all the things he would purchase with his future wealth. Yet, his thoughts often turned to the old woman in that desolate cabin. She'd seemed wise, even beyond her years, and had been a gracious host who asked nothing of him in return. Surely she knew the value of the stone, and yet she had given it to him freely.

He went back to the cabin a few days later. "I want to return this stone to you," he said as he placed the stone in the old woman's hand.

"I know how much it is worth, and I know that you do, too," the hiker said. "And I know that I don't have the right to ask you for more, but can you share with me the precious gift you have that allowed you to give me that stone?"

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It is a piercing question, and the answer is known by each of our dedicated caregivers. They don't speak it; they demonstrate it.

Their gift is a deep and abiding love for people, particularly those they are called to serve. And their gift is of far more value than any precious stone – presented in hugs, tender words of hope and encouragement, and acts to comfort and to heal.

And they share their gift every day.

– Beecher Hunter