

1 Peter, Teacher's Guide

Week 3: A Chosen People and Holy Priesthood

1Peter 2:1–10

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Peter 2:1–10 is one of the richest ecclesiological passages in the New Testament, that is, one of the clearest windows into what the church actually is. What is doctrinally at stake here is the identity of God's people in Christ. Peter teaches that Jesus is the chosen and precious cornerstone, that the church is a spiritual house built of living stones, that all Christians together form a holy and royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices, and that the titles once given to Israel now belong to the church, the people of God in Christ. The teacher should be ready to handle the cornerstone Christology, the doctrine of the church as God's spiritual house, the priesthood of all believers, the relationship between Israel and the church, and the sobering truth that the same Christ who is precious to believers is a stone of stumbling to those who disobey.

This passage also speaks directly to how a congregation lives together. Peter does not describe isolated Christians but living stones built into one house. He begins not with grandeur but with the homely work of putting away malice, envy, and slander and craving the pure milk of the word like a hungry infant. The teacher's task is to help students embrace their astonishing identity as God's chosen people while taking seriously the daily disciplines, and the daily repentance, that growing up into that identity requires. Students should come to value the church not as an optional add-on to private faith but as the very house God is building.

Keep both targets in view. Students should leave with a clearer doctrinal grasp of what the church is and a renewed sense of their own place in it, and they should leave hungrier for the word and more committed to the brothers and sisters they are being built together with. The disciple we are forming is a living stone, joined to Christ and to others, growing up into salvation and proclaiming the excellencies of the God who called them out of darkness.

Question 1

Student Question:

Peter calls Jesus "a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious," and the cornerstone on which everything is built (vv. 4, 6–7). What does the image of Christ as the cornerstone teach us about who He is and how everything in the church must align to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter draws together three Old Testament "stone" passages (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Isaiah 8:14) to make a single point: Jesus is the cornerstone God has laid, chosen and precious to Him,

even though men rejected Him. In ancient construction the cornerstone was the foundational, load-bearing stone that determined the position and alignment of the entire building. Everything else was measured from it.

Applied to Christ, this teaches several things at once. First, it speaks to His identity: He is the one God Himself chose and laid, the foundation on which God is building His people. Second, it speaks to His rejection: the builders, the religious leaders of His day, threw Him aside, yet God vindicated Him and made Him the cornerstone (the resurrection stands behind this). Third, it speaks to alignment: a building is only as true as its cornerstone, so everything in the church, its teaching, worship, leadership, and life, must take its bearing from Christ.

Help students feel the practical weight of this. A church that aligns itself to Christ the cornerstone, as He is revealed in the New Testament, will stand. A church that takes its bearings from the culture, from tradition for its own sake, or from a charismatic personality, is measuring from the wrong stone and will eventually lean toward collapse. The authority of Christ, expressed through the apostolic word, is the church's only sure reference point.

This is also a quietly comforting truth. The cornerstone does not move. When everything else in life feels unstable, the believer is built on a foundation that God Himself laid and vindicated. Helping students grow in faith here means anchoring their confidence not in their own steadiness but in the unshakable Christ to whom they are joined.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as the cornerstone chosen and laid by God (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16)
- The rejection and divine vindication of Jesus (the resurrection behind the image)
- Christ as the reference point to which the whole church must align
- The authority of Christ expressed through the apostolic, New Testament word
- The unshakable foundation as a ground of the believer's confidence

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean, practically, for a church to align everything to Christ the cornerstone?
- What happens when a church takes its bearings from culture or personality instead of Christ?
- How does being built on an unmovable cornerstone steady you when life feels unstable?

Question 2

Student Question:

Peter says to "put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander" (v. 1). These are sins that quietly poison relationships in a church family. Which one of these is most alive in your own heart right now? What would it look like this week to put it away in earnest?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Before Peter describes the glorious house, he names the rubble that has to be cleared away. The five sins he lists, malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, are not the scandalous sins the world notices. They are the quiet, relational sins that corrode a church family from the inside. Each one attacks the bond between living stones.

Help students see how connected these sins are to the passage. You cannot be built together into one house while harboring malice toward a fellow stone, or envying them, or slandering them behind their back. These are precisely the sins that crack the mortar of a congregation. Peter says to “put them away,” a decisive word, like taking off filthy clothing.

