

May 17th, 2026

Title: ***Living Cornerstone***

1 Peter 2:1-12

Church Scripture Verse for today:

### **1 Peter 2:1-6 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

***How do you grow spiritually?*** I’ve been asked many times by many people: ***"Pastor Joseph, how can I grow spiritually?"*** Because I feel like I am not growing. We will answer that question today and more.

### **Who is Peter? (The author of 1 and 2 Peter)**

- Peter, in Greek (Petros), means stone or rock.
- Peter was a fisherman, and much of his fishing was at night. Can you imagine having a graveyard shift for much of your life? This was Peter's occupation, and it was a tough life.
- Peter, who had followed Jesus Christ for over three years, encountered the supernatural power of Jesus and ***denied him three times, yet Jesus redeemed and restored him to do the Lord's work.***
- We know that Peter and all the Jews were ***under Roman occupation***; in fact, much of the known world was under Roman rule. And, ***you had to pay your taxes to Rome.*** And they got the benefit. I mean, your job was tough enough, and now you had to pay taxes to Rome.

- Now Peter and all the other **disciples are dispersed to spread the gospel**, and he writes **First Peter around 62-63 A.D.** This was a significant year because that was when the Roman Emperor Nero reigned from 54 to 68 A.D. So Peter wrote this in the middle.
- Emperor Nero was the one who blamed Christians for the massive fire that took place in Rome in 64 A.D. You had a lot of persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire.

You really had a tough life. Your job was tough. Paying taxes to Rome was tough. Living under Rome was tough. **Being persecuted just because you are a Christian was hard in itself.** And with all the things that were going on on the outside, you still had a lot of battles going on on the inside. There were **a lot of things going on between your flesh and spirit.**

And Peter knows that, and God knows that your life is tough. So, Peter sends out an encouraging letter to the Christians in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. So, here is the **theme of First Peter.**

**First Peter Theme:** Those who persevere in faith while suffering persecution should be full of hope, for they will enjoy end-time salvation.

Life is tough. So until the day God calls you home, put your hope in Jesus Christ. Why should you be full of hope during your tough life? **Because you have an amazing inheritance waiting for you in heaven.** So Peter tells us that you are pilgrims, exiles, sojourners in this place called earth. For our place on earth is but a temporary home. Our **permanent home is waiting for us in heaven.** Because to Christians, our death is just the beginning.

So, until the Lord calls you home, Peter reminds us that **God will guard us and protect our faith from the evil spiritual forces that oppose us.** **“O.K., Pastor Joseph, then how shall we live till the Lord calls us home?”**

The main theme we focused on from last Sunday was from 1 Peter 1:14-15.

**1 Peter 1:14-15 (NLT)**

<sup>14</sup> So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then.

<sup>15</sup> But now you must be **holy** in everything you do, just as God who chose you is **holy**.

You accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You are born-again, renewed in the Spirit. God has given us a second chance in life. You have an inheritance waiting for you in heaven. So **now you are to live a life of holiness**. And here is what holiness means in the original language.

The Greek word for "Holy" is **hagios** pronounced **hag'-ee-os**, meaning most holy thing, saint, **set apart for God's purposes**. Living in a manner distinct from the sinful world.

***So being Holy will help you find a purpose in life.***

God is not calling us to "**be perfect**," but to know that once we are born again, God separates us from the non-believers so that **God can show us our purpose in life within God's kingdom plan**.

So **in order for you to know God's purpose for you, you have to be holy, not perfect**, but what it means to be set apart. God knows, you and I are not perfect, but every believer must be holy. **You have to know that you are set apart for a reason**.

We also understood that the word "Holy" was to connect to wholeness and completeness.

**Holy = Wholeness, Completeness**

So being Holy is also about God filling you with His truth, so you can feel complete to run the race. **When you pursue God's holiness, there is this wholeness and power that fills you up and carries you to your finish line**. So, even though your life is tough, **God will pull you through and help you complete the race**. So, working to be "holy" or "to be set apart" means preparing yourself **to receive God's purpose and plan for you**.

So now in 1 Peter 2, he continues the journey about what it means for us believers to be Holy.

### 1 Peter 2:1-3 Amplified Bible

<sup>1</sup> So put aside every trace of **malice** and all **deceit** and **hypocrisy** and **envy** and all **slander and hateful speech**; <sup>2</sup> like newborn babies [you should] **long for the pure milk of the word**, so that by it you may be nurtured *and grow in respect to salvation* [its ultimate fulfillment], <sup>3</sup> if in fact you have [already] tasted the goodness *and* gracious kindness of the Lord.

