

Introduction and Leader Notes : Rockhound-One Stone at a Time

Thank you so much for being willing to come and teach as an important part of our Mission Adventures program. As you probably know, our program has special times set aside for training and teaching for our participants as an important part of their missions trip. Every year we have a different theme in order to try and emphasize the message we feel God has given us for the year. Each program director finds unique ways to reinforce this theme through the training sessions with the participants, and your teaching plays a key role in these times. These notes are designed for you in order to help you better communicate the theme for our program this year, "Rockhound-One Stone at a Time".

Every year, the Mission Adventures Network Theme Team meets together for several days of intercession, prayer, brainstorming and fun in order to seek God. The goal is to determine what He is saying to us for our participants in the coming year of Mission Adventures. This year's theme verse came through loud and clear, and although there are several others that you will also receive, these are the main two scriptural references that God led us to:

1 Peter 2:4-12 "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.

The first session is often not very long, and as far as teaching is concerned, is primarily an introduction to the theme. It is also, however, the opportunity to set the tone and the layout for the rest of the week. It is our road map and our one chance at a first impression with these students. As we prayed over what exactly God wanted for this group of Mission Adventures students, He led us to these verses, pointing out that our students, most of whom will be teenagers, are so caught up in everything going on around them in the world that they miss the beautiful, life-giving things of God that are right in front of them. And often, they are so disillusioned by the way they are told to look and act, they don't see their worth and the incredible way they were created!

We want to use the first session to lay the groundwork for teaching them about that for the rest of the week.

In addition to giving you background on the theme, here are a few suggestions as you prepare to share.

- Take some time to ask your program director about our Mission Adventures theology policy. We emphasize as much as we can the shared values and beliefs of all followers of Jesus, and try to stay away from the touchier theological topics that could prove distracting during such a short time with our participants.
- Take some time to find out a little about the group(s) you'll be speaking to. The director of the MA program you are speaking to will probably provide you with this information anyway, but it's always a good idea to try and find out the size and make-up of the group, including age range, denomination, and even any relevant history or spiritual maturity level that could be applicable. (For example, are they mostly new believers, or a newly formed group, or have they been together since kindergarten? How long has their leader been with them? Have there been any recent church or community upheavals?) It can also be helpful to consider the interaction between multiple groups should you be speaking to more than one church team or group at a time. All these things can be helpful in forming the way you choose to offer your presentation.
- Try and think of ways that you could involve the participants in the teaching other than just listening to you talk. Small group discussion, using multi-media, games or even simple tools like crayons, or cutting out pictures from magazines can be surprisingly thought provoking. Take some time to process how this theme impacts you personally. How does it reflect what you've gone through in your own journey, or what you're going through now? Often as staff, we're amazed each year how the theme is what WE need to hear, as much (or maybe more) as our participants do. We've found the most effective way to communicate our past themes has been letting God speak to us about them and impact us deeply before we ever even begin our program. Any time we start to think only in terms of "what do these kids need to hear?" without first asking God to search our own hearts, He seems to pull us back and causes us to be changed by the theme first. Isn't He good like that?
- Lastly, the notes are simply meant to be a guideline for you. While the more reinforcement we can give to our theme the better, we trust that you'll hear from God and present what He's saying to you for your particular group.

In the past we've found it helpful to use what we call the **four "P"s**.

(Purity, Passion, Purpose, and Proclamation) as guideposts for working through the theme.

Session 1:

2017 Theme Statement “Rockhound - One Stone at a Time”

1 Peter 2:4-8

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)

2017 THEME STATEMENT

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!

- * * 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

Session 1 con't

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 - ETERNAL - MULTIFACETED -**

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.

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 focusing 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.*

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.

Here are also some highlighted words God also showed us in regards to this year's students and the theme verse which are included in the following sessions: handcrafted, chosen/holy—set apart, Living stones (foundation) , God's temple= spiritual house, growth/action, obedience, holy nation = foreigners,- " refugees" , rejection/ shame— trust.

Session 2:

JESUS IS The Cornerstone and My Rockhound

1 Peter 2:4-8

NIV

⁴ As you come to Him, The living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him—⁵ 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. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: “See I lay in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.” ⁷ 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,” ⁸ and “A stone that caused 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.”

NLT

⁴ 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. ⁵ And you are living stones that God is building into this spiritual temple. What’s more, you are His holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. 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.” Yes, you who trust him recognized the honor God has given him, “The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.” 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 fate

NKJV

⁴ Coming to Him as a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” ⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,” ⁸ and “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” They stumble being disobedient to the word, to which they also appointed.

JESUS IS THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE!

