**SERIES: ONE CHURCH**

**Message: # 1 Sermon Title: One People**

**Text: 1 Peter 2:4-10**

**Topic: Influence**

**BIG IDEA:**

God has left His people on earth to be built up into a living picture of Christ—all built on the foundation, Christ.

1. God’s Making You Into Something AMAZING
2. Jesus Is the Secret Ingredient
3. The Way You Live, CAN Change the World

NEEDED SUPPLIES FOR PROP: 1 Rock, Bricks, Permanent Marker

You wanna know what the hardest thing to do is…? Get someone else to change. I mean, we look around, we see all the people going about their lives, and we EASILY see what all there problems actually are! We’re like… if you would only do this!!!! It’s so simple!!!

You ever tried to tell someone what their problem is…? It usually starts like this… I know what your problem is… usually ends pretty well… right? “Thank you for telling me!” —said no one ever

How many of you see the world around you and wish it was different? You read through the news and you see things that just don’t make sense!!! Why would someone do this? Why would this even happen? Why is this even a thing?! And in the same way… we so easily see what the problem is… but we don’t know how to do anything to change it.

And that’s where we’re stuck.

We wish things would be different, but nothing ever changes. It looks like I’m not going to be able to do anything... So I need to do the only thing that makes sense. Worry about me. Make sure I get mine. Make sure I focus on where I’m at. Sure… everything around me is terrifying and broken and a huge mess. But as long as I focus on where I’m at right now, then I’ll be fine.

BUT…What if I told you there was something you could do… something that would change things… something that would make a difference…

This morning we’re continuing our series: ONE CHURCH

Take a look at this News Headline from a little while back…

* [N.Y. judge barred from bench for posting noose image with 'Make America Great Again' caption] <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/n-y-judge-barred-bench-posting-noose-image-make-america-n1055736>
* Here’s the thing… this judge was newly elected. Only been on the bench for a month. And the judge is actually a registered democrat who has spoken out against Trump’s policies—so he wasn’t taking a stand with the “make america great again” slogan.
* He’s in office a month… and he posts this on his social media… and then everything goes crazy. He gets thrown off as a judge and he is banned from ever serving as a judge ever again!!!
* And throughout the whole thing… he doesn’t understand what was wrong with him posting this photo…? He says, that this was just a way for him to show that he agrees with having the death penalty
* What’s the problem with this photo?? [SHOW PHOTO] What does this noose represent to most of the world…? Racism. Hate.
* So why wasn’t the judge just given a slap on the wrist and told… hey… alright… I know you didn’t know that you were posting something super racist and hurtful… let’s just make sure you don’t do it again now…
* Why is he getting fired and why he’s not allowed back as a judge ever…?

Because regardless of wether he meant it or not… this judge has influence.

And I believe the perspective that we have to see is… we have influence. Some read this article and our outraged that this judge is still alive. How could he post something so racist and still be breathing! And others read this article and are wondering why he was so harshly punished! He just made a mistake!

And I don’t want to focus on making a judgment about either… but whatever position you would potentially take on this article… you have to agree that the judge has influence. He sits in a position where others look up to him and he helps shape what justice is.

In the same way every single person in this room is an influencer. You have influence on your kids. Your brothers and sisters. Your friends. Your co-workers. Your neighbors.

You have the potential to effect their lives for good or for bad.

And I believe that our talk this morning is sooo important as you have to understand: **The Way You Live Matters**

Today we’re looking at a part of the Bible called 1 Peter. The Bible is a collection of 66 different books, letters, and writings. 1 Peter is a letter written from one of the early leaders of the Church—named Peter—to the Church 2,000 years ago. This is a church that’s been scattered. This is a church that has been suffering. This is a Church that is in the middle of some intense persecution. People were getting killed for being Christians.

And so Peter is writing this letter to a group of people that are feeling that pressure. That pain. That anxiety.

So as we go through this series, we’ve been seeing how appropriate these same things are for today. How they apply to today.

