

Results of the Call

Devotional Reading: [1 Thessalonians 5:1–10](#)

Background Scripture: [1 Peter 2:1–25](#)

1 Peter 2:1–10

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, **5** Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy

nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.



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Key Text

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

—1 Peter 2:9

From Darkness to Light

Unit 3: God's Call

Lessons 10–13

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the stone that causes people to stumble.
2. Explain why certain thoughts and actions are incompatible with status as a member of a holy priesthood.
3. State to the class which of the four identifications in [1 Peter 2:9a](#) is most convicting to him or her, and why.

Lesson Outline

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B. Prayer

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How to Say It

alpha privative *al-fuh priv-uh-tiv.*

Bithynia *Bih-thin-ee-uh.*

Cappadocia *Kap-uh-doe-shuh.*

Diaspora *Dee-as-puh-ruh.*

Galatia *Guh-lay-shuh.*

Pontus *Pon-tuss.*

Septuagint *Sep-too-ih-jent.*

Introduction

A. Questions of Identity

We live in a time when questions of identity predominate. Who are we in terms of politics and consumer tastes? Which relationships define us? Are these markers static, or are they fluid? The questions multiply from these starting points.

As the New Testament writers amply attest, Jews from the religious

leadership class all the way down to the common person found their identity in God and in the specific religious practices of the Law of Moses. When we read the New Testament today, we sometimes lose sight of the fact that becoming a Christian was a huge step in that cultural and religious context (compare [Luke 14:26](#); etc.). Beginning with the apostles, Christian leaders worked tirelessly to help new believers come to see themselves in a new light. They had a new identity in Christ.

B. Lesson Context

Peter was undoubtedly the most prominent among the original 12 apostles. He is named first in listings ([Matthew 10:2–4](#); [Mark 3:16–19](#); [Luke 6:13–16](#); [Acts 1:13](#)). His denials of Jesus and subsequent reinstatement are significant markers of his life ([John 18:15–17, 25–27; 21:15–17](#)). Some commentators use those and other indicators to see Peter’s life in terms of four chronological segments. The following texts in that regard are not exhaustive but representative:

1. Early ministry [Mark 1:21, 29–30](#); [Luke 5:1–7](#); [John 1:40–42](#)
2. With Jesus [Matthew 16:18](#); [Mark 1:16–20](#); [Luke 9:28](#); [John 1:42; 21:15–17](#)
3. Post-ascension ... [Acts 4:13; 5:29; 10:1–11:18; 12:1–19](#)
4. Later Life [John 21:18–19](#); [1 Corinthians 9:5](#); [Galatians 2:11–14](#); [2 Peter 1](#)

The 27 books of the New Testament include 2 that are ascribed to the apostle Peter. The first of these two is particularly thick with citations from and allusions to various Old Testament passages. By one count, 1 Peter is tied for second place with Hebrews in having the highest percentage of verses (69 percent of its 105 verses) that reflect Old Testament passages; only Revelation has a greater percentage. Peter was particularly fond of drawing from the book of Isaiah (examples: [1 Peter 2:6a](#),

8–9a, below).

We should wonder who Peter’s primary intended audience was. Were the addressees mainly Christians of Jewish background, Christians of Gentile background, or a significant percentage of both? Supporting the theory of a Jewish-Christian audience is the opening verse, which notes the letter addressed “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1). The word translated “scattered” is *diaspora*, mentioned in last week’s Lesson Context (see James 1:1; compare John 7:35). The Diaspora is a technical term for Jews who were dispersed among Gentiles as predicted in Deuteronomy 4:25–27; 28:64–68. And Jews certainly did live in the areas listed (compare Acts 2:5, 9–11), provinces located in modern-day Turkey.

On the other hand, supporting the theory of an audience of predominantly Gentile background are certain indicators in 1 Peter 1:14, 18; 2:9–10, 25; and 4:3–4. Proponents of this theory argue that Diaspora, or dispersion, should not be taken literally as applying strictly to Jews, but figuratively as applying to Gentile believers.

I. As Newborn Babies

(1 Peter 2:1–3)

A. Exhortation (vv. 1–2a)

1. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and all hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.

