

Living Stones:

LEAD, CARE
AND SERVE
LIKE JESUS

12 Day YMCA Devotion Series

"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."

1Peter 2:4-5

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The *Living Stones* YMCA devotion series is brought to you by onPrinciple.

The mission of [onPrinciple](#) is to equip YMCA leaders to skillfully put Christian principles into practice in an inclusive manner that strengthens healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

We envision a movement of transformational leaders who embrace the heritage of the Y and strengthen Christian presence as they meet contemporary needs and enrich the lives of the members and communities they serve.

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LIVING STONES: LEAD, CARE AND SERVE LIKE JESUS

How can we be 'like Living Stones' used by God to strengthen the presence of Christ where we lead?

Recently, 24 YMCA leaders with the onPrinciple program visited 12 places throughout the Holy Land where Jesus taught about how to live and lead in God's kingdom.



Inaugural onPrinciple Cohort, Sea of Galilee, February 2020

From this experience comes 12 spiritual leadership principles – or Living Stones – (inspired by 1Peter 2:4-5) that Christ-followers can embody as we are being built up to lead, care and serve everyone, like Jesus.

For additional information about the onPrinciple program, contact Michael Bussey:

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Day 1: Living Stone of RESPECT

David Newman, Pastor of Antioch Church in Countryside YMCA in Lebanon Ohio

Day 2: Living Stone of CARING

Erin Reuland, Membership & Wellness Coordinator
YMCA Metro Tampa Florida

Day 3: Living Stone of RESPONSIBILITY

Jorge Perez, CEO & President
YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Ohio

Day 4: Living Stone of HONESTY

Michael Bussey, Board Chairman
Friends of the Jerusalem International YMCA

Day 5: Living Stone of FAITH

Bruce Jeffery, Vice President of Community Action
YMCA of Greater Cincinnati

Day 6: Living Stone of EMPOWERMENT

Tim Hallman, Director of Christian Emphasis
YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne Indiana

Day 7: Living Stone of SERVANTHOOD

Carlos Verastegui, Executive Director
YMCA of Greater San Antonio Texas

Day 8: Living Stone of FORGIVENESS

Melissa Logan, CEO & President
YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in North Carolina

Day 9: Living Stone of HOPE

Norris Lineweaver, Board Secretary
Friends of the Jerusalem International YMCA

Day 10: Living Stone of GRACE

Laura DeVries
Program Director, onPrinciple

Day 11: Living Stone of PEACE

Norris Lineweaver

Day 12: Living Stone of LOVE

Tim Hallman



<D1>

Living Stone of RESPECT

David Newman

Deep within the human heart is the strong desire to feel "Respected" and to give "Respect."

This word has become a core principle of the YMCA as we seek to build a culture where all can experience a sense of dignity and where "disrespect" is left at the door.

Perhaps, the greatest path to respect can be discovered within the foundational Bible verse of the YMCA.

Those familiar with the history of the YMCA will know that this verse is carved in stone logos, printed on camp t-shirts, and

painted on YMCA banners all over the world.

It is the prayer request of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Recently I was able to sit and pray in that garden where there is still an olive tree believed to have been planted around the time that Jesus was there.

Being in that garden, I reflected on the tender and tearful moment Jesus prayed for all of His future followers:

"That they may all be one."



Jesus prayed for unity, and it is within the soil of it that a harvest of Respect can grow.

Unity, however, is something that is often desired yet difficult to attain.

So how do we shape a culture where a diverse group of people experiences the type of unity that grows living stones of Respect?

Jesus' prayer reveals part of the answer - a deep connection with Him as the source of this unity.

A.W. Tozier illustrates this through the example of how to tune the instruments of an

orchestra. If each instrument tunes itself to one another, they will never be in tune.

However, when the conductor strikes one standard tuning fork, all the musicians will tune the instruments to that standard, and then all of the instruments will be in tune with each other.

If we learn to love, serve, and care, with Jesus as our standard, there will be a profound unity that occurs.

As we grow in our connection with Jesus, He becomes the source and the model of our unity, and out of this soil of unity can grow a mighty harvest of Respect!

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



John 17:21 "That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

Living Stone of CARING

Erin Reuland

We have all seen or experienced different kinds of caring love, whether it is the protective care of a parent, the patient care of a friend, or the passionate care of a significant other.

God's loving care for us shows up in these and many other ways. Furthermore, he calls us to show our love for him in return by caring for others.

