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The Mission
October 21, 2026

1 Peter 2:4-10 I Will Build My Church

So take your Bibles tonight and turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 2. We've been walking through this letter together, and tonight we're going to be looking at verses 4 through 10.

Now, as we go through these verses you're going to notice something. Peter's not just going to tell us what the church ought to **do**. He's going to tell us what the church is, and also who the church belongs to it, and then finally why the Lord Jesus put us all together in the first place.

And there's a difference in those things. There's a difference in what the church ought to do and what the church is; and who it belongs to and why we are all part of this church family.

And the truth is, if we're not careful, we can stay really busy doing quote "church things" and still forget why Jesus established His church and why we're to be a part of it.

And so look at 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 4.

1 Peter 2:4, Coming to Him (that's Jesus) as to 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 were appointed.

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.

I remember hearing somebody say one time that everybody needs three things in life: something to believe in, somebody to love and be loved by, and something worthwhile to do.

Now, think about that for a moment. We all want something that will stand when everything else gives way. In other words, we all need relationships. We all need people who really know us and care about us.

And we all want to know that our lives count for something beyond ourselves. And so Peter in these verses we just read, is going to show us how Jesus can meet everyone of those needs if we'll just let Him.

And we're going to see that we not only have a Savior that we can trust for our salvation; but we also have a family that we belong to, which is the church, and we also have a calling to fulfill within the framework of the church.

Now, that said, there are all kinds of worthwhile organizations and ministries around the world that do good things for the society. And thank God for people who have a heart to feed the homeless, and people who have a heart to help the poor, and people who have a heart to minister to people struggling with addictions, and people who have a heart to minister to women and children who have been trafficked, and I could go on and on naming ministries that come alongside the local church to address a specific social problem and or spiritual need.

And as a church we support and even participate in ministries that come alongside the church to meet the needs of people in our community and around the world. And so we believe in that type of work here at The Mission and we participate on different levels.

But as we come to this scripture tonight, Peter is going to remind us, that we need to be very careful to keep the main thing the main thing. In other words, we need to keep things in their proper place and make sure our priorities line up with the word of God.

Now, before we get into our lesson, let me ask you a question.

What is the purpose of the church? And when I say church, I'm talking about the local church. Most everything mentioned in the Gospels and in letters written by the Apostles to the churches have to do with the local church; the local church being a local assembly of born again believers, just like our local church here at The Mission.

Now, there are some scriptures that talk about the universal church but for the most part when the term church is used in the New Testament, it refers to the local church.

Acts 2:42 is one verse that describes the local church. And here in this verse we see four purposes of the church.

Acts 2:42, says **And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

So the church's first order of business is to teach; to teach biblical doctrine so that believers can be grounded in their faith.

Ephesians 4:14 tells us, **"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."**

The church we see is also to be a place of fellowship; a place where Christians can be devoted to one another and honor one another. That's in Romans 12:10. It's also a place where we instruct one another. That's Romans 15:14.

It's a place where we are to be kind and compassionate to one another.

That's in **Ephesians 4:32**, **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

It should be a place where we encourage one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11, **Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**

And then most importantly, it's a place where we are to love one another.

1 John 3:11, **For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,**

Another purpose of the church according to Acts 2:42 is prayer. The church is to be a place that promotes prayer, and teaches prayer, and practices prayer.

And then of course we have the great commission, which was given to the the disciples and eventually to the church by Jesus just before He ascended in to heaven.

That's in Matthew 28;19, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen

Acts 1:8, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

And so the church is called to be faithful in sharing the gospel and teaching the word and in baptizing those who believe. In other words, the church is to be a “lighthouse” in the community, by pointing people toward Christ.

Other purposes of the church are given in places like James 1:27:

James 1:27, Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

In other words, the church is to be about the business of ministering to those in need. This includes not only sharing the gospel, but also providing for their physical needs such as food, and clothing, and shelter as necessary and appropriate.

The church is also to equip believers in Christ with the tools they need to overcome sin, and to remain free from the pollution of the world. This is

done by biblical teaching and Christian fellowship. We do that here through Sunday School and Bible studies of which we have many.

Bottom line is the church is God's hands, and mouth, and feet in this world. And as the body of Christ, we're to be doing the same things that Jesus would be doing if He were physically here.

And so it is the local church that Jesus works through to accomplish His purpose in the life of believers and to draw others to Christ.

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18, He said, "I will build My church."** He didn't say He would build a certain denomination. He didn't say He would build an organization to feed the homeless, or a hospital to meet the physical needs of people, or the Habitat for Humanity organization to provide housing for the poor, or a food stamp program to feed the poor.

No, He said I will build My church.

