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Living Stones
Part One
Forerunner Church

Well, you can turn in your Bibles to 1st Peter 2. That's what we're gonna be covering this morning. We're gonna talk about a pretty controversial topic, so I hope you came prepared, and I hope you're not feeling very offed this morning. We're gonna talk about the church... that was a joke... We really are. We're gonna look at the church and how God sees the people of God, how He sees community. This is something that has been on my heart recently. Not even just in light of, you know, we're launching this young adult service here in a month or so, month and a half, at the end of April. Not just in light of that. This is something that the Lord kind of sprung on me out of the blue, and what began to happen, just very simply, is I began to fall in love with the body of Christ. I didn't even know we were supposed to do that.

I mean, you know that, but how that actually plays out is just so different, and there are just so many challenges and issues that we're confronted with, and pains, present, past, and all this stuff as it relates to the body of Christ and as it relates to the church. And I believe that the Lord would want to stir our faith on this issue to see what it is that He sees within His people, to actually feel for the body of Christ what it is that the Bridegroom God, Jesus actually feels when He sees people. It's called having faith or if you want to get the fancy term, it's called having prophetic insight about a topic. And we need this. We need this, not just for the body of Christ as a parent. If you're a parent or you're going to become a parent someday, you need faith to see what God sees in children, in your children or in the next generation. You can't just look at the exterior. You need faith. You need to see something beyond what is present and what is tangible. You need to see in the way that God sees.

I was struck recently, you know, we quote the apostle's creed once a month. We take communion with one another. And you know, it says, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." It goes on and says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," and then it's implied, "I believe in the church." It says the "holy Catholic church." We know that the word 'Catholic' there means the worldwide church, the global church. I believe in the church. Why is that in there? What a strange idea. It's like, yes, we need to believe in Jesus. Yes, we need to believe that He was conceived of the virgin Mary. We need to believe in the Father. We need to believe in Holy Spirit. And then it's like the fathers that created this creed somehow knew, "No, no, no, no. Where this is going, you need to have faith. You need to believe in the church, that it is holy, and that it exists."

There are people that are totally fine with being a follower of Jesus and loving Jesus, but not participating in church, not being a part of a congregation of people. Not being a part of a spiritual community. And they just think that, "I can just love Jesus on my own, do the Jesus thing over here on the side, just kinda on my own and in the closet, shut the door, and light a candle in there. Hope, you know, the house doesn't burn down, but I can just do Jesus on my own over here, but I don't really need to be a part of the body." But Jesus would say, "That is not how covenant works." Covenant is not just between an individual and God. It's always a corporate

body. Even in the New Covenant. Even in the covenant of marriage that has been given to us, there is a corporate aspect of leaning upon one another and being accountable to one another, and we need, as a people, as the church of Jesus Christ, to touch that covenant reality in the corporate aspect, not just as individuals.

We need to enter it. We don't think of it that way, and the reason that we don't think of it that way is because our culture trains us to think individually. So, we have this individualistic mindset, which means, "Me first. What about me? What can I get from this experience?" And that's how the majority of people operate. "I'll go to your thing, but how does it benefit me? I'll do this thing, but how does it benefit me? I'll follow Jesus, but how does it benefit me?" There's the individual aspect. And when God cuts covenant, when He creates and ordains covenant with people, there is a corporate dimension, and it's only in that corporate dimension, I would go as far to say, that you experience the glory and the privileges of that covenant. In other words, if we don't see the church in the way that God sees the church, then we won't share in the privilege and in the fellowship of being a part of a corporate people.

And therefore, these early church fathers said, "You know what? We're gonna write this creed, and we're gonna put in there." You've got to fight to believe in the church. You've got to fight to believe for community. You have to fight to believe for a corporate expression otherwise, you sell yourself short. If you have covenant without God, you sell yourself short. And if you have covenant with God without another person in it, you sell yourself short.

