

1 Peter

Week 3: A Chosen People and Holy Priesthood -- 1 Peter 2:1–10

Think about the last time you watched something being built. Before the walls go up, before the roof goes on, everything depends on one unseen decision: the cornerstone. In the ancient world a builder would choose a single great stone, set it precisely, and align the entire structure to it. Every wall, every angle, every course of stone took its bearing from that one stone. Get the cornerstone right, and the building stands for centuries. Get it wrong, and the whole thing leans toward collapse.

Peter takes that picture and does something breathtaking with it. He says Jesus is the cornerstone, “chosen and precious” in God’s sight, though “rejected by men.” And then he says something we might never have dared to say about ourselves: you also, he tells these scattered, ordinary believers, are “living stones,” being built into a spiritual house. You are not bystanders watching God build something. You are the building. And not only the building; you are the priests who serve in it, “a holy priesthood,” offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.

It is hard to overstate how dignifying this is. These were people the wider world looked down on, foreigners and nobodies, the kind of people history forgets. Peter tells them they are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” The very titles God once gave to Israel at Sinai now belong to them, to this little gathering of believers in Christ. Once they were “not a people.” Now they are the people of God. Once they had not received mercy. Now they live inside it.

But Peter does not start with the glory. He starts with the nursery. Before he calls them a priesthood, he tells them to put away malice and envy and slander, and to crave the pure milk of the word “like newborn infants,” so that they may grow up into salvation. The path to this high calling runs through the ordinary, daily business of growing up in Christ. So read this passage and let it lift your eyes again. You are being built into something that will outlast every empire, aligned to a cornerstone that will never move.

Group Discussion: Peter tells ordinary believers that together they are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (v. 9). Why do we so easily forget this identity, and what changes in a congregation when its members truly believe they are God’s own people, built together into one spiritual house?

Personal Reflection: Peter says to crave the pure spiritual milk of the word “like newborn infants” so that we may grow up into salvation (v. 2). Honestly assess your own appetite for God’s word right now. Is it the hunger of a healthy, growing child, or has it faded? What is one thing that has dulled your appetite, and what might restore it?

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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”)?
6. 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?
7. 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”?
8. 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?
9. 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?

10. 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?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 118:22, the stone the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone; Isaiah 28:16, the precious cornerstone God lays in Zion; Exodus 19:5–6, Israel called a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; Ephesians 2:19–22, the church built together into a dwelling place for God; Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, those who were “not my people” called God's people