

**The Wise and Foolish Builder**-<sup>24</sup> “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (Mt 7:24-27)

Most of us are familiar with the famous parable above from Matthew. I had my own personal experience with this parable in August when I took my 90 year old parents on a nostalgic fishing trip to northern Minnesota. This trip retraced the steps of our summer family vacations spent visiting my grandparents when I was growing up. Given the physical challenges of age and all of the changes that had occurred in the past 50 years, including our own fading memories... this was a trip that required all of our collective resources to be successful. We went to reminisce on the 10 hour one way drive, to see familiar places and how they had changed through the times, visit my grandparent's graves and of course, go fishing. We did all of that and it was a wonderful experience. What I didn't anticipate was the power of the “rock experience” that I am about to share.

There was a big, flat, rock that stuck out of the ground in the front yard of my grandparent's home in the woods. This rock became famous as a family icon as we had our pictures taken on it as kids, played on it, cleaned fish on it, fixed car parts on it and almost anything you might imagine. The house is long gone and the woods had grown up immensely, but it was our mission to comb the woods and find the family rock. We looked for it parts of two days before locating it. Actually we found it 3 minutes after I gave up trying to take on the burden of finding it myself and began praying for God's help to locate the rock. (Funny how that works!)

After locating the rock, sharing stories and having our pictures taken on it, a deep wave of emotion moved across my soul. It occurred to me that the rock was an important symbol but that the real rock has been my parents. First of all, they built their house on the rock of Jesus. After 71 years of marriage and counting, I think that foundation must have been a good decision. We have had many challenges as a family, so don't let me give you the impression that every day has been “rosy.” What has been comforting every day of our lives is that my parents provided a rock foundation and a consistent faith that has allowed us all to endure our challenges and celebrate our success.

It was my distinct pleasure at the age of 61 to be able to tell my parents that they are “the family rock” and to thank them for it. It is not too late to tell your loved ones the same thing and I would encourage you to do so. If they have passed on, tell them anyway through your thoughts and prayers. They will hear you.

—Kevin Shrake



Kevin Shrake and his sister on the family rock in 1959.



Kevin Shrake and his parents, June and Vivan on the family rock in 2016.