The opening *wherefore* is a conjunction that gives the implication of what has just been said in terms of necessary action to be taken (compare Ephesians 4:25). Peter’s audience—the members of the congregations to which he wrote—had received the gospel of Jesus Christ will-

ingly. They had obeyed the truth (1 Peter 1:22), had purified their souls (1:22), and had been born again (1:23). Consequently, they must resolve to live in a way that was consistent with those facts (compare Romans 13:12).



Visual for [Lesson 13](#). Before closing with prayer, ask the class to consider what actions or inactions can hinder them from building their lives on Christ.

What follows is called a “vice list” of five items in three groupings (compare [Matthew 15:19](#); [Galatians 5:19–21](#); [Colossians 3:5, 8–9](#); [1 Timothy 1:9–10](#); [2 Timothy 3:2–4](#); [1 Peter 4:3](#)). *Malice* constitutes the first grouping. It carries the sense of evil actions in general. Such actions

can be motivated by greed, spite, jealousy, or other moral failings; the resulting action intends to harm another person.

The second grouping consists of attitudes or personality traits that present themselves in behavior. *Guile* is an orientation of general dishonesty. *Hypocrisies* characterize a person who will play whatever role is most beneficial to him or her. *Envies* characterize a bitter, restless spirit that begrudges the success or possessions of others. Envy is the opposite of gratitude, of contentment with what God has given (see [1 Timothy 6:6–8](#)).

The third grouping is the spiritual poison of *evil speakings*. This word is translated “backbitings” in [2 Corinthians 12:20](#). Such behavior is what results from the previous three: a deceitful person feigning innocence and friendship yet harboring deep resentment and envy. Such persons work behind the scenes to damage the reputation of others.

All this reveals Peter’s concern for congregational solidarity. A congregation under pressure tends toward bickering and division (again, [2 Corinthians 12:20](#)).

What Do You Think?

Are there any aspects of your life in which you give yourself a pass to indulge in the vices named in [1 Peter 2:1](#)?

Digging Deeper

What risks are there in engaging in such, especially when the person speaks or acts anonymously?

2a. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.

As there are different levels of spiritual maturity, there are different foods that are appropriate for those levels. These are described in more detail in [1 Corinthians 3:1–4](#) and [Hebrews 5:11–6:3](#). There is nothing

wrong with the *milk of the word*; it is necessary and desirable for those who are infants, spiritually speaking. But its ingestion should lead to something important ([1 Peter 2:2b](#), next).

There is a play on words in the original text that is difficult to bring across in English. The words translated “guile” in [1 Peter 2:1](#) and *sincere* here are the same word, with the letter *a* added to the beginning of the second occurrence. This additional letter, known technically as an alpha privative, expresses negation. We often express negation the same way in English (compare the opposites *historical* and *ahistorical*). Thus, human guile and the sincere Word of God are seen as complete opposites.

B. Expectation (v. 2b)

2b. That ye may grow thereby.

There are two extremes to avoid when it comes to the milk of the word as spiritual nourishment. One extreme is to become so attached to that milk that the believer becomes satisfied and never moves on to spiritual meat; the other is to avoid that milk altogether. Either extreme yields the same eventual outcome: stunted (or no) spiritual growth. The point of the “newborn babes” ([1 Peter 2:2a](#), above) metaphor is not to illustrate helplessness or sinlessness. Rather, it frames and illustrates the need to *grow* in holiness.

What Do You Think?

How do you experience being completely reliant on God?

Digging Deeper

What other biblical illustrations are helpful when considering both your reliance on God and your responsibility to take initiative in your

C. Explanation (v. 3)

3. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The phrasing *if so be ye have* sounds strange to our modern ears. The *King James Version* elsewhere translates the underlying word as “though” ([1 Corinthians 8:5](#)) and “seeing it is” ([2 Thessalonians 1:6](#)), implying “since.” Thus Peter was appealing to his readers’ past experience with *the Lord*.

In so doing, Peter draws on [Psalm 34:8](#): “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” What the ancient psalmist advised is what Peter’s audience had done. This created the obligation noted in [1 Peter 2:2a](#), above. The obligation, if recognized and implemented, would help Peter’s audience grow out of the perilous state of spiritual infancy. [Hebrews 6:4–6](#) expands on this danger.