Now, again these are all good ministries, and they do good things and people may even come to know the Lord through work that is done through organizations outside of the authority of the church, but Jesus chose the church to work through and to be His hands and His feet and His mouth.

Now, that said, we have an addiction ministry that is an extension of this church and falls under the authority of this church, but it's not a ministry that stands alone outside of this church or in any way takes the place of what this church does.

Now, it's a fact that my burden for people struggling with addiction was one of the primary motivators in the planting of this church, but in that process, I quickly realized that a recovery ministry could not and should not stand alone.

And I believed that the answer to an addict's problem was really Jesus, then I also had to know that the church had to be at the center of that

answer. Because Jesus not only died for lost sinners, but He also gave His life for the church so that after lost sinners are saved, they can learn how to actually follow Christ and become witnesses for Christ.

Ephesians 5:25, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Acts 20:28 says this, Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.

So the question one of the questions I believe we should always ask with respect to a ministry we become involved with that falls outside the authority of the church is; Does this ministry or this organization strengthen our local church or does it threaten to weaken our local church by taking away precious resources?

And when I say precious resources, I'm not talking about financial resources, though that could be an issue as well. I'm talking more specifically about taking away gifted people that would normally be used within the body of the church. In other words, having their time and attention, and attendance drawn away to the extent that it negatively affects the operation of the church.

Now, I think we we would all agree that when a person is saved, the Bible teaches that God places that person within the watchcare of a local

assembly of believers, and at the same time, He gifts that person with a supernatural gift to use in conjunction with others in that church body.

Now, that gift may be to teach or lead or encourage or help or any number of other gifts or combination of gifts. But whatever gift he is given it is needed in that particular body. And when it's absent, the body doesn't function properly.

Our gifts are to be used to strengthen each other, and the church as a whole, and when we don't fulfill our calling, then the whole church suffers.

Hebrews 10:25, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

So how should we prioritize our time and our attention and our financial resources when it comes to our responsibilities in the local church?

As leaders in the church, what kind of example are we expected to set for other Christians to follow?

Should our number one priority be our calling to the local church, or to some para ministry outside the church?

Well, before we attempt to answer those questions, turn with me if you would to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And let's read together what the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 12:14, For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye,

where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Now, what’s Paul saying?

Well, in the chapter before he brings up the problem of division in this church at Corinth. They weren’t getting along very well to put it mildly. There was all kinds of trouble and strife going on in that church.

And so here he’s trying to get them to see how dependent they are on each other. And to understand that if things are going to work like they should, then everybody’s going to have to do their part. Because altogether they make up one body. And if one doesn’t perform properly, or if one is missing altogether, then the entire body suffers.

Now, I think sometimes we forget that. And we think well I'm just one person or we're just one family. They'll never miss me or they'll get along fine without me. But friend that's not true. We're a family made up of a lot of different parts and if one family member is missing, or one part is missing, or not functioning properly, then the rest of the family suffers.

Now, I don't know how to stress that enough. I don't think some people realize the influence or the impact that they have on the whole. And when several people at one time have that same mindset, then the problem is just magnified.

You say but nobody misses me when I'm not at church. I do. Your presence, and or your absence has an impact on me. And whether you realize it or not, it has an impact on others as well. And even if it had no impact whatsoever on me or anybody else, Paul says this. I read it a few minutes ago

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor;

It doesn't matter if you're an elder or a deacon or a teacher or a greeter or the yard man, you're important to this church. Nobody serves the Lord on an island. We're all one part of the body of Christ, which for us, is this local assembly of believers we call The Mission. This is where we worship together. This is where we grow together. This is where we serve together. This is where we care for one another and pray for one another. And so we're all connected to each other, because this is where God has called us.

And so we're dependent upon each other. But more importantly we're all dependent on the Lord Jesus.

Now, Peter here in chapter 2 is using a word picture if you will that everybody in his day would have understood. It's a picture of stones being laid to build a building. And from that picture I want to show you three truths very quickly tonight. If you're a note taker I'll go ahead and give all three to you.

Number one is the cornerstone of the church. Number two is the construction of the church. And number three is the character of the church.

So look first at the cornerstone of the church in verse 4. Peter says we come to Jesus **“as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.”**

Then in verse 6 he calls Him the **“chief cornerstone.”**

And so the first thing Peter wants us to understand is that the church begins with Jesus. Not a pastor. Not a program. Not a building. Not even a congregation of good people. It begins with Jesus.

And if we're going to be a healthy and growing and thriving church then we've got to be aligned with Jesus. We've got to depend on Jesus to build the church.

1 Corinthians 3:11 says no one can lay any other foundation than Jesus Christ.

Now, verse 4 says He was rejected by men. Verse 7 repeats it and says that even the builders rejected the very stone that God had made the Cornerstone.