You know, when God inaugurated that covenant with Moses and the children of Israel in Exodus 19, He made a covenant with the whole nation. And He goes, "You're gonna be a kingdom of priests with Me." And this isn't just about God and Moses. This is about God and a whole people. And it's only when those people together pursue the Lord that they experience the power and the privilege of that covenant. We're a covenant people. And we might look to the right or the left and be like, "Y'all are messed up," but we also gotta look in the mirror and realize, "Y'all are messed up."

Somehow we've become so good at identifying the problems of the church, we forgot we're a part of it. We've got all these reasons why it's messed up and not working right. "We should do this, and we should do that. Why don't they do this, and da da da..." And we forget, when God looks at us, He sees us as the church. Us, the ones that have identified all the problems, amazingly. We're so insightful. No, we're not. We're just complainers. We're just complainers. And I think that God is looking for a people that go, "You know what? It is messed up." You know what? In any marriage, you know what? There are real challenges here, but I made a covenant. I'm in a covenant, and regardless of the challenges that come up, I'm gonna fight for the beauty and the power of covenant within marriage even in spite of the failures, the flaws, the weaknesses of myself and my wife. We're committed to something, and it's not just one another. We have a central purpose. We have a central aim. And that's what I think Peter is talking about here.

There's a quote from a guy named G. K. Chesterton, and he said this. It makes me laugh. He goes, "There's only one unanswerable argument against Christianity. There's only one thing that Christianity can't answer, Christians." That's the only argument. And again, the truth is that the

world, the perception of Christ and the church and all of that is being formed by us. So, if the world is going, "I'm not about God because I don't like the people," well, yeah, that's a huge error on their part, but that's also on us. We've got to own that. We've got to own that. And the way that we carry our lives, and the way that we're called to be salt and light, and the way we love our neighbors, and reach out to the broken, and reach out to those that are needy.

You know, in the first century church, they gave to the poor in such a way that people were like shocked. They gave way beyond their means. They served the poor. They did it in such a way that it brought glory to Christ, and it opened up people's hearts. They're going, "Who are these people that just serve the poor with just freakish passion? Who are these people? What are they about? What do they value? Who is it that they're after?" And I think that the Lord would challenge us on this issue. Do we have faith?

Okay, you're in this room, most likely, you've said yes to Jesus. You have faith that He is the Son of God. But do you have faith that the church is who God says it is? Do you have faith for that? And that's where we're like... Because again, we like Jesus, but the church, and the people and my friendship group, and my pastor, my leader, what's going on? And this is hard, and we came for this, and it was all messed up. And now it's messed up. We can't get away from the mess up. I keep trying to run from the problem, but everywhere I turn, there's just more problems and more issues. And maybe it's time that we get a higher vision for how God sees and then begin to respond in a way that is appropriate, in a way that we can actually control.

You know, you can't control the person next to you. You can't control your spouse. You can't make their decisions for them. You can't control your kids. You can't control your friendship group. You can't control. We have to take responsibility for what it is that God has called us to and look around with different eyes. We've got to remove the eye of criticism and get eyes of faith. Faith gives no opportunity for the eye with a critical spirit, that critical eye. That's why we need faith. If you find yourself being critical, go, "Lord, give me eyes of faith. I want to see what You see. I want to see beyond the exterior. I want to see beyond the failure. I want to see Jerusalem, the city, as You see it. I want to see it in the way that the Bible says it.

You know, you read the Psalms, and the way that King David is just singing about the glory of Zion and its beauty and its perfection. Then you see a picture on the internet of the city. You're just like, "This is it? Like, this? This is the place where God has chosen to put the soles of His feet and dwell forever and His glory is gonna..." And people would say that about us. "The church? That's the place where You've chosen to manifest Your power and make Your name known and famous? Through them?" Yes. Yes. Through them. Through us.