II. As Living Stones

([1 Peter 2:4–8](#))

A. Model (v. 4)

4. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

The focus of the discussion now shifts from the believers to whom Peter was writing to the Lord himself. Peter accomplished this by drawing on [Psalm 118:22](#), the first of several Old Testament texts used as proof (see [Lesson Context](#), above). Jesus applied this passage to himself in [Matthew 21:42](#). Peter also used it in his earliest preaching (see [Acts](#)

4:11; compare [Isaiah 28:16](#); [1 Corinthians 3:11](#); [Ephesians 2:20](#)). As the focus shifts, so does the metaphor: from infants needing to be desirous of milk to a *stone* evaluated in different ways.

To whom coming speaks of our approaching Jesus in obedience and worship. On the basis of what God has done in Christ, we as baptized believers have the privilege of approaching the throne of God in worship, praise, and petition (compare [Hebrews 10:19–22](#)). The words *approaching* and *coming* help us think about how the New Testament writers understand worship.

What Do You Think?

What difference does it make that your life is built on a *living* stone?

Digging Deeper

Which Bible passages support your answer?

B. Result (v. 5)

5. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

As rapidly as Peter shifted the focus away from his readers, so now he shifts back to them. One stone does not a building make, no matter how immense that stone may be. God's spiritual house requires numerous other *lively stones*. Their identity is not in doubt, as witnessed by the opening *ye also*.

The nature of this structure is also not in doubt: it is *a spiritual house*, not a physical one ([2 Corinthians 6:16](#); [Ephesians 2:20–22](#); etc; compare [1](#)

[Corinthians 6:19](#)). The way Peter phrases things in the verse before us, this spiritual house consists of *an holy priesthood*. In the Old Testament era, priests went to the physical temple to offer physical sacrifices that included animals; in the New Testament era, the priests (all Christians) are the temple, and they *offer living spiritual sacrifices* of themselves (also [Romans 12:1–2](#)). The physical temple building of the Old Testament era is not to be equated with physical church buildings of the New Testament or modern eras. The concepts of priesthood and temple have not been done away with; rather, they have been transformed (compare [Revelation 1:6](#); [5:10](#); [20:6](#)). Christians do not need a priest as the ancient Israelites did, because we now are priests ourselves as we serve under the great high priest, *Jesus Christ* ([Hebrews 4:14](#)).

What Do You Think?

What are some examples of sacrifices you are willing to offer God as part of your “priestly” responsibilities?

Digging Deeper

How can [Psalm 51:17](#); [Philippians 4:18](#); and [James 1:27](#) inform your response?

Stones

Outside the town of Bethlehem, I saw a stone threshing floor. On top of Mount Masada, I saw the stone fortress where the Jews made their last stand against the Romans in AD 70. In Jerusalem, I marveled at the huge stones that had been the foundation for Solomon’s temple. The small stones along the shore of the Sea of Galilee reminded me of Peter—a pebble compared to Jesus. A particularly moving sight was “the Pave-

ment” ([John 19:13](#)) in Jerusalem, which tradition says caught the blood of Jesus during one of His trials. What “stones” in your life call Jesus to the front of your mind?

—C. R. B.

C. Prophesied (vv. 6–8)

6a. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture.

Peter demonstrates the value of *scripture* as he begins to weave together several Old Testament texts. The particular reference here is [Isaiah 28:16](#) (compare [Romans 9:33](#); [10:11](#)). The quotes don’t read quite the same in our English version of Isaiah because Peter quoted from the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint.

6b–7. Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

Sion is, of course, Zion, which is Jerusalem (see the words used as parallel expressions in [Psalm 102:21](#); etc.). The Greek phrase translated *corner stone* or some variant of it occurs seven times in the New Testament (see [Matthew 21:42](#); [Mark 12:10](#); [Luke 20:17](#)). The second of the two uses here (*head of the corner*) quotes from [Psalm 118:22](#). The two occurrences in today’s text are entirely consistent in identifying this cornerstone as Jesus (compare [Acts 4:11](#); [Ephesians 2:20](#)).