Invite honest self-examination. Most of us would rather discuss these sins in the abstract than admit which one lives in our own heart. Encourage each student to name privately the one that is most alive in them right now, perhaps a grudge nursed against someone in the church, a habit of subtle gossip, or envy of another’s blessing. Then move to action: confession, repentance, and a concrete step toward the person involved. This is where growth in Christlikeness becomes real.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The quiet, relational sins that corrode church fellowship
- Repentance as decisively “putting away” sin, not merely managing it
- The connection between personal holiness and congregational unity
- Honest self-examination as the path to genuine change

Discussion Prompts

- Why are the “quiet” sins like envy and slander so damaging to a church family?
- Which of these sins is most alive in your own heart right now?
- What would it look like to “put it away” in earnest this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Peter says that we, as 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). What does it mean that the church is a spiritual house and that all Christians are priests, and what “spiritual sacrifices” are we called to offer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter makes two great claims about the church here. First, believers are “living stones” being “built up as a spiritual house.” The temple in Jerusalem was made of dead stone; the true

dwelling of God is now a people, joined to Christ and to one another, indwelt by His Spirit (compare Ephesians 2:19–22). God no longer dwells in a building made with hands; He dwells in His people gathered in Christ.

Second, this spiritual house is also “a holy priesthood.” Under the Old Covenant, only a special class of men from the tribe of Levi could serve as priests and approach God. Peter announces that in Christ all believers are priests. This is the doctrine often called the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian has direct access to God through Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, and every Christian is called to the priestly work of offering “spiritual sacrifices.”

Help students understand what those sacrifices are. The New Testament describes them: the offering of our whole selves to God (Romans 12:1), the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15), doing good and sharing with others (Hebrews 13:16), and lives of holiness and service. We no longer offer animals; through Christ we offer ourselves, our worship, and our good works. All of this is acceptable to God only “through Jesus Christ,” our mediator.

Be clear about what this priesthood does and does not mean. It does mean every believer has access to God and a part to play in worship and service. It does not erase the New Testament pattern in which God appoints qualified men as elders to shepherd the congregation and assigns men the role of leading the assembly and teaching when men and women are gathered together. The priesthood of all believers is about access and service for every Christian, not about overturning the roles God has ordained in His church. Holding both truths helps students grow in a faith that is both wholehearted and ordered according to Scripture.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as the spiritual house and dwelling of God, not a physical building (Ephesians 2:19–22)
- The priesthood of all believers: direct access to God through Christ
- Christ as our great High Priest and the only mediator (Hebrews 4:14–16)
- Spiritual sacrifices: self-offering, praise, good works (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15–16)
- Worship and service acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ
- The priesthood of all believers alongside the New Testament pattern of appointed male leadership

Discussion Prompts

- What changes when we realize the church is God’s dwelling, not just a place we attend?
- What “spiritual sacrifices” are you offering to God right now?
- How does the priesthood of all believers give every Christian both access and responsibility?

Question 4

Student Question:

Peter pictures believers as living stones built together into one house, not as scattered individual rocks (v. 5). How connected are you, really, to the life of the church family? Where are you tempted to live your faith as a private, individual project rather than as a stone joined to others?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter's image is pointed: not a pile of separate rocks, but stones joined and bonded into one structure. A stone lying by itself bears no weight and shelters no one. It only becomes part of the house when it is set in place alongside others.

Use this to challenge the common modern assumption that faith is essentially a private matter between an individual and God, with church attendance as an optional extra. Peter will have none of it. To be a Christian is to be a stone in the house, bonded to other stones. The Christian life is not lived alone; it is lived joined to a particular body of believers, bearing weight and receiving support.

Invite honest reflection on connection. Some students are deeply woven into the life of the congregation; others attend faithfully but remain emotionally and practically detached, present in the room but not joined to the house. Ask where each person is tempted to keep their faith private, and what one step toward real connection might look like: joining a smaller group, serving, opening their home, letting others in. Growth in Christ rarely happens in isolation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The communal, not merely private, nature of the Christian life
- Church membership as being "built together," not optional attendance
- Mutual dependence: bearing weight and giving support among believers
- Concrete steps from attendance to genuine connection

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to treat your faith as a private project rather than a shared life?
- What is the difference between attending church and being "built together" with it?
- What one step could move you toward deeper connection with this church family?

Question 5

Student Question:

Peter says that to those who believe, Christ is precious, but to those who do not believe He has become "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense," for "they stumble because they disobey the word" (vv. 7–8). What does this teach about how people respond to Christ, and how do we square human responsibility ("they disobey") with God's sovereign plan ("as they were destined to do")?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter sets up a stark division. The same Christ who is “precious” to those who believe becomes “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense” to those who do not. The cornerstone is unavoidable; everyone must do something with Him. Either we build our lives on Him, or we trip over Him. There is no neutral ground.

Note carefully how Peter explains the stumbling: “they stumble because they disobey the word.” The cause of their ruin is named plainly as their own disobedience. People do not perish because God withheld an opportunity from them, but because they refused the word He gave. This protects us from any idea that the lost are merely victims of a divine decree.