A Sure Foundational Rock for some AND a Rock that some will stumbled on.

Supporting scriptures:

Matthew 21:42

Isaiah 28:16

Acts 4:10-12

Psalms 118: 22-23

(Job 38:4-6)

Romans 9:33

The technical definition of a Cornerstone is “an important quality or feature on which a particular thing depends on or is based; a stone that forms the base of a corner of a building; foundations, basis, keystone, the heart or center of something. In ancient building, the cornerstone was a crucial stone placed as the main stone the builders would then line up the entire building to. IF your cornerstone was not perfect, the building would gradually be off and eventually would not be structurally sound.

Jesus describes Himself (as well as words about Him in Old Testament scriptures) as the Chief Cornerstone that His church would be built upon, a unified body of believers, both Jew and Gentile. He is also called the living stone - one the builders rejected. He came from heaven, born of a woman what we call the incarnation and then lived and died, buried and rose again in resurrection power. He was rejected by most of the Jewish nation who had been looking for the Messiah. The Stone (Jesus) was rejected and on this stone” He is building His bride the church.

THEN we are also called living stones, a holy nation and royal priesthood. Believers in Christ, who know of the Love of God through His Son Jesus will know His preciousness. To know Jesus, is know HE is the only way to God. That Jesus is the only way, truth and life. It is not part of the way, or some of Him is true and yeah there are multiple ways to get eternal life... HE. IS. IT !!! That will be comfort to some and the stumbling block people cannot get over for others — just as this passage describes.

Session 2 continued:

What is it like to BE a living stone?

And not just a living stone But to BE spiritual house—a temple?

And not just a temple BUT to BE a holy priesthood who offers the spiritual sacrifices???

SO many layers here. Multifaceted. Jesus came to fulfilled the whole process. We, no longer like our Old Testament brothers and sister, have to go through a man, (priest), or rituals, (sacrifices), to have our sins forgiven and to talk to God! THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS!!!

As Jesus came to fulfill the Law and prophets as a man— He did this so He could understand or empathize. AS Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are –yet he did not sin.” This is part of the preciousness of Jesus. Left all of heaven, Came to live as a man with all the same temptations and trials and NOW is at the right hand of God as our mediator and great intercessor for us.

Being a spiritual temple:

A quote From John Piper’s Desiring God: -”If we are going to be a spiritual temple for God’s presence, and if we are going to be a holy priesthood, and if we are going to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, then we must day-by-day, hour-by-hour come to Christ. We must taste his kindness by feeding on his Word—his promises, his commands, his teachings, his warnings—until we are so filled with him that his Word will dwell among us richly as we teach and admonish one another with thankfulness in our hearts to God. “ That daily commitment and fear of the Lord is what makes us a spiritual house. Obedience according to our passage is the answer if we will be blessed by the Cornerstone Jesus Christ or judged because we have stumbled. In regards to identity: there are two choices fear of man leading to manipulation OR Fear of the Lord leading to Influence.

Holy Priesthood:

We are not only a spiritual house or temple as a dwelling place of God’s presence BUT an active, living part in worship... that of the priests were doing in the O.T. All Christ followers are the priests of this new spiritual house, and our privilege now as priests is to draw near to God with spiritual sacrifices. The priests brought the sacrifices into the tabernacle in the Old Testament. But now that tabernacle is replaced by the Church. The atoning altar is replaced by Jesus Christ and his shed blood. And the priests are replaced by you, those who believe in Christ. What a precious thing! The preciousness of Christ to our hearts is this: through him we know God and come to God and experience the presence of God and offer acceptable sacrifices to God. Without him all is separation and darkness and wrath. Christ is precious, very precious. And a priesthood we are actively participating in the priestly duties.

Spiritual Sacrifices:

These are some of the duties or the actual spiritual sacrifices:

With our Bodies: In [Romans 12:1](#) Paul says that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship. That means that everything you do with your body is to be done as an act of worship to God. Whether you eat , drink or hammer nails or drive a car or make a meal or scroll on FB or read a book or shoot a basketball or pin on pinterst—whatever you do with your body, do to the glory of God ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#)). Then it is your spiritual service of worship.

Session 2 con't

The acts of praise and thanksgiving: It might include singing, writing poetry, art expressions or speaking words of praise as in [Hebrews 13:15](#), "Continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name." So the spiritual sacrifices are the praises and thanks of God's people alone and in group worship.