8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

The first two phrases are parallel expressions from [Isaiah 8:14](#). In

Hebrew poetry, parallel lines of poetry often describe only one thing but use two phrases with synonyms to do so. Thus the *stone of stumbling* and the *rock of offence* are two different ways of describing the same thing.

Much has been made of the fact that the Greek word for “offence” is *skandalon*, the source of our English word *scandal*. That is true, but it can also be misleading since the way we use the word *scandal* may not be the same as the way *skandalon* was used in the first century AD. The way the New Testament uses the parallel word translated *stumbling* comes to our rescue here. In [1 Corinthians 1:23](#), the apostle Paul is most direct in identifying the crucified Christ as this stumbling block. All devout Jews expected the Messiah (the Christ) to come, but no one expected Him to be crucified. The concept was downright offensive.

It is worthy of comment here that we do not often (or ever) present Jesus as *a stone of stumbling* or *a rock of offence*. We tend to prefer more appealing images, and quite often our evangelism bypasses the truth embedded in these phrases. Not everyone will believe when presented with the gospel; the crucifixion of Jesus can be incomprehensible for many.

The flip side of believers being “elect” ([1 Peter 1:1–2](#)), or destined to salvation, is that those who reject Christ are destined for destruction. Peter understood that God in His foreknowledge was aware that the enemies of the cross would reject the gospel, thus *they were appointed* to this. We can be sure, however, that Peter’s heart longed for the salvation of his nation (compare [Romans 9:1–3](#)).

III. For a New Beginning ([1 Peter 2:9–10](#))

A. Identity, Part 1 (v. 9a–b)

9a. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.

Chosen generation draws on the ancient Greek version (Septuagint) of [Isaiah 43:20](#). The church as a chosen generation has not been granted that status because of its accomplishments, but because God selected it to be a *royal priesthood* (see discussion on [1 Peter 2:5](#), above; also compare wording in [Exodus 19:6](#)). In ancient Israel, those of royal lineage were separate and distinct from those in the priesthood. That changes in the New Testament era. Believers are royalty because of our relationship with King Jesus, but we're also priests in that we minister to one another.

I, the Priest

In my previous role as a hospital chaplain, I encountered an elderly man who was Roman Catholic. That tradition along with its religious terminology was deeply ingrained in him. That made it necessary for me to be creative in finding common ground on which to base my ministry to him.

My greatest challenge, however, was the fact that he was functionally blind and had extreme hearing loss. When I arrived for my weekly visit, his caregiver would announce, “The chaplain is here!” His response was always, “Who?” With more volume, she would then say, “The minister!” “WHO?” “THE PRIEST!” “Oh!” As he finally understood, a smile would cross his face.

I could have tried to correct his doctrinal error in calling me a priest (as he had been taught to understand the matter). But my concern was more about bringing him closer to the Lord in his final days. I *was* a priest as I mediated Christ to him. When was the last time you mediated

Christ to someone in your own role as a priest?—C. R. B.

9b. An holy nation, a peculiar people.

These two concepts draw on promises given to Israel. God told the people in [Exodus 19:5–6](#) that they were to be unlike any other people on the earth in their dedication and service to God and in God’s favor to them (compare [Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2](#)). In the older English of the *King James Version*, the word *peculiar* has the sense of being a “unique possession” (compare [Titus 2:14](#)). God does not share the church with any other god. He is a jealous God (see [Exodus 34:14](#)). These descriptions and titles speak of the church as a collective of believers rather than merely as individuals who share the same beliefs.

B. Task (v. 9c)

9c. That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The contrast between spiritual *darkness* and *light* is a key New Testament theme (Matthew

[4:16; Acts 26:17–18](#); among many others). We are not only *called ... into his marvellous light*; we are indeed light, as the apostle Paul points out in [Ephesians 5:8](#). The nature of our light sets us apart from unbelievers. To the degree that we fail to use that light to *shew forth the praises of him*, we lose the countercultural power of the Christian faith.

C. Identity, Part 2 (v. 10)

10. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The descriptions and titles Peter bestows on the baptized believers are all the more amazing when we consider the place from where the Jewish element of his audience had come. *In time past* they had forfeited their status as God's *people*, as seen in some of the lines Peter draws on from [Hosea 1:6, 9–10; 2:1, 23](#). These speak of Israel's adulterous faithlessness toward God. The Gentiles, for their part, had never been God's people just by definition. But in Christ the reversal for both was complete: believers are *the people of God* and recipients of His *mercy*. In light of that, no persecution or suffering at the hands of enemies of the cross can ultimately prevail.