This is what Jesus did when he called the disciple Peter to a breakfast of fish on the beach at the sea of Tiberius.

During a visit to the Holy Land, I stood on that same beautiful shoreline, and I can imagine Jesus kneeling on that sand next to the fire he started, questioning Peter.

Jesus asks three times, "Do you love me?" and each time, Peter responds, "Of course."

Jesus is asking if Peter loves him using a very specific word: *agape*.

**In other words, "Do you love me unconditionally?"
Do you care for me as I care for you?"**



Imagine caring for someone enough to forgive them after they pretended not to know you while being condemned to death.

And not only do you forgive them (without them explicitly apologizing, I might add), but you entrust them with the most important thing in the whole world to you.

For Jesus, the eternal Good Shepherd, the most important thing to him is his flock. And he asks Peter to dedicate his life to caring for them; it won't be easy and will end up costing him his life in the end.

Just like Peter, Jesus wants us to sacrificially tend to his flock, like a shepherd does for his lambs. He wants to know how we love him.

The best way to show him is by caring for others, especially those who feel lost from the rest of the flock.

Caring for one another is easy when it's convenient. But *agape* looks different.

It requires us to reach beyond our comfort zone to

those who are different and disagree with us.

It means offering forgiveness, especially when it is difficult.

Caring is not always convenient; caring is not always comfortable.

It requires sacrifice and expects nothing in return; like living stones, it is not normal.

But we are not called to be normal or to care when it's convenient. We are called to lead, care and serve like Jesus.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



John 21:15 "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'"

<D3>

Living Stone of RESPONSIBILITY

Jorge Perez

On a trip to Bethlehem, we visited fields believed to be where angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds watching over their flocks.

What you need to know about shepherds is that they are a gritty bunch; hardworking, calloused hands, 24-7, never-say-die folks.

Their daily tasks of tending, herding, feeding, or guarding made them synonymous with the leadership principle of Responsibility.

As a five-year-old boy, I understood Responsibility

because I needed to take care of my three sisters while my mother worked to provide for our basic needs.

In my early teens, I became a wage earner, a mechanic, a plumber, a carpenter, an interpreter, and a surrogate parent; my familial duties left little room for school.

I remember feeling proud of my contributions, but also struggling with the accountability placed on my way-too-young shoulders.

For me, Responsibility was a set of duties and obligations that added to my burdens.



But this was not how Jesus described Responsibility; he counterbalanced duty and obligation with love and faithfulness.

This is highlighted in Jesus's story of a shepherd who searched for a lost sheep, leaving behind ninety-nine.

When he found the lost lamb, joy replaced drudgery: "Rejoice with me! I found my lost sheep." Leaders have a responsibility to shepherd individuals in their care. If leadership and service are only out of duty and obligation, the work will become a burden.

However, if love and faithfulness are incorporated, we can step into the rest-giving, weary-lifting sphere of cause-driven, living-stone of Responsibility.



Try these three ways to lead with cause-driven Responsibility, like the Good Shepherd:

Embrace duty and obligation. Without it, love and faithfulness are unproductive; a gritty commitment to excellence is not optional.

Align what you do (duty) with why you do it (love). As embodied by Jesus, the never-say-die shepherd, the combination of obligation and faithfulness refreshes our soul and those we serve.

Take time to rest. Responsible shepherds who work hard and love sacrificially need to be led by the Good Shepherd; he will give you rest.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:

*Psalm 23:1-3b "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.*

<D4>

Living Stone of HONESTY

Mike Bussey

Having lived and worked in Nazareth for two years as a YMCA World Service worker, I often worshiped in Jesus' home synagogue.

It's easy for me to reflect on what it must have been like in Nazareth when Jesus returned home following an extraordinary series of events in his life and new ministry.

Just months before, he had been baptized in the Jordan River, the heavens had opened, the Holy Spirit had descended on him, and he heard his Father's voice say,

'You are my Son, whom I love; with you, I am well pleased.'

He was then led by the Holy Spirit into the Judean Wilderness where he endured forty days of fasting, prayer, and temptations, and then on to Galilee to begin His public ministry.

News of his preaching and miracles spread throughout the region.

During all that was happening, Jesus must have looked forward to returning to his hometown to rest and for the opportunity to worship in His home synagogue.



As it turned out, the joy of returning to Nazareth soon turned into confrontation as his home community questioned His legitimacy as He boldly read from the book of Isaiah, authentically proclaiming, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Nazarenes had known Jesus for nearly 30 years, most recently as a carpenter, and couldn't understand what had changed since he'd left home just months before.

