

The Chosen is a Christian historical drama series, created, directed, and co-written by filmmaker Dallas Jenkins. It’s the first multi-season series about the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The series depicts Jesus’ life through the eyes of the people who interacted with him, including the twelve disciples, other followers, Jewish leaders, Roman officials, and ordinary people. If you’ve never seen *The Chosen* I recommend it. It will be time well spent.

The literal translation of the word *Messiah* in Hebrew (pronounced *mashiach*), is “*the anointed one.*” We English speakers in the Western Hemisphere are not as familiar with the word “*anointed,*” as we are with the word “*chosen,*” as in Jenkins’ series about Jesus. In today’s Scripture the apostle Peter identifies and challenges his listeners with similar wording: “***Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...***” (vv. 2-5).

Peter does so much mixing of his metaphors in this passage that something could easily get lost in the translation. This part of Peter’s letter reminds me of a poem by Brian Bilston that I once read, titled, “**How to Avoid Mixing Your Metaphors.**” Here’s what the poem says: “*It’s not rocket surgery. First, get all your ducks on the same page. After all, you can’t make an omelette without breaking stride. Be sure to watch what you write with a fine-tuned comb. Check and re-check until the cows turn blue. It’s as easy as falling off a piece of cake. Don’t worry about opening up a whole hill of beans; you can always burn that bridge when you come to it, if you follow where I’m coming from. Finally, don’t take the moral high horse. If the metaphor fits, walk a mile in it.*”

To give you an example of Peter mixing his metaphors, besides the language about being **chosen**, there are 8 times in this passage where we find mention of

stones, cornerstones, or rocks. Every time I read this passage I think about all the stones I collected when I was a boy.

Stones and rocks do appear frequently in Scripture, and for purposes other than **throwing** like in the story of David and Goliath. God is often referred to as a **rock**. The patriarchs of the Old Testament set up **stones** wherever something important happened. The Ten Commandments were written on **stone** tablets. Moses struck a **rock** and water flowed from it. Stephen was killed by **stoning**. Jesus changed Simon's name to "Peter," which means **rock**. And it was a large **stone** that was rolled away from the tomb before the women arrived on the first Easter morning. Our Scripture speaks of **stones as building blocks**. This passage comes from a time when buildings were most often built of **stones**. A construction site in Palestine would consist of piles and piles of **stones** to be used for the foundation and carefully placed together to build the walls.

The most important building block is of course the **cornerstone**. Today **cornerstones** have more of a ceremonial function providing a place to record the history of a building. Sometimes churches write the date a church was built on a **cornerstone**—such as on this building. But the **cornerstone** in Jesus' day served a more important function. The **cornerstone** really was the one piece on which the rest of the house was built. If the **cornerstone** wasn't set just right, then the rest of the house would not be square and would not stand the test of time. The **cornerstone** determined the character of the whole house.

Our Scripture today contains a wide imagery of stones. We're invited to come to Jesus, "*a cornerstone chosen and precious.*" Though rejected by humans, he was "*chosen and precious*" in God's sight. Then, we are admonished **to be like living stones ourselves**, to be built into a spiritual house. Christ is the "*living stone*" (v. 4) which became the **cornerstone** of the church. But what does Peter mean when he describes us as being "*like living stones...built up as a spiritual house?*" After all, a stone by its very nature is an inanimate object that does not have life.

Well, first of all, Webster defines a stone as a rock that is used for a specific purpose, such as a building block, a paving stone, a grindstone or a gravestone. If it is used for these specific purposes, then we must ask why it is used for these purposes. It seems obvious that a stone is known for its permanence, impervious to change or to things like the weather. It is also not easily moved from one place to another, especially if it is a large stone. Once placed in a specific spot, it will stay there unless a greater force is exerted upon it. **All these qualities can be attributed to people too.**

An ambassador on a diplomatic mission visited the famous city of Sparta. Knowing that its strength was acclaimed throughout all of Greece, he expected to see massive fortresses surrounding the city, but he found nothing of the kind. Surprised, the ambassador said to the king, “Sir, you have no fortifications for defense. How can this be?” “Oh, but we are well protected,” replied the king. “Come with me and I will show you the walls of Sparta.” He led the ambassador to the plains where Sparta’s army was assembled in full battle dress. Pointing proudly to his soldiers, who stood fearlessly in place, the king said, “Behold! The walls of Sparta—ten thousand men and every one a brick!”

Bricks or rocks signify they will not be moved and will be steadfast in their loyalty to the king. Because of this, when we are called a **rock** it implies bravery and courage in the face of danger. *“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God **chosen and precious**, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (vv. 4-5). **Living stones? Bricks? Rocks? A spiritual house? A priesthood?** Peter continues to mix his metaphors. But then we can recall there is something that truly makes a house a home. There’s something that can transform the bricks and mortar, the boards and nails of a house into a “home” for a family. **The birth of a baby.**

Let’s go back to how this Scripture passage began: *“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed*

you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Newborn babies grow up when they are well fed, cared for, and loved. This is also true for us when *growing up into salvation*. There are houses, classrooms, and offices in our lives that are interchangeable boxes, forgotten as soon as we move on. Then there are the homes and rooms and sacred spaces that we never forget—places forever etched in our minds. This is the kind of household that Peter would have us become. **We are a chosen people** whose life appears flawed and unworthy, yet on closer inspection, we’re a household whose doors welcome home the outcasts and prodigals of this world. A royal household of *“newborn infants”* is formed into God’s people who *“have tasted that the Lord is good.”*

God is a little bit like a great Rock-Collector who finds us. *“Once we were not a people (nobodies)”* says v. 10. We were Cinderellas, Misfit Toys, Ugly Ducklings. But somehow God saw something useful within us, **so we grow up, with God’s help**, into beautiful princesses, trustworthy guides for Santa’s sleigh, or elegant swans. Then, the great Stonecutter puts us together. Imagine a rock-polishing machine like one of my friends had when we were kids. It tosses around the rough stones to make them smooth. To make a house, rough-edged Christians get ground down so finally the great Stonemason can fit us together.

At the end of his life Joshua calls all the people together and says, *“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD”* (24:15). Truly, **we are God’s chosen people** who in every moment we live must choose and then choose again, to serve God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. *“Then [Joshua] took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. See! he said to all the people. This stone will be a witness...”* (24:26-27). God’s *chosen and precious cornerstone* is asking that we make a choice to be true to God’s purpose for our lives. If *“like newborn infants”* we *“grow up into salvation—if indeed we have tasted that the Lord is good,”* we will become, **if we can imagine it**, *“a people of God’s own possession,”* **God’s chosen people, for now we have received mercy!** May God bless this simple witness to his word...Amen.