

# 2017 THEME STATEMENT

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## ROCKHOUND ONE STONE AT A TIME

A rock was once laying in the sand, dusty and unwanted. It was rejected for any sort of use. But God called this rock precious and he made it into the cornerstone of a building, the most important stone in the building. This stone is Jesus. God also says that we too are precious to him and we can be stones in his building. He wants to shape and sculpt us into a beautiful, precious, living stone. We have a place and a part in what God is doing. Once we were a simple rock in the dust, now we are chosen stones, a chosen people, that God calls his special possession.

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
a chosen and precious  
cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
will never be put to shame.”

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

and,

“A stone that causes people to  
stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:4-12 (NIV)

Jesus was the first stone picked from the dust. Since then he has worked with God to gather more and more stones for his building. This includes us! And there are still many more stones to gather. While we all need to be sculpted and handcrafted to be more like Jesus, we can still help find more stones!

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A Rockhound is a person who sets out to search for precious and valuable stones—an amateur geologist if you will. They look for Jaspers, agates, rubies, diamonds, quartz and many other minerals which are scattered all over the earth. These stones are not found easily. Many are hidden inside another rock or buried in sand and dirt. While most of us would walk right over something valuable, mistaking it for just another stone, a Rockhound knows how to recognize a precious stone in its natural habitat.

Once found, a raw stone can be transformed into a beautiful, bright, and shiny gemstone. The stones are carefully crafted down to what makes them special. Every stone is multifaceted. It has many parts that need to be worked and crafted so that its gifts are magnified.

Yahweh is building a kingdom. And Jesus is his Rockhound! He is searching for dusty, raw, stones that are willing to be cut, crafted and polished into a precious gemstone. The world is full of many uncut stones that need to be found, polished and disciplined.

And Jesus invites us to be rockhounds too. We are to seek out lost stones, and bring them to the place where they can be handcrafted and polished into what God truly designed them to be.

When a rockhound wants to polish stones he will tumble them. The rocks all go into a big rotating bucket or drum for weeks. The stones rub, grind and crash into each other, and over time the stones are polished into shiny gemstones!

Together, we are the church and we are continually learning from each other, rubbing, grinding and shaping each other. Of course, we are never fully finished being crafted or polished. God uses our whole lifetime to shape us into the people we are to be. So we should always both be looking for more stones to join us and for more ways that allow God to disciple us and teach more of the kingdom way.

**We waited on the Lord and asked him for insight into the students we will serve next year. We believe he gave us three words that help shape our theme:**

### IDENTITY

What makes you valuable? Special? Have you ever wanted to be famous? Or maybe you have just wanted more people to like you? Have you ever wanted to be really good at something, like the very best so that you will earn the approval of others?

This is human nature. We all do this to some degree. It's not wrong to be famous or to want to be liked. But when we allow these things to control us it becomes a problem. We often try to be someone we are not. We forget our identity—or we just don't know who we really are. It's so critical to know deep in our bones that we are all created by God and we are precious. Because of this it means we are not foreigners but citizens. We can't allow our status, circumstances, position, or who our friends are to change the simple fact we are created by God and therefore we are his. We find our identity in him not anywhere else.

### ETERNAL

We are not disposable. Humans are created in the image of Yahweh. We all have a purpose in God's greater plan. He says we all are significant and have meaningful roles to play in this life. This is easy to forget in the world we live.

Our culture is always looking for the next best thing and disregarding the previous. We do this with our stuff and with our family, friends, and significant others. We treat people as disposable. We can get stuck focussing on how others can benefit us. Then we use them to make ourselves feel better and then move on to something or someone else. We have to learn to not treat ourselves and each other like this. We are not tools created to be used a few times and thrown out, but we are a precious tribe created by God for eternity.

### MULTIFACETED

We see this generation as full of promise and hope, but held back by so many things, often seeming duplicitous, or opposite in natures:

- They want to change the world, but are afraid of being unnoticed.
- They want to take a stand for a good belief, but don't want to hurt anyone.
- They want to have a successful business that feeds their soul and is philanthropic, but they are afraid to fail and get stuck as a nothing.
- They have so much ambition and drive to do good, make something new, and be a catalyst for change but are often so held back by fear.

Our goal with this theme is to help our students understand their true identities, their eternal, intrinsic value, and how they can fulfill their destinies.