There are these staggering promises about what the church is like and where she is going. I want to read to you just a few of them. Ephesians 5. He says that "He might present," now the 'He' is Jesus. He might present her to Himself as a glorious church. A church that is filled with glory. The nature of God, the light of God, the brilliance of God would shine forth out of this people, out of me, and out of you. That's what He spoke. That's what He's doing. He's gonna glorify. He's gonna bring glory to Himself through His church. Ephesians 4 says this, "that we will come to the unity of the faith." That's impossible. There's a denomination that's being born every ten minutes. I mean, if we all, in this room sat down and hashed it out together, we'd probably have,

you know, 500 different denominations. Thank God we don't know each other well enough to do that. He goes, "You're gonna come to the unity of faith. You're gonna come to the unity of the knowledge of the Person of God, Christ and who He is, more than just, you know, a statement of faith on a website."

He goes, "You're gonna become a perfect man. Perfect. Perfect." What was the last time you thought about the church or a person in the church and thought, "Perfect"? It's only when the church buys fried chicken for everyone. If the church buys fried chicken for a moment, I will believe this is perfect. Absolutely perfect. And if it's Popeyes or Church's, double perfect.

And then He says this, and this is the real kicker, right here at the end of verse 13, chapter four, "They will come to the fullness of Christ." The absolute fullness. Beloved, if this doesn't stretch your faith, you must be walking on water and multiplying bread at Price Chopper, because this is a stretch for me. This challenges my faith. I can read about the knowledge and the glory of God and the perfection of the man all day and delight upon it and dote upon it, and go, "Oh, my goodness, Jesus, yes. This is amazing." But then He goes, "My people are gonna come to the fullness of the Son. They're gonna grow up into Him. They're gonna look just like Him. They're gonna be mature in love. They're gonna be perfected. They're gonna walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. And I go, "That is a huge challenge to my faith, Lord." I never thought of myself as a doubter until I started reading about myself.

Alright, Ephesians 3 says, verse 10, "That the manifold wisdom of God." The manifold, it means multifaceted. It's like a diamond, then as light touches the diamond, it splits the diamond off into these dazzling patterns and colors and all these things. And He goes, "I'm gonna show the manifold wisdom of who I am." And then, if we pause there and get together in a group think and began to come up with strategies about how that was gonna happen. How are you gonna show forth the manifold wisdom, the multi-faceted wisdom of God? I guarantee there's not a person that would say, "Through us! That would be awesome!" No, no one would think of that. No one would think of that. And the prophets foretold that, and the first century showed that, and we're seeing that right now. No one thinks in that way.

He goes, "I'm gonna show My manifold wisdom. How's it gonna be known? It's gonna be known by the church. The multi-faceted wisdom, the glory of God, His Person, and all these different aspects, all these different veins and ways to see God and experience His delight." He goes, "I'm gonna show it to My people, and who am I gonna show it to? I'm gonna show it to principalities and powers." That's so profound to me because you could wow a couple people if you just started multiplying some bread, and went down to the city pool, and like, walked across the deep end, hopped up on the other side completely dry. That would wow some people. And they would go, "How did you do that?" And you'd say, "The manifold wisdom of God." They would be like, "I believe you," you know? That's easy.

But to prove the wisdom of God through weak and broken people, to powers, principalities, demons, angels, all of that that they would look at the church and go, "Oh, my goodness. The manifold wisdom of God!" I don't know what the principalities over this city are thinking right now. I don't really care, and if you know, don't tell me. But I don't know that they're looking

down at my weak attempts to love Jesus with my friends, with my co-laborers, and going, "The manifold wisdom of God!" I mean, maybe they are. Again, don't tell me if you know.

The point is this, God is not done with His church. He's only beginning. The church is not an old, worn out rag that we're supposed to cast aside and then take up a new thing. He is not done. And He is gonna shock not just the principalities and powers. I think the church is going to be shocked. When they begin to see one another, and look at their brother, and look at their sister and say, "The manifold wisdom of God," when they see it in one another.