Was he being honest about his proclamation that the scripture had been fulfilled?

What had changed in Jesus' life?

He had been filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered by his Father

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



to honestly proclaim the kingdom of God, even if it meant creating discomfort among his friends and family.

As followers of Jesus, we have the same Holy Spirit dwelling in us, empowering us to spread the good news and to love and lead honestly and authentically like Jesus, even amidst opposition from those closest to us.

What kind of honesty is the Holy Spirit requiring of you as you seek to live and lead like Jesus in today's world?

Pray with me: *God, we thank you that you sent your same Holy Spirit to us so that we may fully and honestly be your people, authentic living stones wherever you call us to serve, like Jesus. Amen.*

Luke 4:16 'He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.'

<D5>

Living Stone of FAITH

Bruce Jeffery

When Jesus showed up that night to the disciples walking on the water while they were in the boat, what was going through his mind about testing their faith?

Jesus set an amazing example for his disciples, leading by faith through his believing that this Father in Heaven would protect him while walking on the water.

Jesus' leadership shows us that stretching your faith in God is a crucial test we must all endure on this journey.

I think one way our faith is often tested is when we

wrestle with turning over a situation or idea to God, and trusting that if it's his will, believing it's already done.

Not long ago I was in a boat on the sea of Galilee, and I couldn't help to have many real-life fears.

As a non-swimmer, I had the fear of, "Will the boat tip over?" "Will there be a storm like in the Bible to come while we are on the boat?"

Any number of thoughts came across my mind until I really sat and thought, "This is what the disciples felt.



As I remember being in that boat, it's powerful to imagine what it would have been like to see Jesus walk up towards the boat and call to one of his disciples to test his faith.

While we were on the boat in Galilee listening to this Gospel story being read, it hit me, "Keep my eyes on Christ and there is nothing to be afraid of."

Would I have been as courageous as Peter to step out of the boat?

The story tells us that as the storm got worse, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and immediately began to sink.

I believe all of our faith has and will be tested, whether you are a seasoned Christian or someone who has just committed themselves to Christ.

Will we courageously accept the testing of our faith?

Or, will we lose sight of what Christ is doing in us and for us?

Would you pray with me?

Dear God, forgive me for losing faith in you at times. I know that you are God and trust that what you're doing in my life is for me. Help me to keep my eyes focused on Jesus Christ through the storm and strengthen me to be a living stone as I seek you more and more every day. Amen.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



Mark 6:50 "Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

<D6>

Living Stone of EMPOWERMENT

Tim Hallman

Standing in Jericho near the base of the sycamore tree many believe Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus, I looked up into its gnarled leafy branches.

I used my imagination to envision the crowds surging through the area, of Jesus making his way along the street, of Zacchaeus hefting himself up into the tree, and of Jesus stopping to look up.

What was Zacchaeus thinking? Why did he want to see Jesus so intently? What was Jesus thinking? Why did he want to see Zacchaeus?

What did he see in him? What did he have in mind for the wealthy chief tax collector?

We know from his own words that Jesus saw in Zacchaeus a son of Abraham, a sheep of Israel that he had come to find, rescue, heal and save (see Ezekiel 34:16).

When Jesus the highly respected and righteous rabbi looks up to Zacchaeus the corrupt tax collector and invites himself to dinner, Jesus uses his power of holy presence to transform Zacchaeus' life.

Jesus helps us see how proximity empowers.



Despite the muttering and complaints of the crowd – as well deserving as they were – Jesus empowered Zacchaeus with the courage to withstand judgment one last time in order to receive a new calling, to become a living stone and not a burdensome one in the community.

There can be an isolating and enslaving power in the names and situations we find ourselves with – roles and reputations, expectations of the future based on the past, of our habits, fears, and desires.

Through sharing in a meal together, Jesus put his healing power near the sinner Zacchaeus, he put his holy power in him, that he might be set free to lead, care and serve as he does.

I'm sure Jesus smiled big when Zacchaeus pledged to make amends to his community through his financial generosity.

What an empowering and healing moment for his neighbors – getting their much-needed money back and sighing with relief at no more greed from their chief tax collector.

In whatever opportunities God calls you to, look up for ways to empower others, to be present to see in them what Jesus sees.

May the presence of Jesus draw close to your spirit, may his power in you compel generous compassion that brings healing to the wounded, strength to the weak, and God's salvation to the lost.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



Luke 19:5: When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

<D7>

Living Stone of SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Carlos Verastegui

Being a leader is often received with the pressure of having to deliver, perform or achieve.

