

Session 4

LIVING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

1 Peter 2:4-10

Memory Verse

As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

— 1 PETER 2:4-5, CSB



Living as God's People

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church and faith. As believers, we are “living stones” in God’s spiritual house, called to offer spiritual sacrifices to God that proclaim His goodness and point others to Jesus.

CALL TO ACTION: We are meant to point to Jesus in everything we do and say, and to point others to Him as well, telling them about His goodness and the salvation He offers.

In modern-day construction, perhaps nothing is more important when building a home than building a sound foundation. As the (literal) foundation upon which a home is built, foundation issues pave the way for costly problems down the line.

The process of pouring a foundation in the first place is exacting and complex. You need a stable building site (with the right kind of compacted soil, not in an area that is prone to flooding or home to underground cables, pipes, or tree roots), which will be excavated, treated, and compacted, before the formwork for the concrete pour can be put in place. After the formwork is done, rebar is put in place to make the foundation stronger and more durable. After all of these steps, the concrete itself is poured.¹

Once a foundation is in place, a number of things can cause problems in the long run. Things like poor drainage and large tree roots growing under the home can lead to cracks in walls and floors, and gaps in materials.

For a modern home to remain structurally sound, its foundation must be in order.

In New Testament times, their process didn't involve the multi-step prep and concrete pouring process we observe today, but it did involve the use of a critical stone: the cornerstone. This stone gave the building a reliable, stable, and firm foundation.²

This building feature appears both in the Gospels and other New Testament writing as a symbol for Jesus Christ's importance in the church and our lives. We'll unpack this idea in our study today.



Have you ever had foundation issues on a home you lived in? What happened?



Why was it important to fix this?

Session Summary

Jesus Christ is the “living stone” (v. 4) and cornerstone, rejected by many during His incarnation, but chosen and honored by God as the foundation for salvation and the church. He is both the cornerstone of the church and our lives as disciples of Jesus.

In God's “spiritual house,” (v. 5) Jesus is the cornerstone, and we are “living stones” (v.5), making up an active part of God's family. Though we may differ from other Christians around the world in culture and life context, we have Jesus in common—and He transcends everything else. As active members of God's family, we glorify and honor Him by offering the sacrifice of our time, talents, gifts, and service.

There are two possible responses to Jesus as the cornerstone of the church and our lives: we can believe and follow (and receive honor), or we can reject the cornerstone, acting as a stumbling block. Those who believe in Jesus are honored, chosen, and holy as God's treasured possessions, set apart from sin to praise God.

We once were slaves to sin, living in darkness, but God called us “out of darkness and into his marvelous light” (v. 9), and now we receive God's mercy and grace and have a joyful eternity with Him waiting for us.

1. The Cornerstone of Christ (1 Peter 2:4)

? Who did Peter refer to as “him, a living stone” in verse 4? How was He rejected by people? How is He chosen and honored by God?

The “living stone” (v. 4) Peter referred to in this verse is Jesus Christ Himself. This metaphorical image is used throughout the New Testament:

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This is what the Lord has done
and it is wonderful in our eyes?” —Matthew 21:42

“This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.” —Acts 4:11 (Peter spoke these words)


Jesus, the living stone, was rejected by (some) people during His incarnation. Some of those in opposition to Him falsified evidence, connived and had Him wrongly imprisoned, and ultimately pushed for His death on a cross. How hard and proud their hearts were to not recognize the long-awaited, prophesied Messiah had come.

Though Jesus was rejected by people, He was chosen by God to be the means by which we would find atonement for our sins, and God honors Him (John 8:54). He gave Jesus the name above all other names, the name at which every single knee will bow (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus is the “heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:1-3), and has been chosen by God to judge humanity (John 5:22-23).


? How and why is Jesus foundational to the church?

Just as the cornerstone is essential to a building's prosperity, Jesus is essential to the church's prosperity and ours. He must be at the center, foundational to all we do, for the church (and us) to remain healthy.

Remember the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10? Martha, overwhelmed by the chaos that ensued with a large crowd of visitors to whom she wished to show hospitality, Jesus's words reframe Martha's priorities. The problem wasn't the activities she was doing, it was that she wasn't focused on the Lord. We are meant to have Christ as the cornerstone, not just that the church is built on, but that our lives and daily activities are built on, too.

 How foundational is Jesus to your daily life? Why do you answer as you do?

2. Living Stones (1 Peter 2:5)

 In what way are we “living stones” as Peter described here? (v.5)

 How should we understand the “spiritual house” Peter is referencing?

In this passage, Peter moves on from writing about Jesus' identity to writing about ours.