You know, in the New Testament, over and over, this is just a side note, but over and over and over, you know, you have these huge messages and theological doctrinal truths that are being established. The day of the Lord, the judgement seat, live in light of the judgement seat over and over and over. And the practical application almost every time is, love one another. Walk in brotherly love. Because Jesus and the apostles knew, there's a huge disconnect between the two. And you're gonna be tempted into offence. And you're going to be hurt. And you're going to be mistreated. It's just, it's going to happen. And he goes, "In spite of that, or in light of that," whichever. Not in spite of it as diminish your pain and it's completely irrelevant, but work through it in a way that produces gold in your heart, and you begin to see others in a way that Jesus sees His body, His people.

Let's look at this 1st Peter 2:4. "And coming to Him as to a Living Stone, which has been rejected by men, but as choice and precious in the sight of God. You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture, behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious Cornerstone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed, or not be ashamed. This precious value, then, is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, the Stone which the builders rejected, this became the very Cornerstone or the chief Cornerstone and a Stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. For they stumbled because they are disobedient to the Word and to this doom. They were also appointed," look at verse 9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light."

As a preacher, that's the hardest thing to do, read through all those verses without commenting. Test passed. Okay, let's look at some of these phrases here. If we want to understand who we are, if a child wants to understand who they are, they must go to the father. You must go to the one who formed you and who created you. If the church is to understand who we're to be and who God has called us to be, we have to begin, not with ourselves, not in self-examination, but we would examine the person that formed us and created us. We have to go to Him and look at Him and understand Him and then come to conclusions about who we now are.

That's important because we live in a generation that does the exact opposite. We start with self-examination, "What do I like? What do I need? What are the areas in my life that I want to improve because I don't like those areas? What are the gifts that I want to walk in because the gifts that I have, others don't recognize those gifts, so I'm going to build something from this way, from inside out? I'm going to construct programs and buildings and religions and followings and teachings from the inside out."

And Peter goes, he's thinking back to Matthew 16. He goes, "One time, I did that, and Jesus called me Satan." Because Peter goes, "Hey, Lord, You're not gonna go to the cross," and what he's saying is, "Lord, that's not the way we build this ministry. We don't go to the cross." He goes, "We go to glory. We go to winning." And Jesus pulls him aside and goes, "You're not mindful of the things of God. You're only mindful of the things of man." And He rebukes Peter from building from the inside out. And He calls him Satan. That's a heavy rebuke.

He goes, "Satan always builds from the inside out." Satan is consumed with the interests of men. Because if you get so distracted with the interests of men, and the felt need, and the pressure, and "I just need my life to be A, B, C, and this," but if you don't first come to Him, then you're doing what the enemy does. You're believing what the enemy believes. You'll have a view and an opinion that's formed around you and me, formed around me, rather than a view formed and fashioned by God.

So, he says this, he says, "Come to Him. Come to Him." What powerful words, that we would come to Him. That before we act, we would come to Him. That before we conclude, we would come to Him. Before we determine who we are, what we're like, what our gender is, what our position is, what our gifts are, what are talents are, what are called, why we're set on this earth. Before we determine any of that, who knew we would come to Him.

There are three things that happen when we come to Him that we must do. Number one, we must see Him. We must see Him in the way that God sees Him. We can't just see Him in the way that many in the nation of Israel saw Him, by the flesh. They only saw a Jewish man, a poor carpenter, and just a new Rabbi. They only saw Him with the eyes of men. They didn't see Him with the eyes of God. That's why the Lord tells Peter in Matthew 16. He says, "Blessed are you. He says flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who's in heaven." We need revelation about who Jesus is to discover who we are. Not just as individuals, but as the corporate body of Christ. We must see Him.

