



American Expression E1827 Carve in stone

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"Carve in stone" is an idiomatic expression that is often used to convey the idea of permanence, immutability, or something that is unalterable. When someone says, "It's carved in stone," they mean that a decision, plan, or statement is finalized and cannot be changed easily, if at all. The phrase suggests a sense of certainty and commitment to a particular course of action.

The origin of this expression can be traced back to the practice of inscribing important information or messages on stone tablets or monuments in ancient times. Stone, being a durable and long-lasting material, was chosen to ensure that the message would endure for generations. Notable historical examples include the Ten Commandments inscribed on stone tablets as described in the Bible, and ancient civilizations like the Egyptians and Mayans using stone monuments to record their history and achievements.

In a contemporary context, "carve in stone" is often used metaphorically. It signifies a decision or commitment that is so resolute and unwavering that it is compared to something etched in stone, which cannot be easily erased or altered. This phrase is commonly employed in various aspects of life, including business, personal relationships, and government policies.

For instance, in the business world, when a company announces a major strategic change and states that it is "carved in stone," it reassures stakeholders that this decision is not subject to reconsideration or modification in the near future. This can provide a sense of stability and predictability, which is crucial for investors and employees.

In personal relationships, individuals may use this phrase to emphasize the permanence of their commitment. When a couple decides to get married and says their vows, they often promise to love and cherish each other "until death do us part," signifying a bond that is carved in stone, meant to last a lifetime.

Similarly, in politics and governance, policies or laws that are passed with overwhelming support and are unlikely to be amended or repealed easily are described as "carved in stone." This suggests a level of consensus and a recognition that the decision is not to be taken lightly.

However, it's important to note that while "carve in stone" implies a high degree of finality, it is not always an absolute guarantee of permanence. In reality, circumstances can change, and even the most firmly established decisions may need to be revisited or adapted over time. Nevertheless, the phrase serves as a powerful symbol of commitment and determination to uphold a particular course of action, even in the face of challenges or uncertainties.

In conclusion, "carve in stone" is an idiomatic expression that conveys the concept of permanence and unwavering commitment. Its origins lie in the practice of inscribing information on durable stone, and it is now commonly used to describe decisions, plans, or statements that are considered final and unchangeable. While it may not always represent an absolute and unalterable reality, it serves as a symbol of resolute determination and steadfastness in various aspects of life.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a personal or professional decision you've made that you initially considered to be "carved in stone"? How did your perception of its permanence evolve over time, if at all?
 2. In what situations do you believe it's most important to use the expression "carve in stone" to emphasize the immutability of a decision or commitment? Are there circumstances where flexibility is equally or more valuable?
 3. How does the idea of something being "carved in stone" impact individuals' willingness to accept or adapt to change? Can this phrase sometimes hinder innovation or progress?
 4. Can you provide examples from history or current events where policies or decisions were initially described as "carved in stone" but were later modified or reversed? What lessons can be drawn from such cases?
 5. In personal relationships, what are the potential benefits and drawbacks of treating commitments as if they were "carved in stone"? How can flexibility and open communication be balanced with the desire for stability and certainty?
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