So please feel free to follow along if you’re able. If you need a free Bible please raise your hand. Or feel free to pull out your tech and flip open the Bible app (yes, it’s a thing!). Follow along with me and make sure I’m not making any of this up.

Peter starts this letter with a whole introduction where he talks about who these people’s REAL identity actually is! How in the midst of trials and horrors, we are actually part of a new family. The family of God. And that changes things! God has given us a new identity.

And Peter continues to talk about what it means to be a part of this new family. He talked about this hard topic—holiness. What does it mean to exist in this world and look a little different. To function different. To live different.

And that’s where we come up to today… Right after this command to be holy. To be different. To draw closer to God.

And this is what it says in V4…

* **As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—**

Who is Him?? As you come to Him??

Right! JESUS! It’s coming out of the context of coming to the One who brings salvation.

So why doesn’t Peter just say Jesus!? What does he use…? THE LIVING STONE! Why does he say that?

Let me tell you why… you know what we preachers like to do more then anything…? Use props!!! And that’s what Peter is doing right here. He’s starting to use a prop. I mean, here’s a guy after my own heart!

He’s like… come to the living stone!! [HOLD UP STONE]

Here’s the cool thing. I’ve been to Israel and I’ve actually seen Peter’s home with my own eyes. I’m not making this up. In Israel—they’ve unearthed what they are almost 100% sure is Peter’s home. And they’ve built this huge glass ceiling over it so you can see it without messing with anything.

So imagine with me… that this is where Peter’s sitting and writing this letter… I imagine Peter is sitting in his home. And he’s writing this letter to all these Churches scattered throughout the world and he’s trying to think of an example that everyone will understand. Something that will make sense…

And he’s zoning out in thought… staring at the wall… And then he looks more closely and he sees the walls! And he sees the stones all interlaced… holding each other up. And he’s like… aaaaaa stone!! LOOK AT THIS!

This is exactly like Jesus… This stone is Jesus… EXCEPT… IT’S ALIVE!!! A living stone!!!

And all ya’ll are comin’ to this stone—a stone that doesn’t look that great… I mean, it was rejected by everyone… I mean… people literally killed Jesus. BUT GOD chose Him and He is precious to Him! And NOW you’re coming to this LIVING STONE…

and…

* **5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood,**

So Peter’s caught up in this example… and he’s like… and you ALSO are stones… that arrrre alive! And you’re being built into a house!!! I mean!

I mean… c’mon!!! This is like the first sermon prop ever given!!! And so I’m sure Peter’s like… wooooh! Lord… what a great idea!!!

And he’s catching steam with this verse.. You know why you all are being built into a house…? To be a royal priesthood!!!

Now I know that doesn’t sound that great to us… BUT Peter is declaring your identity again… you’re a part of God’s family. And that makes you royalty.

But you’re not just a royal living stone… You’re a priest… And a priest is someone who connects people with God. Peter is saying… you’re coming to this stone… and you’re being built onto it to make a house… and this house is something that will help others connect with God because you are priests… and you are

* **offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

Peter’s like, you know how the early Jewish people did all these sacrifices to make up for their sins—like literally they would sacrifice animals in place of themselves—NOW YOU are able to make spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to him…

* + Things like living your life differently.
  + Helping others re-connect with God.
  + Helping make a difference in this world…

Alright… so this is a really cool sermon example Peter… using the rocks and all… but what does this have to do with influence…

Here’s the thing… Peter’s starting from the ground up. He’s starting with this because it’s something we need to know before we can influence anyone else… He’s telling us what we need to know about ourselves in order to RECLAIM our influence. To actually be an influence for good. To live in a way that makes a difference…

And what Peter’s saying here is…

1. **God’s Making You Into Something AMAZING**

Now doesn’t that sound like a great point?! If you’ve ever thought I wasn’t the most encouraging preacher… Here’s something that we would ALL like to hear, can I get an amen?! God is making me into something amazing..! Tell the person next to you… GOD IS MAKING YOU INTO SOMETHING AMAZING!