I want to tell you something. This just struck me in between services. First service didn't get this, but if you see Jesus, I mean, when the believer really sees Him, they will become a priest. That is their first response. They will become a priest because a priest lives with Christ at the center. All my other work, all my activity, everything I do, comes out of the revelation of God as I express my love for Him in worship, I declare who He is back to Him through intercession, and then I work from that place. And that's exactly what Peter's saying right here. He goes, "You are a holy priesthood." In verse 4, he goes, "If you come to Him," verse 5, "the only outcome is you become a holy priest and there is no other option."

I was just reading in Luke chapter 9, the transfiguration. And Jesus goes upon the mountain and says that His clothing begins to shine with brilliant light, and it just struck me in light of this. It just struck me because Peter is there. You know, he's writing this letter. Verse 4, he goes, "You come to Him." What if, in his mind, I'm just making this up. What if in his mind, he goes, "I remember that day that we came to Him." He goes, "He called us up on the mountain, and Peter, James, John, and I, we came to Him, and we saw Him in such a powerful and profound way." And what happened? In verse 33 of Luke chapter 9, they all became priests. When they saw that

Man brilliant with light, they all became priests. They fell down, it says, and then Peter goes, "Let's build tabernacles." Well, see, only priests build tabernacles. and what Peter is saying, he's going, "I've seen God in such a way that has wrecked me at such a deep level." He goes, "I don't want to leave this mountain. I only want to see God." And he maybe got into a little idolatry going, "Hey, let's make a tabernacle for Moses and Elijah. Let's worship them! They look awesome!" But what struck me is this, that in one moment, in one encounter, he went from a poor fisherman to a wealthy priest. In one moment. All he had to do was see Him. When you come to Him, it means that you see Him.

Number two, it means that you hear Him. It means that you allow His words and His values to shape who you are. And that's also what Peter is talking about here because he goes on to describe Jesus as the Cornerstone and we, as living stones, are being fitted to Him, connected to Him. The Cornerstone that describes Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone isn't just beautiful, but He has a value system and the Cornerstone was perfectly and precisely fashioned so that every stone that was added to it would construct this glorious building, modeled after the very first Stone that was set into place. But to be joined to the Cornerstone, you have to be hewn You have to be ground down. You have to be chipped away at. You have to be smoothed over otherwise you can't line up to the Cornerstone.

That's why we have to come to Him. Because when we come to Him, we can see Him, and people come to the Cornerstone, and they're like, "Yay, Jesus! You love the poor, and You heal the sick, and You forgive sins, and all these things! And they're like, I want to join You." And He goes, "Well, to join Me, you're a rough, hewn rock that's just been plucked out of the hillside. We've got to grind down these areas so that you can be shaped to My value system, so you can stand next to Me. If you don't, if you don't and you just kind of try to get in there, then the next person that comes next to you, they're gonna be a little more off line. See, the disciples that you make will be more out of sync because you didn't join the Cornerstone in the right way. You didn't full take on His values. You didn't deny yourself. You didn't take up the cross. You didn't drink the whole cup."

When the disciples came to Jesus, they said, "Let us sit at your right and left hand." You know, He asks them, He goes, "Are you able to drink the cup that I'm about to drink? Are you about to fully take in who I am?" And that has illustration to the Jewish wedding, and when the bride would come to the bridegroom, he had a cup of wine, and she would drink all of the wine from the cup, and it was a sign that to enter into the covenant, she would fully receive everything that He was, and they would be joined in covenant.

See, we're splashing around a lot of times in the kiddie pool of who Jesus is and forgiveness of sins, and grace, and redemption, but we're not drinking the dregs. We're not drinking the fullness of the cup. We're unhewn stones. And He goes, "I have such a higher vision for My people. He goes, "I have a whole plan about how to get those stones joined and fitted into the cornerstone."

