

The Peter Principles

Week 4: The Stages of Growth

1 Peter 2:1-12

Leader's Guide

Start your time with asking the group share about their week, or some testimonies or what they have learned so far. You can also ask them about the message on Sunday and what they can recall about it.

Read 1 Peter 2: 1-12 in New International Version (NIV).

What is the first word of chapter 2? What is this word referring to? How does this passage relate to the previous passage?

In the last 3 verses of chapter 1, Peter gave a prominent place to the Word of God and the role it plays in our salvation and spiritual rebirth. Now he transitions into chapter 2 by giving a high regard to the Word of God and its role in our sanctification (the process of becoming holy).

In verse 2, Peter exhorts his hearers to have an intense desire for the Word of God. In the physical world in order to have a hunger for food, we need to have an empty stomach. Peter says that in a spiritual realm we also need to empty ourselves of something's if we want to be hungry for the Word of God.

What are the 5 things that Peter asks to rid (strip off) ourselves from? Other New Testament writers support Peter's instructions. (See Colossians 3:8-10; James 1:21)

- a. ***Malice***
- b. ***Deceit***
- c. ***Hypocrisy***
- d. ***Envy***
- e. ***slander***

Give a definition for each? (Comparing different versions of verse 2 may help)

Which of these have been a major struggle in your life? Which of these sins do you need to strip off? Take some time to examine your thoughts, speech and actions. Write below at least one specific relationship you want to improve by putting away these sins.

In verse 2, Peter refers to his audience as newborn babies or infants and refers to the Word of God as pure spiritual milk. Does it mean that his audience were all brand new believers? Why is he using these metaphors? What is the significance of this analogy?

How does this apply to us today? What if I am a much older believer and have read through the Bible year after year and have studied in depth. Does this exhortation have any application for me?

Are you an older believer who is very familiar with the Bible? If you are, are you intensely desiring for God's Word as a new born baby does for his or her mother's milk? If not, why?

Let me get painfully honest and personal. When I (Ali) became a Christian some 30 years ago, I truly craved for the "pure milk of the Word". But I don't have that craving and intense hunger anymore. I still read it and study it but it is not the same as those old days. I really want that hunger back.

How about you? Do you want that hunger for God's Word come back in your life? Then let's together search our hearts in the coming weeks to find out what junk food is killing our appetite. Let's find out what unconfessed sins are hindering our growth.

In verses 4 to 7, Peter uses a few titles to describe Jesus: Living stone, choice stone, Chief corner stone and stumbling stone. What are the significances of these titles?

In verse 6, Peter is making reference to the Old Testament. Do you know the cross reference? (**Isaiah 28:16**)

What do you think is meant by the phrase "*and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame*"? (**2:6b**)

What do you think is meant by the phrase "they stumble because they disobey the message-which is also what they were destined for"? (**2:8b**) who is *they*? (**Look at Romans 9:30-33 to see if Paul can help you with your answer**).

In verses 4 to 10, Peter gives six different descriptions of who we are as believers. List them below:

a. Living Stones

b. Chosen People

c. Holy and Royal Priesthood

d. Holy Nation

e. God's Special Possession

f. People of God

Living Stones: What implications can we draw from Peter's reference to us as "living stones"?

Chosen People: Peter refers to his audience as a chosen people (other translations: chosen race or generation). Now when we look for people to choose to be on our teams we often look for winners, superstars, people with great abilities and advantages. Do you think that there was something very special about us or God knew that we are superstars and that is why He chose us? (*See Deuteronomy 7: 6-8*)

Holy and Royal Priesthood: What Old Testament parallel does Peter want to bring to mind through images like "spiritual house", "holy priesthood", and "spiritual sacrifices" in verse 5?

We as believers are God's spiritual house both individually and corporately as a church. Can you think of New Testament references related to that?

Peter calls us priests. What were the 2 main responsibilities of a priest in the Old Testament?

a. To offer sacrifices acceptable to God

Am I fulfilling my role as a priest? Am I offering acceptable sacrifices to God? (*Look up the following verses to help with your answer: Psalm 51:17; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15-16*)

b. To intercede on behalf of God's people

Am I praying for other believers in the body of Christ?

Holy Nation: We have already learned that the word “Holy” means to “be set apart” or to “be different”.

What was the nation of Israel set apart for? What did God expect the Israel to be? In what ways we, the church are a holy (set apart) nation? If my co worker or class mate did not know that I am a Christian could he or she tell that I am different from others in our group? (**Look up Matthew 5:13-16**)

God’s Special Possession: What does this mean? To what end are we given this privilege of being God’s special possession?

People of God: In verse 10, Peter tells his audience who they used to be and who they have now become and as a result what they have received. What does it say about their background? Are they Jewish or gentile believers?

In verses 11 and 12 Peter is setting the stage for what is to come in the rest of his letter. In these 2 verses, he encourages his audience in a general way how and why they should live godly lives all the time and especially in the midst of suffering and injustice. And then from verse 13 of chapter 2 he shows how this holy life can be displayed and practiced in the context of everyday life.

What does it mean to be foreigners and exiles and how would that help to live holy lives? (v. 11)

In verse 12 Peter begs us to live a godly life among the unbelievers. He says that if we do that, it will glorify God. (See also Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 3:16; Philippians 2:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 8:21)

Once I heard a preacher commented that the holiest place on earth is church parking lots on a Sunday because the minute we Christians arrive at that spot our whole attitude becomes godly and Christian. But though that is necessary, expected and needed, Peter is asking us that we live holy lives in more than one spot and more than one day a week.

Where some of those places are that we can live God-honoring lives; places that we spend a lot more time than church or its parking lot? Can we make a determine decision that this week we be the salt and light for Christ in those unsavory dark places? Give some practical examples.

Spend some time in prayer.