I mean, that’s a feel good line if I’ve ever heard one… that’s something we can go around and put on our mirror. Or our door. Have the cute little plaque hanging in the kitchen… God’s making me into something AMAZING!!

BUT… before you all rush out to make this sign and hang it up… there’s something that you’re missing about this point…

See… I’m afraid that you all just read THIS… but what your brain PROCESSED is: God’s MADE me into something amazing. Like I’m already there!!! I’ve got it.. Looking for amazing…? Look no further… I am the perfect example of this!!?!

Hahaha… oh I know… I’m just the same… BUT WHAT does Peter say about this whole rock temple that you’re a part of…? He says you **ARE BEING BUILT** into something amazing. (look back if you don’t believe me)

Because let’s be honest… you look around and you’re gonna say… nahhh… doesn’t look that amazing to me Pastor G…!? At least everyone else… I mean… if everyone could just look like my rock… Hahaha

So let’s modernize this example of Peter’s for a second… if Peter’s looking at the walls that are made out of rocks… and we’re in Chicago… and I’m staring at the walls… what do I see…? BRICKS!

So take this pile of bricks here… Imagine I had this just sitting up here when you came in this morning… and I’m like… will you look at that?!?! ISN’T that BEAUTIFUL!!! And you all are like… ummm… it’s a pile of bricks…

And I’m like no no no no!! You got it all wrong… this one’s Jesus… and this one’s you… and this one’s you…

And that’s when everyone turns around and walks out the door right… this guys craaaazyy..

But how we see this pile of bricks is how we see ourselves…

This is how we see our potential. Our influence. When we look at the things happening around us…

* + The broken political system we live in…
  + The constant racism that pops up all over the place…
  + The suffering that happens to innocent people…

What do we say… this is horrible… BUT there’s nothing that I can do about it… I’m just this little pile of bricks…

AND God’s like… NO NO NO NO! You don’t see the full picture… you don’t see what I’m building with this little pile of bricks… there’s a huge house that’s being built… and this house is going to change the world!!! This is gonna be a place where people actually reconnect with God (ME) and you’re going to be a part of that!!!! And when people reconnect with me…

* + We start to see changes happen in this world.
  + People aren’t treated worse because of their race…
  + People who are addicted find freedom…
  + Marriages get restored…
  + Kids grow up in families that love and care for them…

Get this… on our own… nothing. Nothing can happen. No changes. [HOLD UP SINGLE BRICK]

But what does God say that He’s doing…? I’m building you into a living house. Not a building where people can meet on Sundays—A LIVING HOUSE. Made up of people that have been changed by me—that’s the Church by the way!

And that’s what God’s doing! He’s building all of us into a living house. A house that is guided and directed by God. And we’re not called to know where and how all of this will all work… How this building is going to look… BUT WE ARE CALLED to be a part of it…!

Peter keeps going…

* **6 For in Scripture** [He’s talking about the first half of the Bible that had already been written at this time] **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.”  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 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.**

So Peter gets done with talking about this house and what does he do?!

He keeps talking about the house…! Hahaha.. he’s just like me… Drags a sermon example way too far…

He’s like.. take this brick here… look how great it is… You wanna know why?!! BECAUSE: THIS ONE’S JESUS!!! [WRITE JESUS ON IT]

And God put this stone down first and this is the CORNERSTONE!! If you’re ever around the Church much you hear this term. I mean this is even a song that we sing… well here’s where it comes from!!

What does being a cornerstone mean?!

* cornerstone is a stone set at the corner of a building, joining two exterior walls, and often inscribed with the starting and completion dates of construction, the name of the architect and owner, and other details.

A cornerstone is the stone by which you align all other stones! Like when you’re about to start building a building… you gotta put down one first. And that one helps keep all the rest in line. So the CORNERSTONE is SO important in the ability to build a good building.