Some embrace it as motivation -with each and every victory comes confidence, growth, and a reputation.

Look at Tom Brady, arguably the greatest quarterback of all time. He's played in 11 Super Bowls, earned 7 championship rings, and selected as MVP 6 times.

As captain of his team, he is respected by his peers leads by example. He's not afraid to ask anyone to do anything he wouldn't do himself; he is a servant leader.

As impressive as those athletic accolades are, there is someone who models what it means to be the greatest servant leader in every area of life: Christ Jesus.

When I was in Jerusalem recently our group was able to spend some time in what is thought to be the site of the Upper Room where Jesus



shared his last Passover meal with his disciples.

While there we took time to remember what he said and did, which included Jesus humbly performing the lowest of servants' task, washing the dirt off the feet of his disciples, covered only with a towel around his waist.

Jesus, King of the Jews, the Son of God, the powerful healer who fed thousands of people - he flipped the roles, showing them what servant leadership can look like, serving instead of commanding, showing humility instead of brandishing authority, empowering his disciples to go out and serve others as He did.

Have you ever been put in a position where you gave up the comforts of being the boss to jump in the fire to help that front-line worker with their duties?

Did you do it reluctantly, willingly, or freely because it was the right thing to do? Can you honestly say to yourself that you are not above that?

Jesus didn't; he took it as an opportunity to teach his disciples how to be a servant leader.

Please pray with me:

God, give us humility so that we may plant seeds in others by flipping the roles of leadership to model servanthood as living stones, just as Jesus did. Amen.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



John 13:12 "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I've done for you?'"

<D8>

Living Stone of FORGIVENESS

Melissa Logan

Have you ever felt judged? Have you ever been hurt? Have you ever hurt someone's feelings?

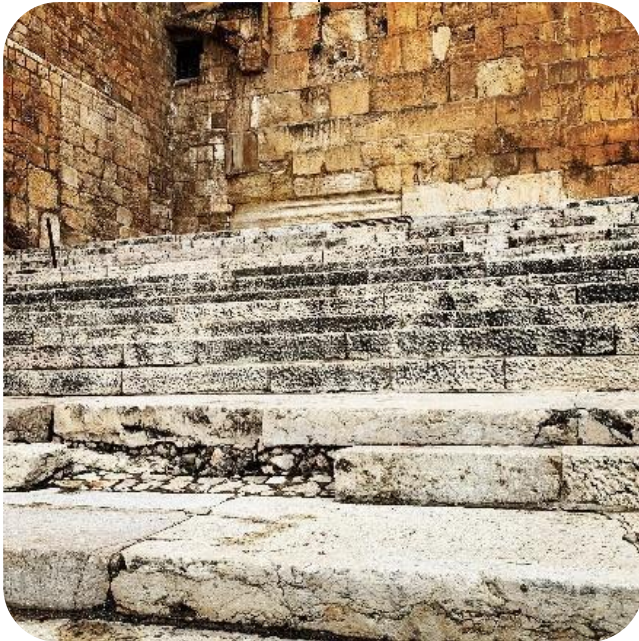
If you are like me, your answer is yes – judgment, shame, embarrassment, anger and hurt. The hurt replays in my head, and even worse, lays a heavy burden in my heart.

Unfortunately, I'm not without sin; my actions and words have wreaked the same havoc on someone else,

too. And yes, those replay and cause great regret.

We aren't always going to make the best choices or do the right thing. Thankfully, we have a great model to look to. We can look to the life of Jesus.

Recently I walked through the temple court area and sat on the steps leading up to the space where Jesus met a woman accused of sinning.



The scene replays in my mind of Jesus facing the scared woman there, writing on the ground with a non-judgmental attitude towards her.

Jesus makes it seem so simple; don't judge others – give grace.

Let's pause on the words of grace and forgiveness. We might think these just happen in our minds when we say, "I forgive you."

However, it's deeper than that. Grace and forgiveness are also heart issues.

Hurt, shame, sin - these happen in the heart, are costly, harmful, and so heavy.

I find that while I'm able to give grace to others, I'm not as generous with myself. I'm working on it.



How about you? What forgiveness of sins do you need to give yourself?

Releasing the emotional heart-hurt is freeing; it's uplifting in spirit, mind, and body. Our heart and mind (and lives) were meant for joy, gratitude, love, and peace.

