

Rocky: Fighting It Out

1 Peter 3:8-12

***Title Slide**

So . . for the last few weeks we've been talking about Peter, right?

And we've learned that Peter means "Rock".

But right now I want to talk to you about STONES.

Show stone

This is a beautiful stone that we painted in Kids Ministry.

Hopefully you've seen the other ones we have outside as decorations around our trees.

Stones are very versatile.

They can be used for a lot of good.

- You can write "Jesus Loves You" on a stone and leave it at the park to bless someone.

But, they can also be used for bad.

- This same stone could be thrown at a window to break it
- Or thrown at a person and cause serious injuries

In Biblical history, stones were used as a punishment for sinners.

- The entire community would come out to throw stones at the accused,
- with the full intention to kill the person.

Did you know that Peter referred to Christians as stones?

***1 Peter 2:4-5**

⁴You 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.

⁵And you are **living stones** that God is building into his spiritual temple...

We are Living Stones in God's Temple.

What does that mean? How can we be stones?
Especially living stones? Isn't that an oxymoron?

Well, Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 3:16

***1 Corinthians 3:16**

16 Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

I think it will help if we visualize another type of stone, more like a brick. For a building.

Show brick

And then, it's important that we remember that

- Prior to Jesus' death, the Holy Spirit was in the temple, the actual building in Jerusalem, in a place called the Holy of Holies
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- Only the High Priest was allowed to enter this space, AND only once per year
-
- Then, Jesus died and the veil separating the people from the Holy of Holies was torn
-
- After Jesus resurrection and ascension to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to now dwell within us, His believers.
-
-
- So that we are no longer separated from Him
-
- Which means that NOW we are living and breathing stones, full of His Holy Spirit, and we are built **together** as His Temple
-
-
- Because it is not just you or just me alone
-
- It is the **community of God's people** that is the living, spiritual temple of God, with Jesus Christ as the foundation and cornerstone.

Now we know *why* we are called living stones, so how should we actually live?

We're going to go back to the Rock to find out. But first, let's

PRAY

Open your Bibles, or Bible app, and turn to 1 Peter 3, verse 8-9.

***1 Peter 3:8-9**

⁸ Finally, all of you “meaning All Christians” should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. ⁹ Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing.

These are all characteristics that will help us grow in unity with one another.

Unity is essential to the Christian community.

Let’s look at this line by line, as we build up the temple with our stones.

Jenga blocks

***Grow in unity with one another.**

- Be of one mind – Be like-minded, live in harmony, have a unity of spirit
- - Philippians 2:2 “. . . make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”
 -
 - This doesn’t mean we have to agree on every single thing and not have any opinions of our own.
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 - It means that we agree on the most important thing,
- - That Jesus Christ, the son of God, is our Savior and we are Fully Devoted to following His way.
- Sympathize with each other –
 - Put yourself in someone else’s place
 -
 - It means sharing in the joys and sorrows of others.
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 - We are called to develop a heart that genuinely cares for the well-being of fellow believers.
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 - Even if you haven’t experienced what someone else is going through,

- you can still show them that you care by listening and responding to what they need.
- Love each other as brothers and sisters –
 - Grow in love for one another
 -
 - We may not have grown up in the same household
 -
 - But, we are now a **family** of believers. Brothers and sisters in Christ.
 -
 - Loving each other.
 -

Here's a picture of what loving your sibling looks like:

***Picture of Danielle & Makenna**

Loving your brothers and sisters isn't always easy.

Sometimes they get on your nerves. They don't listen to what you're saying. Maybe they're too bossy.

Or maybe you're like me and you're the bossy one, and one afternoon you're supposed to be watching your twin brothers (who are only a year younger than you) and you see them drag their mattresses out to the front yard and then climb onto the roof through their bedroom window to jump onto said mattresses . .

So you decide to climb out on the roof to tell them not to do that but they don't listen to you and they jump anyway . .

And then they run inside and shut the windows so that you're now stuck on the roof and you don't want to jump off and break your leg so you just yell and scream until they finally open the window again . .

Or maybe that's just me.

That story might be unique to my life, but I'm sure that those of you here with siblings have experienced some kind of conflict over the years.

The beauty of fighting with your siblings is that it doesn't stop you from loving each other.

- I got into a lot of fights with my brothers as a kid,
- but I also experienced a lot of joy and fun with them as we were growing up.

- Loving each other and sharing our lives together is what helped us develop a strong bond as a family.

That is what Peter is saying to us as Christians when he says to love each other as brothers and sisters.

- We need to show loyalty, support, and love toward each other,
- even when we don't agree on everything.