And I love how the definition says that this also carries the inscription of when this all happened. Not only does this have physical purpose by aligning everything to it… but also this stone carries the weight of the movement. When something was started and where it is going. Who built it and why… [WRITE A CROSS ON THE BRICK]

Here’s why Peter is going into all these details about the Cornerstone. Because he just got done telling us all how a house was in the process of being built… but he ALSO wants us to know that this house is ALIGNED (everyone say aligned). This house is aligned to something important… something that the original builders rejected. I mean… all the religious people of the day.. the people who wore the title “priest” (someone who is supposed to bring us to God)… they ALL rejected this stone… they looked at it… and they’re like NAH… not a great cornerstone.. WE CHOOSE SOMETHING ELSE!!

And that’s what happened… and Peter’s like… even now… they’re tripping over it… They can’t get around it… it’s like that annoying hole in the road that you always seem to hit… it grinds at them… pulls at them…

And what Peter is saying is… when you want to reclaim your influence… when you want to actually make a difference in the world.. you start by knowing that God is building you into something amazing… BUT SECONDLY: you have to know the secret ingredient…

1. **Jesus Is the Secret Ingredient**

I mean, everyone’s got someone with that secret ingredient thing right?! Like.. grandma… how do you make that SOOOOO good?!?! Maybe one day I’ll reveal my SECRET INGREDIENT. And then all those years later… you find out that it’s sugar… LOTS OF SUGAR… Hahaha… that’s what makes everything taste so good! I mean.. you open Grandma’s pantry and all the walls are full of bags of sugar…

Well if you want to have an influence on this world… you have to know the secret ingredient… and it’s not Sugar. It’s not coffee either, though sometimes that’s definitely my secret ingredient…

* God, I’m so tirrrreed… help me to wake up and get this work done… GLUG GLUG GLUG! Ohhhh now I feel God moving in me… Thank you for answering my PRAYERS!!!

You see… so many of us try to make a difference in our own strength… Our own methods. We try to influence on our own.

God I’m gonna change this whole world!!!!! And I’m gonna build my own house all the way over here… without this brick… [MAKE HOUSE ALL CROOKED AND MESSED UP].. I don’t need no cornerstone…

And at first it looks really good… man! I should’ve done this a long time ago!! But as time goes on… you notice that the walls are a little crooked… oh wait… there a whole lot crooked…

* + You thought you had a great idea and your business was going so well… but now all the relationships are deteriorating… I mean.. honestly you all hate each other. There’s no way this business is ever going to work… (that was my life)
  + You knew that you could make a difference but now your personal life is falling apart… you have a secret addiction that you’re not fessing up to… and it’s causing parts of the house to fall..
  + I think of the organization INVISIBLE CHILDREN. I actually heard about these guys back in 2010 when they did a presentation at a ministry I was a part of. They were fighting some of the horrific crimes that were happening in Africa where children are turned into soldiers or sex slaves. And in 2012 a video they made went viral. Anyone remember that video. About the warlord Kony? I was like.. this is awesome…! Now they’ll get the funding and support to make a difference. Well… as they got so big… people started to pry into their organization and started realizing that this organization wasn’t doing everything they said they were. Sure… it was doing some good.. but a lot of the funds were being re-directed to other things. And the criticism got so bad… that the director had a mental breakdown and ended up walking around San Diego naked and screaming!
    - Now can I say that the organization was or wasn’t built on Jesus with 100% surety? I cannot. I can only say what I see. But as I heard about this story… I wondered what happened?? Did they have the special ingredient? Was Jesus the cornerstone?

You see… we can do all kinds of stuff in this world that looks good at first… BUT IF IT DOESN’T HAVE THE SECRET INGREDIENT.

IF JESUS ISN’T THE CORNERSTONE! It’s gonna fall apart!!!!

So Peter says you are being built into this amazing thing where Jesus is the special ingredient that makes everything work… and then he finished by talking about us…

* **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.**

God’s like… you all got something special. Don’t you love it if someone says you’re special.

