

“Got Milk?”

May 3, 2026

1 Peter 2:2-10

Among the great anniversaries to celebrate this year is that of **Habitat for Humanity**, which was founded in 1976, 50 years ago. The idea that became Habitat for Humanity first grew from the fertile soil of **Koinonia Farm**, a community farm outside of Americus, Georgia, founded by farmer and biblical scholar Clarence Jordan. It was a place of welcome for all people.

On the farm, Jordan and Habitat’s eventual founders Millard and Linda Fuller developed the **concept of “partnership housing.”** The concept centered on those in need of adequate shelter working side by side with volunteers to build decent, affordable houses. **The houses would be built at no profit.** New homeowners’ house payments would be combined with no-interest loans provided by supporters and money earned by fundraising to create **“The Fund for Humanity,”** which would then be used to build more homes.

Beau and Emma were the owners of the first home built by Koinonia’s Partnership Housing Program. They and their five children moved into a concrete-block home with a modern kitchen, indoor bathroom and heating system, replacing the unpainted, uninsulated shack with no plumbing where they had previously lived.

Then in 1973, the Fullers decided to take the Fund for Humanity concept to the Democratic Republic of Congo. After three years of hard work to launch a successful house building program there, the Fullers then returned to the United States and called together a group of supporters to discuss the future of their dream: **Habitat for Humanity International.** Habitat now **works in all 50 states in the U.S.** and in **more than 70 countries.** In 2025, Habitat for Humanity helped

3 million people build or improve a place to call home. An additional 20.8 million people gained the potential to improve their housing conditions through training programs and advocacy work driven by Habitat in local communities. What a blessed ministry!

I don't know if the author of 1 Peter was a home builder, but he sure likes to use construction words to describe the Church; living stone, cornerstone, builders, rock, and spiritual house. More importantly, he tells us that God has created the original **partnership housing**, a new place for the displaced. **“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”** No longer are we outcasts, orphans, unwanted, or marginalized. We have found a people to belong to. Great is the mercy of God!

However, just like any household or family, there are always challenges in living together, behaviors which can threaten the peace of the household and converse behaviors that can make it even stronger.

I. SPIRITUAL DETOX

I don't know if they are still popular, but a few years ago **body detox cleanse programs** became popular. There were various products and protocols that were said to clean out not only your colon, but also your liver, lungs, kidneys, and blood from parasites, heavy metals, and other contaminants within the body. Usually this involved a mixture of herbs, juices, fruits, and certain foods, combined with some sort of fasting.

The goal was to cleanse the body's organs for a healthier you. Supposedly, if one follows the protocol, they will feel better, have more energy, and be rid of certain detrimental symptoms. How effective these detox cleanses are is difficult

for me to say. I have heard of some negative results, even life threatening if taken to extreme.

Peter doesn't use the word, but he is certainly recommending a **spiritual detox** for the church when he writes, "**Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice and all guile, insincerity, envy and all slander.**" The word **rid** means to strip off soiled clothing. Peter realizes nothing destroys the spiritual house more than when wickedness, scamming, hypocrisy, envy and gossiping about others. Obviously, these behaviors destroy the unity of the Church, or any group for that matter. They create division and inhospitality instead of a place of welcome, acceptance and hope. Peter is saying, "**Detox yourselves from these attitudes and practices.**" They have no place in the community of faith.

The problem is we don't always see these toxic heart conditions, especially in ourselves. So, how does one know they are in operation? Perhaps we need the coffee test.

There was a monk who asked his students one day, "If you are carrying a cup of coffee and someone bumps into you and you spill the coffee, why did you spill the coffee?" His students answered, "**Because someone bumped into me. Because I wasn't paying attention.**" The teacher replied, "**No. The reason you spilled the coffee is because you had coffee in your cup.** If you had orange juice, you would have spilled orange juice. If you had water, then water would have spilled. **The question is, "What's in your cup?"**"

The monk went on to explain, "When life shakes you, and it will shake you up, whatever hurt, emotional state or struggle within you will come out. What you feed your mind with will be seen in your reactions. What spills over could be joy, peace, affirmation, forgiveness, kindness, love, gratitude, peace, humility, or it

could be anger, bitterness, victim mentality, or quitting tendencies. Life provides the cup; you choose what to fill it with.

By observing what is in our cup when life gets tough, we can see the issues we need to deal with, the thoughts we are feeding upon, the places where we need forgiveness, and the toxic patterns that keep us from living fully in Christ. What is in your cup? We all need a spiritual detox.