Then handle the harder phrase: “as they were destined to do.” This does not teach that God predestined certain individuals to disobey and be lost, as if their rejection were forced upon them. Read in context, what is destined, or appointed, is the consequence: those who disobey the word will stumble. God has appointed that the cornerstone will be salvation to the believing and stumbling to the disobedient. The outcome is fixed; the choice of which group one belongs to is genuinely ours. The gospel call is real and universal, and people are truly able to obey or disobey it.

Hold human responsibility and God’s sovereign plan together as Scripture does. God sovereignly appointed Christ as the cornerstone and appointed the two outcomes attached to Him. Within that plan, human beings really decide whether they will believe and obey. This guards against fatalism on one side and against a man-centered gospel on the other, and it helps students grow in a faith that takes both God’s sovereignty and human accountability seriously.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as unavoidable: precious to believers, a stumbling stone to the disobedient
- Stumbling caused by disobedience to the word, not by divine withholding
- “Destined” as the appointed consequence of disobedience, not predestined individual rejection
- The reality and universality of the gospel call
- Holding God’s sovereign plan and genuine human responsibility together

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Peter say there is no neutral response to Christ the cornerstone?
- How does Peter locate the cause of stumbling in human disobedience?
- How can we affirm God’s sovereign plan without making Him the author of anyone’s unbelief?

Question 6

Student Question:

Peter writes that, having tasted that the Lord is good (v. 3), believers grow up into salvation. Where have you actually “tasted” the goodness of the Lord in your own life? How might remembering His goodness reignite your hunger to grow rather than coast?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter quotes Psalm 34: “if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” This is the language of experience. The Christian life is not only believing true things about God; it is having tasted, in real life, that He is good, His forgiveness, His presence, His faithfulness in hard times, His answered prayers, His word that proved true.

Help students recall specific tastes of God’s goodness. Vague gratitude is easily lost; named memories endure. Invite them to recall a particular moment when they knew the Lord was good: a burden lifted, a prayer answered, a peace that made no sense, a forgiveness deeply felt, a Scripture that landed exactly when needed. These tastes are meant to whet the appetite for more.

Connect this to the hunger Peter just described in verse 2. A baby who has tasted milk cries for more; a believer who has tasted the Lord’s goodness craves the word that delivers more of Him. When our appetite for God fades, it is often because we have stopped remembering His goodness and started coasting on old experiences. Remembering His goodness reignites the hunger to grow rather than settle. This is concrete growth toward Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Christian life as experienced, not merely intellectual, knowledge of God
- Tasting the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 34:8)
- Remembering God’s past goodness as fuel for present hunger
- The link between gratitude and a renewed appetite for the word

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you actually tasted that the Lord is good in your own life?
- Why do named memories of God’s goodness sustain us better than vague gratitude?
- How might remembering His goodness reignite your hunger to grow this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Peter applies to the church the very titles God gave to Israel: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (v. 9; compare Exodus 19:5–6). What does it mean that the church now bears these titles, and what does Peter say is the purpose of this calling: that we may “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In verse 9 Peter gathers up a cluster of titles straight from Exodus 19:5–6 and Isaiah, titles God first gave to Israel at Sinai, and applies them to the church: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” This is a profound statement about the relationship between Israel and the church.

Explain the connection carefully. God’s plan was always to have a people for His own possession. Under the Old Covenant that people was national Israel. In Christ, God has formed His people from all who come to Him through the gospel, Jew and Gentile alike, the church. The church does not replace God’s faithfulness or erase His promises; rather, the promises find their fulfillment in Christ and in the people gathered to Him. The titles describe what the church now is by God’s grace: chosen, royal, priestly, holy, His own treasured possession.

Press on the purpose Peter names. We are given this identity “that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Election and privilege are not for our comfort alone; they are for mission and worship. God formed a people to display and declare His praises to the world. A church that understands its identity will be a church that proclaims, by word and by life, the goodness of the God who saved them.

Help students hold dignity and duty together. This identity should lift the head of the lowliest believer: in Christ you are part of God’s royal, priestly, holy people. And it should send that same believer outward to proclaim God’s excellencies. Growth in faith here means receiving the honor and embracing the mission that comes with it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church bearing the titles once given to Israel (Exodus 19:5–6)
- God’s one plan to have a people for His own possession, fulfilled in Christ
- Jew and Gentile gathered into one people through the gospel
- The purpose of election: to proclaim God’s excellencies (mission and worship)
- Dignity and duty held together in the identity of God’s people

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the church now bears the titles once given to Israel?
- Why does Peter tie this glorious identity to the task of proclaiming God’s excellencies?
- How would a congregation live differently if it truly believed it was God’s royal, holy people?

Question 8

Student Question:

Peter says we have been called “out of darkness into his marvelous light” so that we may proclaim God’s excellencies (v. 9). Whose “darkness to light” story do the people around you

most need to hear, namely yours? Where are you tempted to stay quiet about what God has done for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter says God called us “out of darkness into his marvelous light” so that we would proclaim His excellencies. The most natural proclamation any Christian can make is the story of their own rescue, the movement from darkness to light. This question presses students to own that story and to speak it.