Number three, they must respond to Him. Again, just to recap the first thing. They see Him as precious and chosen. That they hear Him and allow His words and His ways to conform our hearts to Him. That we go, "I'm in all the way. I'm in all the way. I just want to do it. I just want to give my life really to this. I want to die at the wall, whatever it is. I want to go all the way with

Jesus. And whatever He says, I'm going to believe, and whatever He asks me to do, I'm going. I want to go all the way. I'm not gonna sip the cup. I'm gonna fully take in the cup." And that's the only way that we can be joined as living stones to the Cornerstone all the way.

That's why He goes, "The first commandment is that you love Me with all your heart, all your heart, all your strength, all your might." See, whenever those areas aren't fully given over in love, they're given over to idols. And He goes, "You can't have idols in the house of God because I'm building up a spiritual house. I'm a holy God with a holy priesthood. There is no room for idols." And that's what repentance is, that we identify the idols and that we remove them as much as possible that we can within the grace of God, and He does the rest, right?

But that we respond to Him, that we live a life that is commensurate to the revelation of Jesus as precious, which is His person and His nature, and then chosen, which is the two descriptions we're given. He is both precious, He's beautiful, and stunning, and magnificent, and He's also chosen by God. This is God's plan. He goes, "You've got to say yes to both. You've got to respond to both, My Cornerstone."

This Cornerstone is unlike any other cornerstone, and that's why He's often rejected. Look at the second part of verse 4. He's the Living Stone, which has been rejected by men. Men, the natural way and the natural mind rejects the way of God.

Let me say something even stronger. To reject the church is to reject the way of God. It is. That's His way. That's the way He's chosen to build His house. You don't get the house of God and the glory of God and a holy priestly people without the church. It can't happen. And that's why I'm here this morning going, my faith is being stretched. And maybe some of you this morning would want to jump in on that with me, the pain of being stretched in my faith. Because just like you, I have hurts and wounds, and scars done from the church. There're all sorts of things that have happened that have been bad. There's been mistreatment. There's been all of these different things. We're not alone in experiencing those things, but can we, in faith, begin to see beyond and go, "God, give me eyes to see the way that You see, and maybe in that, in the process of that, as we love one another, as we seek to understand, as we go to the Lord in prayer, as we come to Him for these issues of woundedness and pain, maybe, just maybe, it begins to hewn our hearts to unoffended love. And we connect into Him. And we begin to build the house of God where His glory can come. It's rejected by men.

Why is the Cornerstone, why is Jesus rejected? I think there are three reasons. Number one, He's rejected because He comes to the lowest spot. He comes to the lowest spot. Even the disciples are going, "You're our King! Let's get the Kingdom on the road. Let's get the show! Where are the swords?" And Jesus walks into the room, wrapped in a towel, starts washing their feet and Peter's going, "Lord, stop washing my feet." See, he's offended at this Cornerstone, that this Cornerstone would come so low.

I always give this analogy when I speak to our teenagers. That Jesus came in such a way that He's the shovel. He comes lower than the very lowest. Whoever on the earth and throughout history is at the most rock bottom out of the way, whoever it is, Jesus came lower than that. Whoever was the poorest, Jesus came even more poor. You don't get poorer than laying aside

heavenly glory for eternity past and becoming a man and being born and being laid in a manger. You don't become poorer than that. Talk about a huge dip in the heavenly stock market. For real. He came low. Why? Because you can't exalt anything that you're not lower than. You can't lift up anything your hand isn't willing to come underneath. And because of that, He's rejected because they're expecting Him to be the headstone, the capstone, the peace, the Messiah is here, the King is here. He's the capstone, and everybody's gonna be in awe of Him, and yet He comes, and He puts Himself in the bottom corner of the building that no one ever sees, and He's like this block of diamond.

You know, you go to the contractor sight, and the guy's like, "Hey, we got the first piece of the foundation laid." And you're like, "Good, let me see what it is." You're paying for the building, "Good, let me see." They spend all the money on a diamond. That's way down underground. it's in the foundation. It's hidden. It's lowly. it's humble. That is offensive. "Why are you going that?" They would fire that guy. "You just blew our whole construction budget." "Yeah, but it's sturdy." "But we have no other money to build." "Yeah but look at that thing sparkle down there. Do you know that diamonds are like the strongest material on earth? They would we not put that down there?" "Because we need to put that up where everybody can see it and everybody can glory in it, and we can all dance around the fire of it."