Peter tells us to put aside all traces of **malice** (aggressive ill will toward another person), **deceit** (deliberately misleading someone, being deceptive), **hypocrisy** (You tell others to do something, but then you don't do it yourself), **envy** (jealousy), and **slander or gossip**. Notice that all these actions are not taught, but come from the inside out. Nobody had to teach you these things. I do not have to come up to you and teach you how to have malice, deceit, be a hypocrite, envy, and slander. ***This is the sinful human nature that we naturally have.***

**An email I received from someone:** *"Please pray for my protection against gossip and slander." I follow Christ and evangelize daily, but people are lying to those in authority about me. They're trying to find any excuse to attack without any concern for the truth. To them, the system is just another club to use against someone who follows Christ. I only ask for this on the basis that it is, in fact, true.*

So God is telling us to be holy, set apart, but you have to put away your sinful nature, to the Lord's work. If you have any malice, deceit, and **all the corruption of the heart**, then it will be very hard for you to fulfill God's purpose. So, **how do you get rid of this sinful nature?**

### 1 Peter 2:2 (NLT)

**Like newborn babies**, you must **crave** pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. **Cry out for this nourishment**,

When we hear the word “**Like newborn babies,**” we have a tendency to correlate this passage to mean they are *immature in their faith or young in their faith*, as to the reason why you need “**pure spiritual milk.**” Basically, Peter is saying that as *born-again believers, we need to be “like newborn babies or like infants”* that crave or desire “**pure spiritual milk,**” which is the Word of God.

All Christians are to ***cry out for this nourishment, like newborn babies.*** Because once the baby starts to taste the goodness of the pure milk from mom, the *baby naturally wants to crave more of it.* That is why many of your moms would get up in the middle of the night to feed your crying baby. Because infants drink milk around every 2-3 hours.

Go back to 1 Peter 2:2. Now, I want you to focus on the word “**crave**”; in other versions, it will say “**desire**” or “**long for pure spiritual milk.**”

**Crave** or **desire** in Greek is *epipotheō* pronounced **ep-ee-poth-eh'-o**, meaning to long for, to pursue with love, greatly and earnestly long for.

How will you know that you are moving towards holiness? How will you know that you are set apart for God’s kingdom purpose? How will you know if you are growing spiritually?

***It is when you long for, pursue with love, greatly and earnestly long for the Word of God.*** This is the sign that lets you know that you are moving towards the pursuit of God’s holiness. **What will happen when you crave and desire the “pure spiritual milk of the word?”**

#### **1 Peter 2:2 (ESV)**

Like newborn infants, **long** for the pure spiritual milk, **that by it you may grow up into salvation—**

**“That by it you may grow up into salvation”:** When you desire or crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God like little babies, ***then you will grow spiritually.*** Pastor Joe! How can I grow spiritually? “Like newborn infants, crave and desire for the Word of God,” and you will grow spiritually.

If you don't hunger for the Word of God, ***you will not grow spiritually***. Did you also know that when you do not long for, desire for, or seek the Word of God, then ***your ability to fight the spiritual warfare gets weak***. The more you separate from the Word of God, the weaker you become spiritually.

Remember, the ***Bible tells us that the word of God is the sword***. And if you are not using the sword, then the ***enemy is going to know that you have no defense*** - no protection. The enemy will start cutting you up. ***So the further you are away from the Word of God, the deeper your cut will be***.

Pastor Joe, I read the Bible, ***but I still feel like I am not growing spiritually***. A lot of people read the Bible, but do not change, and so some people stop reading the Bible. Why? It is because ***when you just read the word, you will NOT change***. But when ***you believe in what you read and obey what it says in the Word, then that is when transformation starts to happen***.

So, what will genuinely increase your faith and spirituality is believing in and applying the Word of God. That's why James 1:22 tells us this.

#### **James 1:22 (NLT)**

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

In other words, when you just read the Word but you don't do what it says, you will not be wise, and you will not grow spiritually. You will just be a fool. Now, a bodybuilder has to do two primary things. First, ***eat healthy with all the right nutrients to build muscle***. But you also have ***to lift weights to build muscle***. If you just eat the nutrients and don't exercise, then you don't build your muscles. So two things have to happen to grow spiritually: you have to ***drink the pure milk of God's Word***, and ***you have to do what it says***. That is how you will grow your spiritual muscle.

#### **1 Peter 2:4-5 (NLT)**

<sup>4</sup>You are coming to Christ, who is the ***living cornerstone*** of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. <sup>5</sup> And ***you are living stones*** that ***God is building into his spiritual temple***.