What Do You Think?

In what ways would you describe being part of God's people as an example of His mercy?

Digging Deeper

What difference does it make to experience mercy in the context of community instead of solely as an individual?

Conclusion

A. Identity Redeemed

The question of identity is at the center of today's text. In the face of persecution and suffering, the believers to whom Peter wrote seemed to have had their doubts. In our contemporary world, the issue of our identity as Christians is just as important. Our world bombards us with endless identity options. These options in and of themselves range from the harmless to the sinful. But what all of these have in common is that they must give way before our allegiance to King Jesus.

Christians serve that king as members of royalty. Do we act like royalty in the best sense of the word? Do we treat fellow Christians as if they are princes and princesses alongside us? Most of all, do we honor King Jesus in all we do as His obedient servants? May we honor that role in the year 2023 and beyond as we work toward the unity of believers as the holy, royal nation of King Jesus.

B. Prayer

Lord God, help us to remember our identity in Your Son as we live out that identity. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Our ultimate identity is to be found in Christ alone.

Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Before class, prepare individual slips of paper that contain one phrase on each slip: *Wearing brown shoes; Has blue eyes; Had breakfast today; Has a dog; Wears glasses only for reading; Is wearing a belt; Came to church in a truck; Is wearing a watch; Has brown hair; Has a younger brother; Owns a*

musical instrument; Has not answered yes so far; Was one of the first people in class today; Age is an even number; Has an older sister; Is wearing something blue.

Randomly choose and read each slip while learners keep tally of the items to which they can answer yes. After reading all the slips, determine who has the highest score. Follow up by asking, “How do these answers show who you are?”

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Which Category?” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have students complete it as directed.

After either activity, say, “Our identity is composed out of many facets of personality and experience. In today’s text, Peter gives us metaphors for categories that help us better understand our identity as Christians.”

Into the Word

Divide the class into three groups, designating one as the **Newborn Babies Group**, another one as the **Stones Group**, and the last as the **Royal Priesthood Group**. Distribute handouts (you create) of the questions below for in-group discussions.

Newborn Babies Group. Read [1 Peter 2:1–3](#). 1—Since they’ve been “born again,” what activities should these new Gentile Christians be laying aside ([1 Peter 1:23](#))? 2—Just like babies, what should these believers desire? 3—What are some activities that help new Christians grow? 4—By “tasting” the Word, what will they learn about the Lord?

Stones Group. Read [1 Peter 2:4–8](#). 1—Who is the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God? 2—What is our job as “lively stones” in Christ’s “spiritual house”? 3—What does Peter teach us about

Jesus by quoting [Isaiah 28:16](#)? 4—In what way is Jesus “a stone of stumbling” to unbelievers?

Priesthood Group. Read [1 Peter 2:9–10](#). 1—What are the four categories that describe Christians? 2—In what ways do Christians act as priests for other believers? 3—Explain how each of these four categories emphasizes community rather than individuality. 4—How does Peter use [Hosea 2:23](#) to show the change in status these Gentile Christians were experiencing?

After allowing time for discussion, ask for volunteers from each group to share their answers. Then ask, “For Christians to be part of a ‘holy priesthood,’ what should they be doing? What thoughts and actions should they avoid?”

Into Life

Write Peter’s four descriptive phrases for Christians on the board: *A chosen generation / A royal priesthood / A holy nation / A peculiar people*. Then write these new phrases beside the previous ones: *Be grateful / Be helpful / Be holy / Be unique*. Challenge learners to suggest ways the second set of phrases relates to the first set. (*Possible response:* As the chosen, we are to thank God for the honor of being His children. As priests, we are to help others get closer to the Lord. As a holy nation, we are to be holy people. As a peculiar people, we should be different from unbelievers.) Have students pair off and discuss which is the most difficult to live out. End with a challenge to choose one phrase to live out, throughout the week, as their identity in Christ.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Set Apart” activity from the activity page. Encourage students to finish the activity as a take-home.