Acts of love and kindness: it might include acts of love like giving and sharing. For example, in [Philippians 4:18](#) Paul receives gifts of support from the Philippian church and says, "I received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." And in [Hebrews 13:16](#) it says, "Do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

What then are spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ? *They are the deeds you do, the words you speak, the songs you sing—when you do them spiritually.* That is, when you do them in reliance on the power of the Spirit, according to the will of the Spirit, and for a manifestation of the Spirit—which is a manifestation of Christ. We are only able to be any of these things because Christ is our Cornerstone where all things In Him and through Him and for Him come from this strong foundation.

(session 2 notes are lengthy— talking about the Foundation or laying the foundation for the rest of the teaching time. This session also may include the passion play.)

Session 3:

Chosen

1 Peter 5:9-10

“...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ...”

“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 the 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.”

THE STONE

Revelation 2:17 “To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”

Pieces of stone, wood, metal, etc. would be used as a token of admission in those days. In this passage Jesus was offering those who overcome (fear, addiction, persecution, etc.) a ticket into His presence and the heavenly banquet! He wants us there.

He writes on this stone a new name! He gives us a new name, a true name, a true identity, one that He chose for us! The essence of our identity. Challenge - you may not be walking in your complete identity!

A true name is the one that encompasses the character, the nature, the meaning of the person who bears it. It is the person’s own symbol, their soul’s picture or description in a word, the sign that belongs to them and no one else. This is something only God can give, for God is the only one who sees what a man is, this is our identity.

Identity is not something that can be fully revealed in this generation, maybe even lifetime, and it is not a quest that we can complete on our own.

It is something our creator alone can bestow on us; it is only something that can be revealed when we are fully WITH God.

Until we believe that God chose us we will remain unable to even start to embrace or comprehend the fullness of our purpose, calling and identity

HOW ARE WE CHOSEN?

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 “...For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, His treasured possession... it was because the Lord loved you...”

There is no other reason other than His love. Love that is not based on any act of service or worship that you could do for Him.

There is nothing that you need to do before you are chosen! He has already decided to choose you!

You can come as you are; a stone raw and uncut. His love surpasses these things.

It’s out of His love that our identity is found! That place of intimacy and silence in His presence produces His love that spurs wonder (“ahh!”) that initiates discovery (“aha!”) about who He is and who we are and that brings joy (“haha!”) which brings us to His feet to receive His love and the circle continues!

Love is the only eternal thing, putting your identity in anything else will be temporary and disappointing.

Session 3 con't

1 Peter 2:9 "...God's special possession..."

You are something He holds dear to His heart, something He treasures, and something of infinite value to Him. You are made in His likeness, that's what qualifies you to be chosen, our identity is found through Him.

Matthew 22:14 "For many are called but few are chosen."

You are not chosen because you are called, you are called because you are chosen! It goes against everything we have ever been taught, that we are loved and accepted and

Our calling and purpose is not our identity, but it is our hope. Our identity is in the simple fact that we are chosen.

If we are free to choose, God is that much more free to choose and He chose us!

John 15:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you and anointed you..."

You are chosen, marked, rooted and anchored in His love and identity! Revel in being the chosen one of God! Living stones; raw and uncut, yet handcrafted. Your roots, as a child of God, are in eternity...

SO?

1 Peter 2:5 "...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ..."

Built into a spiritual house, invited into the royal priesthood

We have an individual identity from being a part of the house, we have been given authority for an area or structure, and we have responsibility for ourselves within this identity.

We also have corporate identity from being a part of the house or family of God; we have responsibilities and duties to one another within this identity.

Each person has a specific purpose, each person is necessary and important – a house without a foundation will collapse, a house without walls will not stand, a house without a roof is not effective.

Eph. 2: 19 "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household..."

We are no longer in the pile of rocks but we have been sovereignly chosen by the Lord to be a handcrafted part of His house, a part of His family, part of His inheritance.

Once we were exiled and lost but we have been searched for, sought after and now included in His dwelling place.

He wanted us the way we are; He welcomed us into His arms like the prodigal son and loves us unconditionally.

IDENTITY IN HIS CHOICE!

We are trying to discover who we are but in a world of shadows and distortion we cannot see accurately. Things are fast-paced, ever changing, disposable, temporary and unsatisfying. No wonder everyone is searching for that place of secure identity and purpose.

Jesus said no one would know the name written on the stone, it's a secret knowledge, known only to the one who receives it and the one who bestows it. Who you are, your truest self and your inmost being, most intimate identity is something that will only be shared between you and your Creator!

He is your answer. He is the giver of life and love and He chose YOU!

Session 4:
Identity / Refined / Choose Obedience
1 Peter 2:9b

When a Rock goes through the Rock Tumbler, it is constantly going through different kinds of polishing and pressures to get to its final stage. It could take up to a month for the Rocks to be polished in the tumbler.

