

1 Peter 2:4-10 ~ Living Stone, Chosen People ~ Discussion Questions

1. What does the recurrence of the word “stone” in this section suggest? Is stone used in a literal sense or as a metaphor?
2. What is the “living Stone” and how is it described elsewhere in the Bible? (Psalm 118:22, Mark 12:10-11, Acts 4:1, John 5:26)
3. How did God and people (men) treat the living Stone differently? (2:4, Acts 3:13-15, Acts 10:39-42)
4. In what way are we like living stones? (2:5, 1 Corinthians 15:45)
5. In Verse 2:5, what does Peter say that believers are to be? (Rev 1:6, 5:10, Hebrews 7:26) Have they heard this before? (Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 61:6) And what are they to do?
6. What exactly is a spiritual sacrifice? (2:5, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:1-2, Hebrews 13:15-16, Philippians 1:20)
7. What is a cornerstone? What will happen to those who trust in the “Cornerstone?” (2:6)
8. In what way did and does the stone (Christ) cause some people to stumble and fall? Was this destined, i.e., sure to happen? (2:8, Romans 9:33)
9. How could you being disobedient to God cause someone else to stumble?
10. What status did Peter ascribe to believers in Christ? What does he expect of believers? (2:9, Isaiah 44:1, Ephesians 1:4, Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 28:9)
11. How does being chosen by God for a special task make you feel? (Honored, worried, confused, conflicted, reassured, or something else) (Romans 2:6, Colossians 3:12-17)
12. How can we declare the praises of God? (2:9, Isaiah 43:21, Acts 2:11, 1 Timothy 5:25)
13. In what way were you in darkness before you became a believer? Be specific.
14. How does your past compare with your present condition? (2:10)

1 Peter 2:4-10 ~ Living Stone, Chosen People ~ Leader's Guide

1. What does the recurrence of the word “stone” in this section suggest? Is stone used in a literal sense or as a metaphor?

The word “stone” as used here suggests the thought of a building, in particular the temple (“spiritual house” in verse 5) not in the physical sense of the Jerusalem Temple, but in the metaphorical sense of God’s people (the use of “temple” to denote one’s own elect community).

2. What is the “living Stone” and how is it described elsewhere in the Bible?

The living Stone is, of course, Christ. Christ as the son of God has life in himself and furthermore, he is a life-giving stone.

Psalm 118:22 – The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone

Mark 12:10-11 – Haven’t you read this scripture: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’

Acts 4:11 – He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone

John 5:26 – For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

Christ is also referred to as “living water” (John 7:38), “living bread” (John 6:51), and the “living way” (Heb 10:20).

John 7:38 – Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

John 6:51 – I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

Hebrews 10:20 – by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

3. How did God and people (men) treat the living Stone differently? (2:4, Acts 3:13-15, Acts 10:39-42)

Peter says, “rejected by men and chosen by God.” Earlier, Peter repeatedly makes a contrast in Acts between the hostility of Jewish unbelievers toward Jesus and God’s exaltation of him.

Acts 3:13-15 – ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Acts 10:39-42 – ³⁹“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.)

But here, written some years after Acts, Peter says the living stone was not just rejected by Jews but by mankind in general “rejected by men”).

4. In what way are we like living stones? (2:5, 1 Corinthians 15:45)

Peter says all believers are like living stones. We derive our life from Christ, who was the original living Stone, or as Paul says the “life-giving spirit” to whom Peter’s readers (believers) have come.

1 Corinthians 15:45 – So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam [i.e., Christ], a life-giving spirit.

5. In Verse 2:5, what does Peter say that believers are to be? (Rev 1:6, 5:10, Hebrews 7:26) Have they heard this before? (Ex 19:6, Isaiah 61:6) And what are they to do?

God is building his people (living stones) into a spiritual house and they are to become a “holy priesthood,” which means the whole body of believers. John enlarges on this in Revelation.

Revelation 1:6 – and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen

Revelation 5:10 – You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

Hebrews 7:26 – Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Has this idea been heard before? Yes.

Exodus 19:6 – you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Isaiah 61:6 – And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.

Peter’s readers and we believers are first to become living stones. With our help and cooperation, God will then build us into a spiritual house in which we are holy priests. As priests, believers are to:

(1) reflect the holiness of God

- (2) offer spiritual sacrifices here on earth
- (3) intercede for others before God
- (4) represent God to others

6. What exactly is a spiritual sacrifice? (2:5)

1. Our bodies, as “living sacrifices” - Romans 12:1-2 – 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. 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.

2. A lifestyle characterized by sacrificial love - Ephesians 5:1-2 – Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3. Praise and thanksgiving, which we do in prayer and song - Hebrews 13:15 – Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

4. Doing good and sharing with others - Hebrews 13:16 – And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased

5. Even in the way we die for the Lord! - Philippians 1:20 – I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

It may be that the “spiritual sacrifice” that Peter intends is that of costly obedience to God in the face of abuse, since he later goes on to stress the passion (extreme suffering) of Christ as the pattern of uncomplaining suffering for believers (2:21-24, 3:17-19, 4:13-14).

7. What is a cornerstone? What will happen to those who trust in the “Cornerstone?” (2:6)

First of all, don’t confuse the words cornerstone and capstone. A cornerstone is the stone that forms the base or corner of a building joining two walls. A capstone is the crowning point of a structure. (For the sake of completeness, the top stone in an arch is called a keystone.) But here, the strong suggestion is a strong foundation and not the finishing touch on a structure or bridge. Some Bible translations incorrectly use the word “capstone” at the end of 2:7; it should continue to be “cornerstone.”