We have a choice on how we show up each and every day to ourselves, our family and friends, to the world, and most importantly to Jesus.

Choosing to show up with the grace of Christ allows you to shine the light of God's forgiveness in the world.

May you be the light, like living stones who you drop the judgey-stones, and may you choose grace every day.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John 8:7 When they kept on questioning him, Jesus straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

Living Stone of HOPE

Norris Lineweaver

Over an early morning cup of coffee discussing the hope for peace in The Holy Land with a Palestinian friend from Ramallah, he said: "How can I have hope for peace with God if I do not have a relationship with my brother."

Later that morning, we joined in a worship service in the Oratory Chapel of the Jerusalem International YMCA, a landmark near the Old City, known as a 'sermon in stone'.

On a wall at that Y near the altar there made of twelve stones, are sculpted bas-reliefs that tell the story of the twin brothers, Jacob and

Esau, from the Book of Genesis.

It is one of the most remarkable stories about hope and restorative justice in the Bible. The sacred story shows just how difficult reconciliation is.

It involves devastation, sacrifice, great struggle, even injury; and requires hope and trust in God.

Through striving to achieve reconciliation with his brother Esau, Jacob saw the face of God. He named the place of his struggle and hope "Peniel" – which means "face of God."



At noon my Palestinian friend and I traveled north through the Jordan Valley of lush green fields to end the day's journey in Tiberius at the beautiful YMCA Peniel by Galilee Retreat Center.

From the shoreline of Galilee at Peniel one can see Mount Beatitude and the foothills of Capernaum. Visitors come from around the world to rest from their struggles, to be reinvigorated spiritually.

Recently an unexpected fire raged up the Tiberius coast of Galilee severely damaging Peniel, leaving much of the property in ruins.

For many like me who have benefitted from coming "face to face" with God at YMCA Peniel, this devastation caused a loss of hope of it ever being restored to a place of reconciliation and spiritual renewal.

It's easy to ask God why Peniel was not spared from the fires.

But in the struggle to rebuild the beloved retreat center God has come "face to face" with those in the YMCA working together as living stones in hope and trust: Jews, Muslims, and Palestinian Christians.

What are the fires in your life that have caused you to lose hope?

What are the struggles you experience that could be the place where God wants to meet you "face to face"?

How might you rebuild strained relationships in your life, like Jacob and Esau did, through trust and hope in God?

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



Genesis 32:30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Living Stone of GRACE

Laura DeVries

The Jerusalem International YMCA is often referred to as a 'sermon in stone', each column, wall, and relief tell a story.

Framing the soaring entrance are carvings depicting the Woman at the Well and a lamb – a symbol for Jesus Christ.

I'm reminded whenever I walk past this stone-sermon that goodwill between neighbors is practiced here and all are welcome to experience grace regardless of race, culture, class, or creed.

The story of Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well is surprising on many levels.

First, with a long history of racism and prejudice that was rooted in religious and racial stereotypes between Jews and Samaritans, travelers typically took the longer route around Samaria to avoid contact with each other.

Jesus, however, chose to walk straight through it!

Additionally, in this culture, a conversation between any



Jew and an unknown woman would have broken social convention and asking for water would have been understood as an invitation to be friends.

Yet Jesus asks her for a drink!

We also know the woman was ostracized even before she shares her truth because women typically drew together in the cool morning, but this woman came alone at high noon.

But Jesus was completely undeterred by her questionable social status!

Practicing the Christian leadership principle of grace means extending favor to people whether they deserve it or not.

In this marginalized place and to this marginalized woman, Jesus extends grace, reaching past all human barriers into her thirsty soul and revealing that he is the long-awaited Christ.

Through grace, God's mercy meets her brokenness and her life and eternity are profoundly changed.

As leaders who follow Jesus, we are compelled to cross human boundaries in order to extend grace to communities where prejudice, discrimination, and racism persist – to be intentional, regardless of, and sometimes because of social status, race, creed, or culture.

A great exchange can happen in a place of grace. Human brokenness can be exchanged for Christ's righteousness.

It is this Good News that lifts burdens, reconciles, restores, renews, and brings peace.

Pray with me:

Gracious God give us eyes to see opportunities to reach across boundaries like Jesus, to love mercy, cling to truth, work toward reconciliation, bring healing and celebrate peace. Amen.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



John 4:14 "but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Living Stone of PEACE

Norris Lineweaver

Forgiveness is the work of returning dignity to those from which it was taken.