Our life is kind of the same, only it will take a life-time in the refining process that God is doing. When God puts us through this process we come out on the other side and are able to proclaim God's mighty acts more affectively.

This is God's ultimate calling in our life: to make us like Jesus on the inside and the outside, and to do good works Eph 2:10.

The challenge is to really know what is on the inside of our hearts or what we are truly made of. To know this there needs to be some kind of pressure that causes what is on the inside to come out.

Have you ever squeezed an orange? When you squeeze an orange, out will come the orange juice!

What happens when you are squeezed? What is on the inside will come out!

If what come out is not Jesus, God will continually put us in that Rock Tumbler to refine and polish us!

Proverbs 27:19

Says: As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.

The heart of a person reveals our deepest intentions. God always looks deeper than just our behavior; He will actually look at why we do what we do. This is at the level where the heart is.

The Life of David

David is looked upon as a man that had a heart after God.

So how did David get a heart like that and how did he constantly grow and keep the heart after God?

1 Sam 13:8-9, 15:10

After King Saul choose to take matters into his own hands and not to wait to see what God wanted to do, he was told by Samuel that God had chosen another king that had a heart after God. So we see that Saul did not have that heart but David did.

Before David defeated Goliath, Saul was in his tent one head bigger than all the other soldiers but he still did not dare to fight the giant. But David did not have a problem fighting the Giant.

How did David feel so confident but Saul did not?

The difference was that David knew his God but Saul did not. 1 Sam 15:17

It was a question of Identity.

David knew who God had made him to be but Saul did not know who God had made him to be. Saul was the king of God's people but he did not know how to let God flow through him but David knew how because he knew God.

David got to know God long before he was anointed as king by Samuel, he knew God as a young shepherd boy on the Sheppard fields and there is where he received the heart after God! 1 Sam 17:36-37

Session 4 continued

I like to call this Bedroom Christianity (David in the shepherd fields as a young boy).

Young people getting to know their God all alone in their bedrooms, spending time with Jesus, reading and writing all over their Bible, having the Holy Spirit show up and teaching them who they are in God, and letting the Holy Spirit teach them how to pray. This is where David developed a heart after God and this is also how a young generation can develop a heart after God. (Bedroom Christianity).

David was constantly squeezed on all sides throughout his life, he had enemies on all sides, his own family betrayed him and tried to take the kingdom and he made mistakes, but he would always lean into God and come to Him first about everything.

After David's life was over the Bible always refers to David as a man that served God faithfully and would compare a lot of the kings to King David if they served God faithfully.

The Life of Paul:

Paul was known as Saul first in the Bible. He was first a Pharisee that studied under a person called Gamaliel. A Pharisee was a person that was considered the teachers of Israel, he worked on preserving the Jewish understanding of the law.

In Acts we read about how Saul would hunt down believers and put them in prison or witness their death, in other words he wanted to rid the world of Christianity and he thought it was God that was doing this through him.

On the road to Damascus Saul was met by a bright light that flashed around him, Saul fell off his horse and heard Jesus speak to him, Jesus asked him why he was persecuting Him?

This was a moment in time when Saul realized that he had been persecuting Jesus, the church.

This transformed Saul's life forever. His identity was no longer in his religion but it became in who he was in Jesus. Gal 2:20

This changed Saul and he became Paul. He went from hating Christians and wanted to kill them to be willing to die and give his own life for the once he wanted to kill, it was truly a metamorphosis. After Paul met Jesus, he started looking like Jesus.

This is what happens when a person truly meets Jesus, we start acting and looking like Jesus, it is God living in and through us!!

God is always out to change us and make us like him.

Choosing Obedience:

We all have to choose what we will do with our lives, we see that both King David and Paul choose to serve God no matter what the cost was, and sometimes the price can be really high but remember that simple obedience changes history!

In 2Cor 5:18-21 we read about the ministry of reconciliation.

The bible says that we are God's ambassadors, meaning we represent God.

First and foremost we as humans was reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, reconciliation means: The restoration of friendly relations. In other words, Jesus has restored our friendship with God that man lost in the garden of Eden.

In Verse 18 and 19 it says that God has now entrusted us with this ministry of reconciliation to the rest of the world. It's our job to mend the relationship between man and God!!

We are working on God's behalf for a world that needs to have the relationship with God and man healed. Wow that is amazing!! God is literally making his appeal through us!

So in Rockhound language: we are all Rockhounds, looking to redeem Rocks that are hidden gems out there somewhere, it will just take us going out and looking for them!

Session 5:

Jesus is my Rockhound / We are a Holy Nation

1 Peter 2:9-10

NIV

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

NASB

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 into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. and so they meet fate that was planned for them.