In this spiritual house metaphor, Jesus is the cornerstone (the foundation upon which all is built), and we are also living stones, an important, active part of the “house,” connected to Jesus and unified together as one body. Much is written in the New Testament about the importance of unity in the body of Christ, and here is another example (we all, as “living stones,” work as one in God's spiritual house). This house represents the people of God. We may be very different from

other disciples of Jesus in a number of ways, but one thing we all have in common is our belief in Jesus—who unifies us in a way that is more important than any other type of affiliation (political party, race, secondary beliefs, etc.).

Paul wove a similar metaphor here:

So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. —Ephesians 2:19-20

This is who we are, and Peter goes on to describe what we do.³

 What do you think it means for us to be a “holy priesthood” (v.5)?

Peter also writes that we are a “holy priesthood” (v. 5), offering spiritual sacrifices to God, replacing the priests in the Israelite system before Jesus came. In the Old Testament, priests were in charge of handling sacrifices and offerings for the community at large. As “priests” in God’s spiritual house, we offer the sacrifice of our time, talents, and gifts, confessing His name, and offering Him praise and glory through our actions and the things that we say.

3. A Chosen People (1 Peter 2:6-10)

 What was Peter’s point in using the quoted passages in verses 6-8?

 How do nonbelievers “stumble” (v. 8)?

Peter went on to reference a series of Old Testament passages.

The first references the cornerstone, Jesus, and the honor that comes from believing in Him. For those of us who believe in Jesus, honor will come to us (v. 7). But for those who don't believe... Peter references another pair of passages.

For the nonbelievers, this same cornerstone that brings believers honor will be a stumbling block. "A rock to trip over" (v. 8). Peter wrote that "they stumble because they disobey the word" (v.8). They reject the gift of salvation and the truth that Jesus is Lord.

While unbelievers are disobedient, stumbling over the cornerstone that gives us life, Peter writes that believers are chosen and holy. We are chosen by God and holy not because we are perfect, but because we are set apart from sin for God. Peter wrote that we are God's possession. What a beautiful picture! What a humbling thought. God has chosen us for His own. That God would want and choose us, imperfect as we are, is worth marveling at.

As such, as a chosen, royal, holy people that belong to God, we proclaim God's praises! We point to Him with our actions and our words. We recognize when He is at work, and call it out, honoring Him for it. Our very lives proclaim God's goodness.



How do we "proclaim the praises of the one who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light" (v. 9)?

Look at Peter's beautiful depiction of salvation here. Before we knew Jesus, we lived in darkness. We were ruled by the desires of our flesh. Our lives were characterized by slavery to sin (Romans 6:16-18). But God had better plans for us . . . He chose us and called us "out of darkness and into his marvelous light" (v.9). Now we have freedom in Christ. Our eternity with a God who deeply, sacrificially loves us is secure. Praise God! We are recipients of God's mercy and grace. We deserve death for our sins, but instead, God gifts believers with eternal life. We are God's people—part of His spiritual home and family. How wonderful!

Peter's writings on salvation should be an even greater reason for us to tell others about Jesus. Proclaiming Jesus is our job. Those who don't know Him are currently still living as slaves in darkness, but maybe God will use us as a tool to help draw them into "his marvelous light" (v. 9).

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the “living stone” and cornerstone, rejected by many during His incarnation, but chosen and honored by God as the foundation for salvation and the church. Though people opposed Him and sought His death on a cross, God exalted Him above all, giving Him authority over judgment. Just as a cornerstone is essential to a building’s strength, Jesus must be central to both the church and our daily lives in order for our spiritual lives to remain healthy. Like Martha in Luke 10, we are reminded that our activities matter less than keeping Christ as our foundation and the central focus in all that we do.

There are two possible responses to Jesus as the cornerstone of the church and our lives: we can believe and follow, or we can reject and suffer for it. Peter wrote that believers will receive honor for their belief. Unbelievers, however, stumble because of their disobedience.

Those of us who trust in Christ are chosen, holy, and God’s treasured possession. His love for us is so deep! As such, we are set apart from sin to praise God. We are meant to point to Jesus in all the things that we do and say, and to point others to Him as well, telling them about His goodness and the truth about the salvation He offers them.

We once were slaves to sin, living in darkness, but God called us “out of darkness and into his marvelous light” (v. 9), and now we receive God’s mercy and grace and have a joyful eternity with Him waiting for us.



What are some practical ways we could work to keep Christ as more of a foundational part of our lives and decisions?



How does realizing your role as a “living stone” change how you look at your role in Christian community?

❓ What kind of spiritual sacrifices do you currently offer God in your everyday life? Where might God be calling you to offer something more?

❓ How would you sum up what Peter wrote about salvation in this passage? Who is one person in your life you could share this truth with this week?

Memorize

As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- 1 Peter 2:4-5, CSB

References

¹Richard-Purpura, Holly. “Top 10 Most Common Foundation Problems (and What’s Causing Them).” Groundworks, published August 12, 2021; updated August 7, 2025.

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²Martin H. Manser, Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

³Edmund P. Clowney, The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 88.