II. QUALITY MATERIALS FOR SPIRITUAL HOUSE

A few years ago I purchased a cordless hand power tool. I didn't want to spend a whole lot of money, so I went to one of those discount tool places. **Big Mistake!** The power tool looked great on the box, but when I removed it, I noticed what low quality it was. On top of that the battery that came with the tool was worthless. It failed to hold a charge thus rendering the tool inoperable. **Lesson learned, if you use cheap tools and cheap materials don't be surprised by low quality results.**

Peter has the same idea when it comes to building the Church. Don't settle for the cheap materials. Get the good stuff. **“Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”**

A. Yearn For - Have you ever watched **Baby birds in a nest** who are being fed by their mother? When they see mama bird with that nice juicy worm they go bananas. All of them are chirping loudly, and straining their little necks as high as possible and their mouths are open wide to gab the worm. They are yearning with all their might because their survival depends on it. In a sense, Peter is saying be like those baby birds when it comes to your faith. Long with all your heart for God. Act like you are completely dependent of God's goodness. Long to know

God deeper, to love God more fully and to serve God more completely. Know God longs to satisfy the good desires of the heart.

B. PURE SPIRITUAL MILK - Get on a diet of the “**pure, spiritual milk**” so you may grow up. The milk, the nourishment he is talking about are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Nourish your heart, feed yourself on a steady diet of God’s thoughts, intentions, and will. That’s the good stuff. As we nourish ourselves on the Word and Spirit it will transform our thinking and behavior. It will become the new norm and create a household not based on rules but the gracious spirit of God. But you have to eat regularly to make progress.

C. COME TO HIM – A LIVING STONE – Have you ever heard of **Lithops?** They are also known as **Living Stones**. **Now Lithops are not actually stones, they just look like them.** These are small, ground-hugging plants that consist of one or more pairs of bulbous, almost fused leaves, which are often split by a fissure at the top from where their flowers emerge. Lithops are native to southern Africa. They display an enchanting array of earthly hues, including shades of tan, olive, orange, and occasionally blues, blending seamlessly with their natural stone-like environment, helping the plants avoid predation.

Peter first tells us to Come to the Living Stone, meaning Jesus, and then imitate that Living Stone as you are built into a spiritual house. “**See I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.**” The Church is built on its cornerstone so that we become like that cornerstone. Like the Lithops, the church is more than an organization, it is a living organism that creates a growing community. It comes together and is sustained by Christ alone. Apart from Christ we are nothing.

C. BE AT PRIEST – We imitate the living stones by doing Christ’s priestly work. Growing up my siblings and I were given chores. Other than keeping my room clean, my chores included taking out the trash, cleaning up the dog pen, and mowing the lawn. But there were some chores we shared. For instance, each of us took our turn washing dishes and when it snowed we all pitched in to shovel our lengthy driveway.

The same goes for the church. There are some chores we may do on our own, but there are chores we share. In fact, most of our work is shared. It is impossible to be a committee of one, or sing four-part harmony by ourselves. Some chores we do together.

One such chore is being **priests**. Peter writes, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and holy nation, God’s own people...(notice all these titles are given to a group not an individual) in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”**

The role of the priest was to be a bridge builder to God. They were to guide people out of darkness and into the light of God’s grace. And they did this by proclaiming the greatness of God and offering the gift of forgiveness. Peter did not create a priestly hierarchy but rather a shared chore that all the living stones were to play in the Church Body. Think about the atmosphere that was created when people went through spiritual detox, who yearned together to love, know, and serve God, and who practiced the work of being gracious priests with each other. They created a powerful moving building that witnessed to the Kingdom of God.

Several years ago, **Michael Henderson** wrote an article entitled, “**Clinker bricks and Ebenezers.**” He said, “In the town of Gates, New York, near Saratoga, I’m told there is a Presbyterian church which was intentionally built of “**clinker bricks.**” “Clinkers,” as I understand it, are bricks that come out of the kiln deformed and misshapen. Factory seconds. Rejects. Normally they are thrown away. But those Presbyterians thought they were the perfect thing to build a church with.

The greatness of Jesus is that he can turn even “clinker bricks” into “living stones.” Where the displaced have a place, the rejected will be accepted, and the marginalized become mainstream. Now that’s the house I want to live in. How about you? **Amen.**

First Presbyterian Church in Hawley

Sunday, May 3, 2026

Second Scripture Lesson

I Peter 2:2-10

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—

3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and

5 like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

7 This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,"

8 and "A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be To God.