What's more, **you are his holy priests**. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

O.k.! So Pastor Joe, in order for me to find my purpose, I have to put aside the evil corruption in my heart, and crave and desire the Word of God, and believe and apply what it says, so I can grow spiritually. And, **what is the result of all this?** Or, **why should we grow spiritually?** Because God is building a spiritual house here on earth that is living and active, and you are part of God's spiritual house.

Peter has been using the following words:

Living **Hope** (1 Peter 1:3)

Living **Word** (1 Peter 1:23)

Living **Cornerstone** (1 Peter 2:4)

Listen, life is tough. Life is full of stress and headaches. And many of you have family members, friends, or co-workers who are just going through a lot of challenges in their lives. And we need **a living hope that is true, so we can hold on to it. We need the living Word of God** to be alive for us today, right? These are not past hope, but present and future hope. So, until God calls us home, we need these essentials, and also a "living Cornerstone."

**Living Cornerstone:** What is the importance of a cornerstone in building? In the ancient Near East, when building a house, they first had to spend a lot of time and energy finding a good stone. Why? Because this stone was to be used as a cornerstone. The cornerstone is the foundation of a structure that will create two walls. All of the two side walls will be based on the position of that cornerstone. So having the right cornerstone will determine all the other stones, which will be the walls. That is why 1 Peter 2:5 says this.

**1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

you **yourselves like living stones** **[the side walls]** are being built up as a spiritual house, to **be a holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Peter is saying that Jesus is the “**Living Cornerstone**” because He is alive from the dead, and since you are also still alive and are like living stones (the walls), I am building a spiritual house, so that I can dwell in it.

That is why he is telling us to *pursue holiness*, throw away ***all the corruption in the heart, long and crave for the pure Word of God***, because you are the “**living stones**.” And, I want to dwell in my spiritual house. Listen, God is building His temple, and you are all participating in it.

So now Matthew 16:18 starts to make sense.

### **Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In Greek, the word “rock” also means “stone.” Now, I get why Peter uses the word rock or stone " quite often. So, **as believers, we are all part of a structure (living stones) of a spiritual house in which God dwells**. A church is not a building but a body of believers who come together as living stones to build God’s spiritual house until the Lord calls us home.

So the next question is, ***what type of structure are you building for God? What type of spiritual house are you building?*** Are you building a commercial building for other businesses that are coming in to rent? Are you building a hospital? ***Are you part of a living stone that is helping to build God’s house?*** This is your homework for this week. Monday to Saturday, you are to put this in prayer and seek the Lord in. ***What spiritual house are you building?***

### **1 Peter 2:6 (NLT)**

As the Scriptures say, “I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”

What Peter is implying is that when you are connected to the cornerstone, who is Jesus, and you are part of the living stone that is connected to Christ, ***you will never be disgraced or shamed by who you are in Christ.***

In other words, when Christ is the cornerstone, ***your house or building will not fail.*** When you are with Jesus, you cannot fail. When you are with Jesus and submit to Him, all the attacks that come against you will fall. ***No arrow of the devil will kill you.*** That is why Peter tells us that ***we are the living stone.*** A house built by God will never fail. ***You can never fail when you are in Christ.***

So when you trust in Him, you will not be ashamed or guilty before God, and ***here is what happens when you reject Jesus.***

#### 1 Peter 2:7-8 (NLT)

<sup>7</sup>Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, “The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.” <sup>8</sup>And, “He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall.” They stumble ***because they do not obey God’s word,*** and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

The Jewish leaders were the ones who persecuted Jesus and rejected Him to build the house of God. The one whom you rejected, ***Jesus, has now become the cornerstone to build God’s holy temple.*** God has chosen to build His spiritual house for all those who would believe and trust in Him. Jesus has now become the cornerstone in the lives of all who trust in Him, ***but for those who reject Jesus, those who deny that Jesus is God, will stumble and trip over Him.*** Why? Because they will trip or ***stumble because they do not obey God’s word.***

Now, Peter is not bringing this up out of his own thought; he is actually stating a concept rooted in the Old Testament in Isaiah 8:14 and Psalm 118:22. So, this stumbling or tripping over Jesus is the idea that ***while Jesus is the cornerstone or foundation for believers, for the non-believers, Jesus becomes a wall or barrier for those who reject Him as God.***

And this stumbling or tripping is directly linked to disobedience to the Word of God. **Which means they reject the gospel message.** They reject the good news of Jesus death on the cross. **In essence, they reject the truth.** And when you reject the truth, you will not know God's plan, and you are not set apart to be Holy. So basically, when you hear "**stumbling**" or "**tripping**," it means you are in a spiritual downfall and hitting a wall you can't get past.

I love the next two verses. God knows that you are going through a tough time. Listen, if you are **ever struggling with life** or **stressed and need some encouragement**, I strongly encourage you to memorize, declare, and proclaim these promises from God. This will blow you away!