We also need to be:

- Be tenderhearted –
 - Show compassion.
 - This is about experiencing the feeling of great affection for others.
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 - These are the kinds of feelings that Jesus had when he saw the needy crowds.
 - Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
 -
 - Matthew 14:14 Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
 -
 - He felt compassion for them and a desire to help them.

- Keep a humble attitude –
 - Put other's above yourself.
 -
 - Voluntarily submit to others.
 -
 - Be willing to encourage each other and rejoice in each other's successes.
 -
 - And be willing to admit your own faults.
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 - Ephesians 4:2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Admitting your own faults is very difficult. In our sin we are selfish and full of pride.

I used to work at a preschool and I did not like the director, who was my boss. She was controlling and demanding. She always questioned my work and didn't show appreciation. She showed favoritism to some of the other staff.

And at the time, my solution to dealing with these feelings was to complain and gossip with my coworkers. I didn't talk to her personally about any of it.

A few years later I was working at a different preschool where I now became the director, the boss. Things were going great and I was getting along with everyone. UNTIL . . .

One of the staff asked to meet with me and let me know she was upset because I was showing favoritism toward some of the other workers.

She pointed out some of my behaviors and it was like a punch to the gut.

It was very difficult to admit that some of my actions were hurting other people.

And I also had to reflect on how I felt about my former boss. I began looking at her through a new lense.

I realized that her actions were not exactly what I thought. And I would have known that sooner if I had just talked to her personally.

If I would have swallowed my pride, and humbled myself, then a lot of hurt could have been prevented.

So now we've built up our temple, our community, with all of these "living stones"

And if we live according to this scripture, we will stand strong and united.

But the problem with this "temple" is that there is not a strong foundation.

Without Christ as the cornerstone, as the solid foundation of our lives, it begins to crumble.

Every instance of gossip,
or bitterness,
or pride,

or selfishness
begins to erode the bonds of love and loyalty.

And then it falls apart.

Let's go back to Peter to see how we can ensure can stay united in Christ.

***I Peter 3:10-12**

¹⁰ For the Scriptures say,
"If you want to enjoy life
and see many happy days,
keep your tongue from speaking evil
and your lips from telling lies.

¹¹ Turn away from evil and do good.
Search for peace, and work to maintain it.

¹² The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right,
and his ears are open to their prayers.
But the Lord turns his face
against those who do evil."^[b]

There is one line that I want us to focus on.

***Search for peace and work to maintain it.**

Too often we see peace as merely the absence of conflict, and we think of peacemaking as a **passive** role.

But an effective peacemaker **actively** pursues peace by building good relationships.

A peacemaker anticipates problems and deals with them before they occur.

When conflicts arise, they are brought into the open and dealt with before they grow unmanageable.

Making peace takes hard work.

And the hardest work is dealing with conflict.

Here are **some** of the types of unhealthy conflict that we've probably all experienced at one point or another.

***Unhealthy Conflict**

- Yelling / Screaming
- Physical Violence
- Avoidance / Ignoring
- Gossiping
- Passive Aggressiveness

All of these types of conflict cause harm to others and harm to yourself.

They are the opposite of peacemaking.

It is imperative that we, as Christians, address conflict in a healthy way.

So what's healthy conflict?

***Healthy Conflict**

- Pray first
- Matthew 6:33
- ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God^[a] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.
 - o Start by talking with God
 - o
 - o Honestly process your hurt and frustration
 - o
 - o And humbly confess your own areas of fault.
- Be direct
- Matthew 18:15-17
- ¹⁵ "If another believer^[d] sins against you,^[e] go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. ¹⁶ But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.
 - o Go directly to the person with whom we have the conflict.
 - o
 - o Don't gossip, avoid the issue, or act in passive-aggressive ways.
 - o
 - o Find a good time and deal with the issue.
 - o
- Be constructive
- Ephesians 4:29

- ²⁹ Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.
 - Don't tear people down or unload on them.
 -
 - Cover one issue at a time and speak kindly, clearly, and constructively.

When we deal with conflict in a healthy way, whether we are the initiator or the receiver, we are living as God has called us to,

We are building each other up and encouraging one another as Living Stones in God's Temple,

We are strengthened by our bonds of love and the foundation of Jesus Christ as our cornerstone.

I want to show you one more example of a temple.

Show Lego building

This temple is made up of "bricks" of different sizes, shapes, and colors.

But they are all working together for one purpose,

held up by a firm foundation,

and therefore holding strong.

PRAY

For anyone that needs to address conflict
To be Living Stones in God's Temple

Benediction:

Matthew 5:9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.