Jesus, for example, did not encourage his disciples to seek revenge against local authorities for the atrocities committed toward him.

Instead, upon his being raised from the dead, the first words of Jesus were a blessing of shalom; then he declared a mission of forgiveness for his followers.

Located just outside the old city walls of Jerusalem, is The Garden Tomb, considered by many to be a possible location for the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Whenever I visit the beautiful Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, it's like entering a sacred space for peaceful prayer and meditation – not only for me but also for Christians from around the world.

One of the most important reminders for me while reflecting at the Garden Tomb on the Easter story is the power of forgiveness and reconciliation for peace in the example demonstrated by our resurrected Lord.

Near the Damascus Gate and standing in the shadow of Skull Hill, this beautiful garden is a powerful symbol of Christ's peace in the face of adversity, violence, and death.



Current examples are demonstrating everyday work of Christian peace near The Garden Tomb.

As CEO of the East Jerusalem YMCA, my dear friend Peter Nasir is the third generation of his Christian family to lead peace initiatives of the YMCA in occupied Palestine.

Peter's grandfather Labib and his father Kamil demonstrated through leadership succession a consistent language of reconciliation for peace and forgiveness while holding local authorities rightfully accountable for civil injustice and violence.

From their very beginning, YMCA operations in Palestine have focused on everyday works of peace through vocational training for young people. Skilled hands build sustainable economies as a foundation for both progress and peace.

Engaging both Christian and Muslim leaders and youth working together reduces internal conflict and prejudices.

Resilient leaders find renewed strength from encouraging forgiveness in the face of adversity to resurrect peace.

What do these examples of peace mean for you in your everyday life?

If the living stones of The Garden Tomb could speak, they might ask where in your life is a sacred space for contemplation to encourage everyday acts of peace and forgiveness?

May you respond to Christ's call to build up everyday works of peace and forgiveness where you are sent to play, work and live.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



*John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you!
As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Living Stone of LOVE

Tim Hallman

"It's so dark and loud, I can't believe how intense and crowded it is up here" I whispered to myself as a few of my friends squeezed through the dense throng with me in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at the end of the Via Dolorosa.

We were in the Old City of Jerusalem trying to see the eleventh and twelfth stations of the cross, where Christ is depicted as being nailed to the cross and then dying on it.

Standing there in the dim candlelight and swirling incense, I wondered what it would have been like for the

Lord's beloved disciples and family as they tried to see him on the cross.

Bewildered? Terrified? Heart-broken? Wondering: "How could this happen?" "Why did this happen?"

We've all had our own moments of dark grief, loud confusion, and intense fear; there is no escaping suffering in this world, it is all around us in spirit, mind, and body.

Kierkegaard comments that when we suffer patiently this is not specifically Christian, freely choosing to suffer, though, is.



Jesus willing and freely chose to suffer and die on the cross – it is both our salvation from sin and an example to us on how to sacrificially lead and love.

Especially as Christian leaders, we imitate Christ Jesus when we follow his example of practical compassion to those who are suffering and thirsty for loving help – organizing and inspiring from start to finish.

The work that God gave Jesus to do was triumphantly completed on the cross.

Our Lord was faithful to the finish, which included suffering at the hands of those he loved and was sent to save.

When Christians lead with sacrificial love, when we choose to suffer from others, we can share in word and deed the Good News of Christ Jesus and what he finished on the cross.

What is the sacrificial work God has given you to finish in your community, with your friends and family, in your congregation or workplace?

What has Christ been calling you to finish, to complete, to bring to an end – in particular for those in your midst who need a drink of hope and forgiveness?

May the suffering and compassionate Jesus be an example to you in spirit, mind, and body to finish what you started, sustaining you as living stones sacrificially leading, loving, and serving where he has sent you.

NOTES FOR REFLECTION:



John 19:30 "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

NOTES FOR PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Can you give an example of how they occur in your Y?

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

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John 17:21 "That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

Living Stone of CARING

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Living Stone of RESPONSIBILITY

Psalms 23:1-3b "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul."

Living Stone of HONESTY

Luke 4:16 'He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.'

Living Stone of FAITH

Mark 6:50 "Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

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John 13:12 *"When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I've done for you?'"*

Living Stone of FORGIVENESS

John 8:7 *When they kept on questioning him, Jesus straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."*

Living Stone of HOPE

Genesis 32:30 *So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."*

Living Stone of GRACE

John 4:14 *"but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

Living Stone of PEACE

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Living Stone of LOVE

John 19:30 *"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."*