And He goes, "No. I'm the Cornerstone." And the Father goes, "I've laid My Cornerstone in Zion." Everybody else wants to build another cornerstone. And everybody's building their life on their skills, and gifts, and callings, and money, and value, and name, and reputation, and all this stuff, and the Father goes, "You know what? I've put My Cornerstone, and I've laid it in Zion, and the whole world is gonna have to stumble over that stone.

There's lots of reasons why you're gonna stumble over it. You're gonna stumble over it because it's in Zion, in Jerusalem. You're gonna stumble over it because it's not the awesome, charismatic, kingly, powerful leader that you're expecting. He's a poor carpenter. You're gonna stumble over that. He's not gonna seemingly lead His troops and His band of disciples into victory. He's gonna die on a cross, publicly humiliating. You're gonna stumble over that. He's gonna be raised from the dead and exalted to heaven, and He's gonna ascend from the mount of olives, and He goes, "You're gonna tell people, they're gonna stumble over that. Trust Me." That He was raised from the dead.

Number two, they reject Him because they resist what it takes to come into alignment in Him. You don't get a square stone by just blowing up a mountain with dynamite and picking up the pieces. It doesn't happen. A stone that fits against the Cornerstone requires something. It requires fashioning and forming and grinding. And many reject Jesus as the Cornerstone because they refuse to conform to that. He doesn't meet their ideal. "

I think He's one way, and then He shows up in another way." I mean, you gotta think, the disciples must have thought that Jesus was crazy at times. One minute He's this way, the next minute, He's this way. And they're going, "Wait. You're not like that. You're not like the religious, you know, separate guys, but you're also not like the mainstream guys because you're calling them out of sin, but you're calling these guys out of sin. You're somewhere in the

middle." And He walks in the way that the Father walks. He's holy. He's different. And we've got to be conformed to His ways. It's uncomfortable and inconvenient.

Number three, they reject the idea that a precious stone would be the foundation. Now, let's get to some good stuff. "You also," verse 5, "are being build up as a spiritual house as a holy priesthood." We can't be a spiritual house for a holy priesthood without one another. It's impossible. No one looks at a rock laying on the ground and says, "A building!" Even if it's a square block laying in the middle of the road. Nobody goes, "A temple! A temple is here! Did you guys see that? Incredible." No one does that. We can't be a spiritual house without one another. This is convicting. This is cutting.

As I was meditating on this, I felt the Holy Spirit say this to me in relation to community in the church. He said, "Isaac, the way you stink at community is because you think it's for you. You think it's for you. It's not for you, not mostly." Actually, everything in the Christian faith is not mostly for us. See, that's inside out leadership. That's Peter leadership, the interests of Men. He goes, "Community doesn't exists for you. It exists for Me." I said, "What?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "No way?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Lord, how?" He said, "Because if you don't live in community, if you don't do community as living stones, if you don't interact with one another and interact with the Cornerstone and come sharpened and shaped and willing to be ground down to fit against My ways, and it's painful and the person next to you is getting jostled in there. We're being jostled by one another.

He goes, "If you don't do that, you can't build up My house." Do you know who's gonna live in that house? Him. He's gonna live in that house, His presence. His glory. His prestige. His honor is seen greater when we become the house of God. As a priesthood. That means Christ at the center. Everything else peripheral.

When we come to Him, and put Him at the center and go, "You are precious, and You are choice, and You are excellent, and You are beautiful, and then we fix our eyes on Him, we start drawing towards the Cornerstone, others begin to join us." And then we go, "Oh, this is what it was really about." See, our issue was, we were pulling back the bow, we were aiming for the target of community, so we feel like we belong, so we don't feel lonely, and Jesus goes, "That's not the target. That's like the second or third ring out." He goes, "Aim for Me. I'm the One you want.