And truth is, a lot of people today including a lot of churches have rejected Christ as their cornerstone. The religious leaders back in Jesus day

were supposedly looking for the Messiah, but even when He stood in front of them, they didn't recognize Him. They were looking for a Savior who would fit **their** expectations. And when Jesus exposed their sin and called them to repentance, they rejected Him.

And many today do the same thing. They admire Jesus as a teacher, and they sing songs about Him, and many even know a great deal about the Bible, but when they're confronted with their sin, they reject Him. When they realize that they can't make Jesus into what they want Him to be, they turn and they walk away, because they love their sin more than they love God.

That's why Peter in verse 8 calls Jesus "**a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.**"

Jesus can be one of two kinds of stones for people. He can be a stepping stone to your salvation; or He can be a stumbling stone to trip you up. And the difference is not in Jesus; the difference is in how you react to Jesus.

And then finally verse 6 calls Him the chief cornerstone.

In ancient times the line and the level and the direction of the walls for a building would be established by a cornerstone. And if that cornerstone was laid wrong, then everything that followed would also be wrong. And the longer the wall and the taller the wall, the bigger that problem would be.

I did a little research and if you were building a block wall say 200 feet long using 8 x 8 x 16 inch blocks; if when you laid that first course of block you accidentally got the leading end of that corner block a 1/4' high; and then you laid every other block level to that block; by the time you reached that next corner; you'd be over 6 feet higher on that far end. Your building when you got through would look like leaning tower of Pisa.

And so even a small mistake starting out can be disastrous by the time you get to the other end.

Well, that's what happens when a church tries to measure itself by anything other than Jesus. The proper measure of a church is not how many people come through the doors on a given Sunday, or its finances, or its reputation, or how many programs it has.

A church is measured by one thing and one thing only. How are we aligned with Jesus? Is God's Word directing what we believe? Are His commands shaping what we do? Are we making disciples, or are we just making everybody busy?

Listen, a full calendar is not the same thing as a faithful church.

And the same holds true of an individual life. You can build a successful career, and raise a family, and be respected in the community. And those can all be good things. But if Christ is not the foundation, then you've built the most important part of your life on something that cannot possibly save you.

That's was the truth that Jesus was trying to get across when He gave gave us the parable of the wise man and foolish man in Matthew 7. Both men built houses; both men faced storms. The difference was in their foundation.

And then look at the promise at the end of verse 6: Peter says, **whoever believes on Him "will by no means be put to shame."**

Now that does not mean that as a Christian we'll never be embarrassment or never experience disappointment. It means that nobody who puts his hope in Christ, will discover at the end that Christ has failed him. There are a lot of things that if we trust in them we'll probably be

disappointed. Our health may fail. Our strength may fail. Sometimes even our friends will fail us. But Jesus will never fail us.

So that's the cornerstone of the church.

Second is the construction of the church.

Look at verse 5.

He says, **“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house.”**

He says, Jesus is the cornerstone, but those of us who belong to Him are living stones. In other words, He not only saves individuals; He joins us together to make us into something greater than ourselves. We're not just a group of people who happen to show up in the same room on Sunday.

We're built together. We're being built into a spiritual house. We're not one brick laying out in the yard by itself. No we're a brick that's been properly place alongside other bricks, and together we make a wall.

None of us alone could be what all of us together have become or are becoming. And when one brick is missing the wall is weakened. When several bricks are missing, it's really weak. And when enough bricks are missing, the wall will fails and it will fall.

Now, I realize there are some believers whose health or circumstances keep them from attending the way they would like to attend. And so I'm not talking about the person who can't come. I'm talking about the person who can come, but has decided that church is optional.

And listen to me. Listening to a sermon online; and belonging to and being a part of a congregation; are not the same. You can hear a lot of good preaching on your phone or radio, and thank God for it. But your phone or radio can't kneel beside a grieving brother or a hurting brother and pray. A

phone can't teach a child, or encourage someone who is discouraged or carry a burden the way we're meant to in the local church.

Ephesians 2:21–22 says that as believers we're being fitted together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. We're fitted together. We're not all the same. Some stones are small, some are large, some are shapely, and some need shaping.

And it's in and through the church, that God is working to fit us all together. But we have to be present in order for that to happen. Amen?

Well, lastly is the character of the church.

Look at verse 9. He says we are **“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people.”**

And then in verse 10 he reminds us that we were not just any old people, we're God's people; we're people who had not obtained mercy before, but now we have obtained mercy.

Why? Because Jesus died for us. And because Jesus gave His life for us! He also gave His life for the church of which you and I are a part of. And because Jesus loves the church. We too should love the church. And coming to church and using our gifts to minister to each other and to support each other and to fellowship with each other, that should be the norm for a born again Christian; not the exception.

Amen