Help students see that everyone built on the cornerstone has a darkness-to-light testimony, even if it is not dramatic. For some it is a sudden, vivid rescue; for others it is a slow dawning, a lifetime of being drawn into the light. Either way, the contrast is real, and the world around them needs to hear it. People are far more often reached by a credible personal story than by an argument.

Then name the reluctance. Many faithful believers stay quiet, fearing they will say it wrong, push people away, or be thought strange. Invite students to identify the specific person or setting where they are tempted to stay silent, and to consider one small step toward speaking, a word of testimony, an invitation, an honest answer to a question. Proclaiming God’s excellencies is not reserved for preachers; it is the calling of every priestly believer.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every Christian as a witness with a darkness-to-light story
- Personal testimony as a primary form of proclaiming God’s excellencies
- The common reluctance to speak and how to take a first step
- Witness as the calling of every believer, not only of preachers

Discussion Prompts

- What does your own darkness-to-light story look like?
- Who in your life most needs to hear what God has done for you?
- Where are you tempted to stay quiet, and what small step could you take this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Peter tells these believers, “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” (v. 10). How does this verse describe the transformation God works in salvation, and how does a person move from “not a people” into the people of God who have received mercy?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it is also one of the most hope-filled verses in the letter. Quoting Hosea, Peter says, “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.” The whole drama of salvation is compressed into two contrasts: from no-people to God’s people, from no-mercy to mercy.

Hosea originally spoke these words about Israel, who through unfaithfulness had become “not my people,” yet whom God promised to restore by sheer mercy. Peter applies the same pattern to his readers, many of them Gentiles who had never been part of God’s covenant people at all. The point is that belonging to God is entirely a gift of His mercy. No one earns their way into the people of God; we are brought in by grace.

Now address the “how” the question raises, since this is exactly where the gospel must be made clear. How does a person move from “not a people” into God’s people? Not by a private inward feeling alone, and not by reciting a prayer, but by responding to the gospel the way the New Testament describes: hearing the word, believing in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Him, and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:26–27; Mark 16:16). In that obedient response God grants mercy and adds the person to His people. It is all of grace, received through the obedience of faith.

Stress that this is mercy from start to finish. The initiative is God’s, the price was Christ’s, and the mercy is undeserved. Yet it is mercy that calls for a response and then a faithful walk. Those who have received mercy are now to live as God’s people, growing in holiness and proclaiming His praise. Help students feel both the wonder of the mercy and the obligation of the calling.

Finally, let this verse comfort the struggling. Anyone who feels like a nobody, a no-people, can hear in this verse that God specializes in making His own out of those the world overlooks. The movement from no-mercy to mercy is the testimony of every Christian, and it grows faith to remember it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Salvation as entirely a gift of God’s mercy (Hosea 1:10; 2:23)
- Gentiles and outsiders brought into the one people of God through Christ
- The plan of salvation: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:26–27)
- Mercy received through the obedience of faith, not earned
- Mercy that calls for a faithful walk as God’s people
- Assurance and dignity for those the world overlooks

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that belonging to God is entirely a gift of mercy?

- How does the New Testament describe a person moving from “not a people” into God’s people?
- How does remembering your own move from no-mercy to mercy strengthen your faith today?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole passage. Peter moves from putting off sin, to craving the word, to being built on Christ the cornerstone, to living as God’s chosen and merciful people. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from 1 Peter 2:1–10 you most need to carry into this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole passage. Peter has moved from putting off corrosive sin (v. 1), to craving the pure word (vv. 2–3), to being built on Christ the cornerstone (vv. 4–8), to living as God’s chosen, merciful, priestly people who proclaim His praise (vv. 9–10). The question asks each student to name one specific way Christ is forming them through these verses.

Resist generalities. Walk students back through the movement of the passage: the corrosive sin that needs putting away, the faded appetite for the word, the private faith that needs to be joined to the house, the testimony that needs to be spoken, the identity that needs to be believed. Invite each person to name the single point that lands most directly on their life.

Close by reminding students that the goal is transformation, not merely information. They are living stones, joined to Christ and to one another, being built into something that will outlast every empire. Encourage each person to carry one truth from this passage into the week, to return to it, and to act on it, so the building goes on rising.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as a living house being built on Christ the cornerstone
- Transformation through both putting off sin and feeding on the word
- Identity as God’s people lived out in connection and witness
- Self-examination leading to one concrete step

Discussion Prompts

- Which truth from this passage lands most directly on your life right now?
- What one concrete step toward growth can you take before we meet again?
- How can this group support and pray for you in that specific step?