You find community when you make Me the center. You find healthy marriage when you make Me the center. You find healthy relationships when I'm at the center. My values, My way, My plan, My purpose," and we are so resistant to this that we don't get that Jesus does, "When you do it My way, you actually live in the greatest satisfaction and delight." He goes, "Come to Me, you who are weary. I will give you rest. I'll give you rest when you do it My way. When you come to Me, you build community My way, you see the church My way, you see one another My way." He goes, "There you find rest." You find delight and satisfaction because every function and aspect of the people of God and the community of God is ultimately to bring glorification to God.

It has to be about Him. As soon as it's about us, we're off, and it's wrong. We're interested in the interests of men. And God goes, "No, no, no. I've called you to be a priest. There's no priest that operates in building their own thing first, and their priestly identity second." There is no priest. As soon as they do that, they're not a priest.

And in verse 5, He goes, "You're a holy priesthood." He goes, "You offer up spiritual sacrifices," and He goes, "You're a holy nation," Look down at verse 9. He goes, "You're a holy nation. You're for Me first and for each other second." He goes, "Come to the table and go, "You first, God. You first in business. You first in ministry. You first in family. You first in my children, You first in my neighborhood. You first. You first." Put Him first. And in doing that, we come to the Cornerstone. We join ourselves to Him, and the Cornerstone is not going anywhere. Why? Because God laid it there. It's the only sure bet. The only sure way.

Us, as a people, clinging to the Cornerstone, worshipping Him as priests. That's the only way. It's the only way.

Why does it happen? Verse 9. Why does it happen? Why is He doing this? Why is He making us interdependent on one another? Why does He build us into this house? Why does He call us to community even though it's so challenging at times? Because we're challenging. Anytime you have a complaint against someone, just turn that complaint against yourself. Just go, "God, help me."

It's so easy to complain. It's so hard to be proactive. It's so hard to see what God sees, to push against the grain that God would call us into this. He would call us into seeing His church in the way that He sees it, and as we're built up as priests, He goes, "This is the reason why. So that My excellencies would be proclaimed."

There are promises that hang over this city. These promises have been bathed in prayer for years, decades and decades and decades. These promises were given before many of us were even born, over this city. I'm not talking about the global organization and the reach of, you know, the international house of prayer in Kansas City. I'm talking about the church in Kansas City, us. We're the church. Some of us are gonna raise our families here, live here for 10, 20 years, and those who are passing through for training and equipping or whatever, while you're here, put in roots. See yourself as the church.

I'm committing to this because I want the promises. I want His name to be echoed through our streets. I want Grandview and south Kansas City to be on fire with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to see the sick healed, the dead raised, the blind eyes opened, no disease known to man standing before this people, a people that walk in love, a people that are known as Christians because of their love. I want to be a part of that. How do I do that? How do you do that? It's not just, "Lord, send the promises, Lord, send the promises." It's engaging in the way God sees.

Because if I see you as a living stone and I'm a living stone, I go, "Where can we meet and pursue the Cornerstone together?" We have our differences and you have different views, and we're clashing and bumping, and part of that is part of the process of declaring His excellencies. That's why we're here. That's one of the reasons why we're here.

We want our children to grow up in a city that declares the excellencies of God, not the excellencies of a worship model, not the excellencies of a certain Biblical topic. The excellencies of a Person, a Living Stone, Jesus. That our city would know the Man. If we don't have that, then what do we have? We've got to push in. We've got to think, "Okay, global perspective, the return of Jesus, Zion, it's coming," and yet we need to act in our own neighborhoods. We need to act in our own homes and in our own families. We need to make it all about Him, that we would actually drink in the richness of who He has and what He has to give us. But we can't do it as individuals. Let's stand.