

When you throw a pebble into a pond, the entire pond is affected, not just the area where the pebble landed. The same is true of our actions. Our actions are the pebble, and the pond is our community. I will be discussing how an individual character impacts the broader community by sharing the stories of two characters in the epic, *The Iliad*, King Agamemnon, of Argos and Mycenae, and the Trojan Prince Paris. As well as the story of my Great-Grandfather, Ross Stone.

*The Iliad* takes you on a journey through the Trojan War, which took place in the fields surrounding the Asian superpower, Troy. Prince Paris brought the war upon the ancient world when he kidnapped the Spartan Queen Helen. As you could imagine, her husband, Menelaus, was enraged about his wife being taken from him. Menelaus gathered all his allies together to march against Troy and bring Helen back to Greece. Agamemnon, Menelaus' brother, was put in charge of leading the campaign.

During the war, Agamemnon angered the god Apollo by capturing the daughter of Apollo's priest, Chryses. Chryses begged for his daughter's freedom, however, Agamemnon chose to keep his prisoner. The priest, desperate for his daughter's return, prayed to Apollo. The Greek god heard his priest's prayer and avenged his loyal priest. Apollo sent a pestilence on the Greek army, resulting in the death's of many of Agamemnon's soldiers.

It is the first time in the book we see how one man's actions, Agamemnon, affects everyone around him. The result was good for some and bad for others. For the Greek soldiers who died, it was a deadly consequence. But for the Trojans and their allies, this was nearly a perfect outcome. The enemy was dying and you did not have to fight them.

As the story continues, you can clearly see Prince Paris' actions not only result in a war, but also in the death of his family members and those of innocent people. Prince Paris was informed his three brothers were killed, after he received word from his father, Priam. Similarly, when Prince Paris took Helen, nearly every Greek family lost their sons in the effort to retrieve her. And of course, the Trojans lost many men as well. Many people on both sides of the battlefield were affected.

But, our actions can have positive consequences as well. In talking with my great uncle. He shared with me several stories about my great grandfather, Ross Stone. His faith, dedication to his family, and how he approached everything in life to make a positive impact on other people's lives. His consistent and regular prayer was sincere. He was the rock for his family. He taught my great uncle how to behave with family, faith, and work, and to follow the ten commandments.

He was the county land surveyor of Riverside, California. There were dozens of land surveyors who had respect for him. One of the reasons that they respected him was because he would take the wrath of a superior to make working conditions better for other land surveyors. He went to Sacramento to work with politicians to lobby for better laws to protect land surveyors. This was initiated by the Board of Supervisors in Riverside county cutting funds for the land surveyors, making it so that several surveyors needed to be laid off. He went to Sacramento and helped pass a law in 1980 that saved hundreds of jobs state-wide. This law is still in effect today.

Some may argue the actions of people at home will not affect their neighbors. They state, if they do not weed their yard, it will not affect the broader community. However, if a wind blows the seeds of the weed into the neighbor's yard, then those seeds will continue to spread throughout the neighborhood. This is similar to throwing a pebble in the pond, which causes a ripple effect.

As Christians, we are all part of the church family of Christ. But, we are also part of a larger family, that is our communities. As I have illustrated through the actions of Paris, Agamemnon, and my great-grandfather, our actions ripple through our community, our churches, and our families, affecting the people we know and the people we do not know.