

## **The Gem Story - a call for learners to take what they need from your lesson.**

A traveler was on a long journey. Each morning he got up and traveled along his path. One morning he woke up and set out again on his journey. However, he soon noticed that on this particular morning the path appeared to be getting more and more narrow. He began to grow concerned that he had taken a wrong turn, and decided that he would ask the next person he saw that morning if he was indeed on the correct path. But no one else was on the path that morning. He walked and walked, and it wasn't until noon that he encountered the first person he had seen all day. It was almost noon when he entered a clearing, and there at the far side of the clearing sat a very old man. This old man had long, flowing white hair, and a white beard, and had his eyes closed.

The traveler was quite excited to see the old man. He hurried up to him and asked: "Excuse me, but I was traveling along the path this morning, and it began to get very narrow, and I started to wonder if I was on the right path. Can you tell me? Am I going the right way?"

The old man just sat there in silence, his eyes still closed.

The traveler tried again, but could get no response. Finally, in frustration, he started to leave. He was at the far side of the clearing when he heard a sound, and he turned around. The old man had opened his eyes, and was staring straight out in front of him. And when he spoke he said, very softly:

"You're on the right path. Keep going."

But the traveler was at the far side of the clearing, and wasn't sure if he had heard correctly, so he asked the old man to repeat himself. The old man did say something, but this time it was something quite different. This time he said:

"Gather what you find before you cross the river." And then he closed his eyes once again.

Now, the traveler had heard this last part quite clearly, but he was confused -- what did it mean? But he could get nothing more from the old man, and finally the traveler did leave, continuing on the path as before.

It was hot on the path that day, and the traveler grew sweaty, tired, and thirsty. And the path, while growing ever more narrow, was still visible enough to follow. Finally, late in the afternoon, the traveler turned a corner and found in front of himself a river. He was so excited! He ran down to the river, drank some of the water, and used more water to wash himself. When he was fully refreshed he started to

wade to the other side, but as he took his first step the words of the old man came back to him, and he paused.

“What did he say?” the traveler asked himself.

And then he remembered the words: “Gather what you find before you cross the river.”

“Did he mean this river?” wondered the traveler. “Ah, he was crazy!” and he began to move again. But the words of the old man echoed so strongly in his mind that he found himself backing up to the bank of the river. He looked around.

“If I were going to gather something” he asked himself, “what would I take here?”

He looked around, and saw trees, shrubs, and pebbles by the river’s edge, but nothing of any value. But the words of the old man were so strong in his mind that he said:

“This may be the strangest thing I have ever done, but ... ” and he bent down and picked up some of the pebbles and put them in his pocket. Then he waded across the river and continued traveling. However, at the far side of the river he soon lost his way and traveled aimlessly until he found another path to follow several hours later. He knew he could now never retrace his steps back the way he had come.

Late that night the traveler slept by the side of the road. He woke up in the middle of the night, but did not know what had awakened him. Then he realized that he had rolled over on the pebbles in his pocket, and he shook his head.

“That old man was crazy,” he said aloud. “I don’t know why I picked these up!”

He reached into his pocket and took out the pebbles. He was in the act of throwing them away when suddenly the moonlight shone down on what he held in his hand, and he paused.

“No,” he said. “It can’t be!”

Because what he was holding in his hand were no longer mere pebbles. Now they were diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds -- precious gems of all kinds. And he realized what had happened -- they had been precious gems all along, but when he had first picked them up they had been covered in dirt, and in his pocket they had rubbed against each other so that the dirt had come off and he could see them for what they were.

And then the traveler said the most important thing of all. He said:

“Oh. OH! I wish I had gathered more pebbles, before I crossed that river!”