NKJV

⁹ But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Unity through Jesus and His mercy!

At one time, we were wandering aimlessly around with no unity, nothing to bring us together as a people of God. If we follow Jesus, accept His mercy and grace for the forgiveness of our sins, not only do we become priests, living stones, etc, we become unified into one family of priests, living stones etc. We no longer fend for ourselves in a barren post apocalyptic life of solitude, we join together with the others who also have this mercy and grace. We can not go about as "a lone wolf", fighting the enemy by ourselves, and serving the Lord in solitude, we must choose to unite ourselves with one another, and be a part of the greater body of believers.

The children of Israel were designated a holy nation. They were united through circumcision, the Law of Moses and worshipping the One True God. When they were united, they were invincible. (Through God of course). Nothing could stop them. He performed miracles and utterly destroyed their enemies. Later in their history, even earlier, they were enticed to disunity against Moses, then Judges, then kings. They split and became two nations and were never as strong as when they came from Egypt, through the Red Sea and conquered the promised land.

We are the same as those Israelites, but our unifying factor is the blood of Jesus and our desire to follow Him. We are being built into a House as Priests! For His glory, so the whole world will know Him. As long as we are united, we can do awesome things through Him!

Unfortunately, we spend our time trying to find new ways to divide ourselves and thus became totally powerless, destined to be exiled to the enemies kingdom.

As rocks being fitted together to build a temple or structure, so we need one another to chip away or smooth rough edges so that we can be a strong structure built on the Foundation our Cornerstone Jesus!

Eph 2:19-21 says" we are no longer foreigners or strangers but fellow citizen's with God's people and also members of his household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone IN HIM THE WHOLE BUILDING IS JOINED TOGETHER AND RISES TO BECOME THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD AND IN HIM YOU TOO ARE BEING BUILT TO BECOME A DWELLING IN WHICH God lives by His spirit.

Unity is crucial.

Session 6: 1 PETER 2: 11-12

NIV

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² 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.

NLT

¹¹ Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. ¹² 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.

NKJV

¹¹ Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

LIVING STONES—LIVING ON MISSION—ON PURPOSE

This passage begins with a warning, begging and urging. What’s the urgent message? We are not of this world anymore yet the world is watching us. Scriptures to support this are : John 17:14-16; John 15: 19; John 8:22-24; 1 John 4:5; Romans 12:1-2; and others as well. Our citizenship is in heaven... Philippians 3:20 “ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, The Lord Jesus Christ.”

So as refugees or foreigners, we are to live out the Kingdom of God though the culture is contrary. As 9a holy Kingdom nation, we are not to act on the sinful and worldly, fleshly lusts that are common in this age. Just the mere appearance of evil should be even a question in their minds because how we live out our lives intentionally.

The fruit of our lives should be on display. Not for a pat on the back, but out of love for Jesus who is our model. To love what Jesus loves—the broken, the poor, the hungry and the lost. We also will shine brightly by our love for one another. Trust me, people are watching you. You may think no one is but as a believer in Christ and if you are not living as a monk somewhere, the world is watching, your classmates are watching, your family is watching, your enemies are watching and most of your Savior is watching. This requires dying to ourselves. Matthew 16:24 Jesus said “ Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up your cross and follow me.”

A default for many of us, is to resort to the easy, the status quo—but we all know that feeling or temptation. Sometimes it is decision to get involved or not. My advice — get involved!!! The old saying Actions are bigger than words is so true. When we love someone who is hard to love or help someone even when it is inconvenient and hard, or an injustice is staring at us or we cannot sleep because it bothers us or when we respond to the urging of the Holy Spirit to pray for someone or give to someone that IS Being a living, active, stone. Being shaped by our Rockhound, Jesus — conforming to Him, loving what He loves, staying in His Word to learn more about Him to be more like Him. The more we are like Him—the more foreign we will be in this world. I love Matthew 5: 13-18 Where Jesus tells we are the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the world — both if not acting like what they are intended to be is worthless. If our light shines before others not only will they see our good deeds but also our Father in heaven will be glorified! A Win Win!!

So being imitators of Jesus (Rock hound) We are to search out those stones in the “dirt” ... in our neighborhoods, schools, ball teams, family and overseas. To seek and save the lost. To display and brag about our great God. His Kingdom Come and His Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven. I challenge you to be living stones and be a rock hound yourself. **GO!!!**

Mark 16:16 ; Matthew 9:37-38; 1 Cor. 9:22; Romans 1:16; Luke 19:10 ; Proverbs 11:30.

(This can be the missions night / injustice awareness as well .