### 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NLT)

**<sup>9</sup>But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup>“Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy.”**

**[If there was ever a time you need encouragement, then 1 Peter 2:9-10 is the one.]**

A Living Stone (You)

1. You are a chosen people
2. Royal priests
3. A Holy nation
4. God's very own possession (You belong to an almighty God)
5. Called you into the light
6. You are God's people
7. You have received the mercy of God

**Chosen People:** Israel was chosen by family, ethnicity (Jews), and country of origin. But now all who believe in **Jesus are one spiritual race.**

**Royal Priests:** In Israel, under the law, the nation was given the task of serving as priests. These priests were performing the duties between man and God. ***They held the honor of coming into the presence of God.***

But now you are not just any priests, but ***royal priests. You have direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ.*** You have to remember that many of these Christians were Gentiles, meaning non-Jews. They thought that you needed a priest like the Jews to help them get access to the Father, but Peter is saying, “NO”! ***Simply believing in Jesus (being born again) brings you into God’s family; you are a chosen people and royal priests with access to the Father. You can go to Him at any time.*** You no longer have to wait once a year at the year of atonement. Go to God, for you are royal priests.

**Holy Nation:** You might be living under Rome’s occupation, and under Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (the cities in Asia Minor), but now you are a nation of your own, ***a holy nation, and under God’s kingdom,*** and you are God’s people. Because you are now Holy and set apart for God’s purpose. ***You, the believers, are your own nation.***

So now that you know that Jesus brought you out of darkness and into His light, and you have received the mercy of God, ***now go and share the good news with others.*** I love the New American Standard Bible, and here is how they emphasized you and me.

#### **1 Peter 2:9 NASB**

But YOU are A CHOSEN PEOPLE, 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 into His marvelous light;

So, if you are ever stressed or discouraged, I want you to shout out loud and declare these words: ***“I am a chosen people. I am a royal priest. I am part of a Holy Nation, and God has taken hold of me.”***

#### **1 Peter 2:11 (NLT)**

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage ***war against your very souls.***

As we close with today's message, Peter goes back and reminds us that we, as believers in Christ, are just temporary residents, foreigners, pilgrims, or exiles in this temporary life. Because as believers, our death is just the beginning.

And Peter tells us that this battle is not against the flesh or body, but **against our very soul. The soul is our identity.** Soul and identity, in essence, have the same meaning. So the more we identify with worldly things, the more our spiritual identity diminishes.

When we make this world, this place our **permanent home, it is easier for us to sin or increase the flesh.** Because the world and the material things in life become more attachable. **Our identity connects more to the world than it does to God.** That's why Peter tells us that if we are separated for God's purpose.

Simply think of this. A golf ball by itself really doesn't mean anything, but when it's signed by Tiger Woods, that golf ball is going to be expensive. A basketball by itself is not much, but one signed by Michael Jordan or LeBron James is going to be very expensive. It's not the item that makes it expensive; **it is what that item is connected to that becomes valuable.**

When your soul, your identity, is connected to Jesus, and you become that living stone, you are precious in His sight. You are very important to God. That is why **Satan wants to attack your identity of who you are in Christ.** Remember that the angels are watching us. So that means the devil is also watching us and observing what we are doing.

### 1 Peter 2:12 (NLT)

Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

This is the reason why the Bible tells us to be the salt and light of the world. This is why the Bible tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ. This is the

reason why God tells us to live worthy of the calling God calls us. And this is the reason why God calls us to be holy, for He is Holy.

In closing:

**Crave** or **desire** in Greek is **epipothēō** pronounced **ep-ee-poth-eh'-o**, meaning to long for, to pursue with love, greatly and earnestly long for.

The context of the Greek word “**ep-ee-poth-eh'-o**” means something like an animal that is so thirsty that it is running after the water to drink it. I told myself, Lord, I do not want to do another hymnal, but the more I prayed, the more I kept getting this song in my head.

### **As the Deer Panteth for the Waters**

As the deer panteth for the water  
 So my soul longeth after Thee  
 You alone are my heart's desire  
 And I long to worship Thee  
 You alone are my Strength, my Shield  
 To You alone may my spirit yield  
 You alone are my heart's desire  
 And I long to worship Thee.

You're my Friend and You are my Brother  
 Even though You are a King  
 I love You more than any other  
 So much more than anything  
 You alone are my Strength, my Shield  
 To You alone may my spirit yield  
 You alone are my heart's desire  
 And I long to worship Thee.

I want You more than gold or silver  
 Only You can satisfy  
 You alone are the real joy-giver  
 And the apple of my eye

You alone are my Strength, my Shield  
To You alone may my spirit yield  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship Thee.