

1 Peter

Lesson 3 Chapter 2:1-12

Leader Guide

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Lesson 3

1 Peter 2:1-12

Living Stones

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God
(1 Peter 2:9)

Prayers

Introduction

The second chapter of 1 Peter builds on the previous verses of 1:22-2:3, Peter's call to be holy as God commanded in Leviticus 11:44, and to become mature in our faith. In this lesson, Peter begins with the allegory of Christ as the "Living Stone" and our calling to be in Christ, united with each other. The imagery of the "Living Stone" comes from Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14, where the LORD is to be Israel's security and strength – not their city walls of stone, he is their sure foundation, and he is a stumbling block to all who don't believe.

The imagery of living stones must have resonated with first-century Jewish Christians familiar with the temple mount in Jerusalem. The temple mount was a wonder of engineering and construction by Herod the Great, a master builder but a villainous character in the Bible. Some stones laid for the temple's foundation are 40-45 ft long, 15 ft wide and 11 ft high, weighing up to 300 tons – compared to stones in the Great pyramid weighing 2.5-15 tons. Herod's temple was a wonder of the ancient world.

In these verses, Peter exalts Christ and calls believers to serve both God and mankind, living in the glorious light of Christ's holiness.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-12

^{1Pe 1:22} Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

^{1Pe 1:23} For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

^{1Pe 1:24} For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,

^{1Pe 1:25} but the word of the Lord stands forever

And this is the word that was preached to you.

^{1Pe 2:1} Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

^{1Pe 2:2} Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

^{1Pe 2:3} now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

^{1Pe 2:4} As you come to him, the living Stone —rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— ^{1Pe 2:5} 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.

^{1Pe 2:6} For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” [Isaiah 28:16]

^{1Pe 2:7} Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” [Psalm 118:22]

^{1Pe 2:8} and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” [Isaiah 8:14]

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

^{1Pe 2:9} But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

^{1Pe 2:10} Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

^{1Pe 2:11} Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

^{1Pe 2:12} Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Discuss

1. What actions come to mind when you think about sincere love (verse 1:22) for your Christian brothers and sisters?

Our church friends are some of our closest friends. Our lives are knit together by a love for Christ, worship, fellowship, mutual travel interests, serving others, and prayers for each other.

2. In verses 1:24-25 Peter reminds believers their days are short, like grass or the flowers in the field. In his second letter, Peter reminds believers of the day of the Lord’s return when all the world will be destroyed to be created anew. What does thinking about the last encourage us to do?

We should live with the view that our days are short and that all material goods are ultimately without value. Therefore, we should focus on our true calling as God’s children, to live holy and godly lives, to live in close fellowship with one another, and be good and charitable neighbors.

3. In his discussion on holiness in verse 2:1, Peter tells Christians to rid themselves of five specific sins: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Since all sins are contrary to holiness, why do you think he focused on these five?

Peter’s discussion in the previous verses (1:22) is focused on showing love to one another, the fellowship of believers. The sins Peter lists in verse 2:1, malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, are all sins against others and have no part in Christian relationships.

4. In verse 2:2, Peter compares growing in Christ to newborn babies craving their mother’s milk. Some aspects of our faith grow as we mature, while other aspects of our faith are complete, ours by faith and unity in Christ. Which of the following grow and which are complete?

- a. Redemption

Our redemption is complete as a result of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. We can do nothing to add to our redemption. We have been redeemed from our sinful nature to be God's children.

b. Salvation

Our salvation is complete when God gives us faith in Christ and we receive his Spirit through baptism. God planned our salvation before the world's creation and sent his Son to die for our sins to remove the barrier of sin.

c. Forgiveness of sin

Christ's death on the cross was for the forgiveness of our sins is complete, one perfect sacrifice for all sins for all time. However, we sin daily in our thoughts, actions and inactions, so we must continually confess our sins and ask for God's forgiveness – which He is anxious and willing to do.

d. Faith

We receive faith as God's gift; God chooses us so that we are secure in his love and power. Some theological doctrines argue that we can never lose the gift God has given. As a practical point, we all know professing Christians who no longer worship God – usually because of a tragic loss or suffering. Peter's letters to the Churches in Asia Minor were written out of love and a fear that some believers would abandon their faith in the face of trials and persecution.