* + You’re like, why do I get this?! Well… Galen… you’re just special… [crazy face]

God’s like… You’re special. You have a calling on your life.

* + You used to be going after all the crazy evil stuff in this world BUT NOW you give all praise to God
  + You used to live in the darkness, hiding all your messed up gritty stuff… BUT NOW you bring it all into the light!!! You share all your stuff…
  + You used to feel lonely and alone BUT NOW you are my child. MY people.
  + You used to be separated from me BUT NOW you have received my mercy and grace!!!

I mean… this is the kind of special that we all want to receive… We’ll take the label… c’mon God!!! Bring it on!!!

And Peter’s like… but know this!!! When you live this way… when you come out of the darkness. When you start putting Jesus into the recipe as the special ingredient. People aren’t going to understand. People are going to be annoyed. Actually… I’m writing to you all that are already going through all this…

People are gonna think you’re weird. They’re going to accuse of everything they can to deface you. They’re gonna put up every excuse in the book to make it seem like it’s you but not them…

AND LOOK WHAT PETER SAYS…

* **11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.** 
  + Don’t give in to the temptations to just change. To disconnect from what God’s doing. To blend in…
* **12 Live such good lives among the pagans** [another word for people who are not Christians] **that, though they accuse you of doing wrong,** [though the non-christians accuse you doing wrong] **they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

Here’s where Peter drives it home for reclaiming your influence…

1. **The Way You Live, CAN Change the World**

You see.. when God’s building you into this building… it’s gonna looks weird to some people. In fact some people are just gonna get angry and hostile about it… that’s not how you build a house!!

* + That’s not how you raise your kids
  + That’s not how you should spend your time
  + That’s not what you should do about your life

But guess what they can’t argue with… the results…

[ATHEIST VS PASTOR STORY]

* Charles Bradlaugh was an outstanding atheist in England. Down in one of the slums of London was a minister by the name of Hugh Price Hughes. All London was aware of miracles of grace accomplished at his mission.  Charles Bradlaugh challenged Mr. Hughes to debate with him the validity of the claims of Christianity. London was greatly interested. What would Mr. Hughes do? He immediately accepted the challenge and in doing so added one of his own.  Hughes said, “I propose to you that we each bring some concrete evidences of the validity of our beliefs in the form of men and women who have been redeemed from the lives of sin and shame by the influence of our teaching. I will bring 100 such men and women, and I challenge you to do the same.  “If you cannot bring 100, Mr. Bradlaugh, to match my 100, I will be satisfied if you will bring 50 men and women who will stand and testify that they have been lifted up from lives of shame by the influence of your teachings. If you cannot bring 50, then bring 20 people who will say, as my 100 will, that they have a great joy in a life of self-respect as a result of your atheistic teachings. If you cannot bring 20, I will be satisfied if you bring 10.  “Nay, Mr. Bradlaugh, I challenge you to bring one, just one man or woman who will make such a testimony regarding the uplifting of your atheistic teachings.”  Again London was stirred. What would Mr. Bradlaugh do? In answer, Charles Bradlaugh, with great discomfiture and chagrin, publicly withdrew his challenge for the debate.

Here’s the reality. God has called us to live a certain way in this world. And yes… sometimes it looks crazy. Sometimes it doesn’t make sense. Sometimes it makes people angry with us. Sometimes we get confused, anxious, and doubt.

But when we fall in line with God’s direction for our lives… it starts to bring God’s kingdom to this earth. And that influences the people around you. They may not admit it up front. They may hate it. But who knows what God is doing in and through you to influence the world for Him. Just because we can’t see the end result doesn’t mean that it’s not happening…

I want you to know that you are an influencer…

* your kids
* your coworkers
* your friends
* your neighbors

You have an influence over their lives. And the way you live will effect them.

And I want you to know that GOD wants to use you to be an influence for good in their lives.

* What does it mean for you to allow Jesus into your life? (non-christian)
* What does it mean to submit to the influence of God and allow Him to pour through you?