Quoting Isaiah 28:16, Peter says in 2:6 those who trust in Christ, i.e., believers “will never be put to shame,” which actually means honored. Instead of “precious” cornerstone, some newer (and I think better) translations of 2:6, read “honored.” The passage then suggests that just as Christ was rejected by humans but was chosen and honored by God, so too those who are experiencing rejection on account of their faith have been chosen by God and will be honored by Him.

Vs 2:6 from the NLT reads “I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, [or Zion] chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”

The picture that Peter creates is a structure made up of believers (living stones), the design and orientation of which are all in keeping with Christ, the cornerstone.

8. In what way did and does the stone (Christ) cause some people to stumble and fall? Was this destined, i.e., sure to happen? (2:8, Romans 9:33)

Peter says they stumble because they do not obey the message. He doesn't say that they did not believe the message, but that they did not obey it. However, this goes to James statement in James 2:14, “What good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?” Faith in this case is a demonic faith (even the demons believe), useless (faith without deeds is useless, James 2:20), and is a mere intellectual acceptance of certain truths without real trust in Christ as savior.

Peter goes on to say “this is what they were destined for,” i.e., to fall and be lost. It seems that the function of this verse is not to teach that some individuals were foreordained to stumble, but rather to reassure Peter's readers that their persecutors are heading for a fall, and this is all within God's plan. Some commentators say that God in his foreknowledge saw them as unbelievers while still others hold that Peter means that unbelief is destined to result in eternal destruction.

Romans 9:33 – As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

No matter exactly what Peter meant, what it means for us today is that if you come to Christ and believe in him, God will use you as an honored living stone and in turn he expects you to reflect his holiness, obey his commands, offer spiritual sacrifices, and show your faith by your deeds or works.

9. How could you being disobedient to Gd cause someone else to stumble?

10. What status did Peter ascribe to believers in Christ? What does he expect of believers? (2:9)

Peter said believers had four characteristics:

(1) Chosen people. In the Old Testament, as Israel was called God's chosen people, so New Testament believers are chosen or designated as God's people.

Isaiah 44:1 – “But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen.

Ephesians 1:4 – For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

(2) A royal priesthood. (See Verse 5 and Question 5)

Exodus 19:6 – you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

(3) A holy nation.

Deuteronomy 28:9 – The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in his ways.

(4) A people belonging to God. Though once not the people of God, they are now the recipients of God's mercy.

Exodus 19:5 – Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

What does Peter expect of believers? In this verse he says they may (or should) “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” However, earlier he sets out other expectations: prepare for action; be self-controlled; purify yourself; get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander; resist temptation; and offer yourself as a spiritual sacrifice.

11. How does being chosen by God for a special task make you feel? (Honored, worried, confused, conflicted, reassured, or something else)

(1). Honored. Do you feel honored to be chosen by God?

(2) Worried. Do you think you'll be able to do what God expects of you (see second part of Question 10)? What if you can't? Worse, what if you can but don't? What will God do then? When God judges your deeds, will he find you lacking?

Romans 2:6 – He will judge each person according to what he has done.

(3) Confused. Why was I chosen? I'm really not a very good person; I sometimes skip church, I don't pray when I should, I don't read the Bible as much as I should, I give in to temptation, I've led a pretty lousy life. Why me?

(4) Conflicted. Yeah, I guess I'm happy to be chosen, but I've got other important things to do. I want to spend more time with my kids or friends; I want to enjoy life; I want to travel; I want to prove myself. I'm willing to work hard, but I want to do it now for myself and my family, not for other people.

(5) Reassured. After the crummy life I've led and the number of times I've given in to temptation and all the people I've hurt, it's amazing that God would not only forgive me but call me “out of darkness into his wonderful light” to be a living stone and a part of his spiritual house.

No matter how you feel, bear in mind that being chosen by God carries a great responsibility as spelled out by Paul in his letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:12-17 – ¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

12. How can we declare the praises of God? (2:9, Isaiah 43:21, Acts 2:11, 1 Timothy 5:25)

We praise God not only by openly praising him in religious gatherings, but also by our deeds and by our testimony to others. Your personal testimony (you may have several) is one of the most effective forms of praise that you can offer.

Isaiah 43:21 – the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

Acts 2:11 – (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

1 Timothy 5:25 – In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.

13. In what way were you in darkness before you became a believer? Be specific.

14. How does your past compare with your present condition? (2:10)

Peter says once you were not the people of God but now you are. In Hosea (in the tragic final days of the northern kingdom of Israel toward the end of the Old Testament), God said because of disobedience, Israel was no longer his people. Nevertheless, the Lord still loved his covenant people and longed to take them back. Then, 800 some odd years later in Romans, Paul applies Hosea’s words to the Gentiles.

Hosea 1:6 – Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-Ruhamah, [not loved] for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them.

Hosea 1:9 – Then the Lord said, “Call him Lo-Ammi, [not my people] for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

Romans 9:25-26 – ²⁵ As he says in Hosea: “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,” ²⁶ and, “It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

Were you once not a person of God, i.e., not a Christ follower? Peter applies both Hosea’s and Paul’s words to his readers—and to us today. We were not people of God and now we are, Before coming to believe in Christ we had not received mercy, but as believers we have received mercy (forgiveness of our sins).