Our faith is dynamic, not static. Sometimes we feel our faith is growing stronger, and other times weaker. Our faith can be challenged by many events, loss, suffering, sin in the world, and our sin and disobedience. We should be assured that God called us into fellowship with Christ. He gave us our faith, and will keep us secure in him until he raises us from death on the last day. Our salvation is found in Christ alone.

e. Holiness

Our holiness is both complete and growing. In God's view, our holiness is complete because Christ is our righteousness when faith unites us with him. We are set apart from the world to be Christ's disciples. Our holy character continues to grow as we mature in our faith and make better choices not to indulge our sinful nature.

5. What aspects of maturity do you still crave for your life?

Answers vary.

6. What aspects of Christ is Peter emphasizing in each of his stone metaphors (verses 2:4-8)?

a. Living Stone

Christ is the living stone who brings believers together to be built into a spiritual house – a living temple. The purpose of the living temple is to worship and adore God and to offer sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and repentance. Christians are both the temple and the priesthood, serving God and others in loving kindness.

b. Cornerstone

A cornerstone is a stone in the foundation that determines if the rest of the structure will be straight and true. Christ is our foundation to build our lives around and find true purpose and joy.

c. Capstone

A capstone is a stone that holds up a stone arch. The angles of the capstone must be precisely cut, or the arch collapses. Christ was the stone rejected by men but is God's capstone to keep our lives from collapsing and save us from eternal destruction.

d. Stumbling stone

Christ is a stumbling stone to anyone who does not believe he is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, their personal Savior. Jesus declared, "I am the way and the truth and life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14.6)

7. Based on Peter's stone analogies, what warnings and encouragement do we have in being "living stones" like Christ?

Living stones are an analogy of the church called to action. We must be in community with others to serve God and our neighbors. The warning is that anyone who rejects Christ will stumble and fall – receiving judgment and condemnation.

8. Peter says in verse 2 we are chosen to be a royal priesthood. Paul and the writer of Hebrews use similar language to Peter in describing believers as a priesthood. Read the verses below and discuss the following aspects of being a priesthood.

^{1Pe 2:4} As you come to him, the living Stone —rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— ^{1Pe 2:5} 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.

^{Ro 12:1} Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

^{Ro 12:2} Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

^{Heb 13:15} Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

^{Heb 13:16} And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

- a. Who do priests serve?

Priests serve both God and people.

- b. What is their purpose?

Priests served God with praise, worship, and making sacrifices for the sins of others.

- c. What sacrifices does God desire from us? See Romans 12:1, 9-18 (Ephesians 5:1-2, Hebrews 13:15-16 as time permits).

^{Ro 12:1} Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Ro 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.
Ro 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.
Ro 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.
Ro 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Ro 12:13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.
Ro 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
Ro 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.
Ro 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. ⁸⁰ Do not be conceited.
Ro 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.
Ro 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

The spiritual sacrifices Peter refers to are praising and worshipping God, living holy lives, and choosing not to sin. We serve others through prayers for their salvation, witnessing to them, Christian love, and good works.

9. Summarize what Peter meant by telling believers to live as aliens and strangers in the world (verses 2:11-12, Luke 12:29-34).

Lk 12:29 **And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.**
Lk 12:30 **For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.**
Lk 12:31 **But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.**
Lk 12:32 **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.**
Lk 12:33 **Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.**
Lk 12:34 **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

The world is a metaphor for our sinful nature and worldly values. We are called to live with spiritual values where it is more important to serve than be served, to give away possessions than to accumulate them, and to trust in God's provision rather than worry about our lives.

10. In verse 2:12, Peter gives us something to think about (homework). We are to live such good lives that it is clear to others we are God's people.
- How did you do last week?
 - What challenges do you face this week?

Closing Prayer