

Identity is a complex thing. We identify ourselves by many different criteria, none of which fully explains who we are. If you are a Christian, you have an identity that is supremely more important than any other title or identifier.

As we saw in 1 Peter 2:1-3, these new believers were maturing through suffering. Suffering can produce spiritual maturity which in turn leads to a greater understanding of identity.

For example, a baby born into the British royal family has no idea of their identity. Everyone around them knows their identity, but as an infant, they don't. As the child grows and matures, they become aware of the fact that they are royalty, and they begin to understand the privileges and responsibilities that come with that. In the same way, maturing believers grow in the understanding of their identity in Christ.

Living Stones

In verse 4, Peter begins by stating that Jesus is a living stone who was rejected by men but chosen and precious in the sight of God.

Jesus is the foundation stone of the church today. Any church that does not have Jesus and his Word as their foundation is simply not the church (see 1 Corinthians 3:11).

Peter then turns to his readers in verse 5 and says, "*you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood*", 1 Peter 2:5a.

Every believer is a stone in the Church. The building is not complete; daily it is being added to. The global Church numbers nearly 2.4 billion people, and that number is growing rapidly in the developing world. Jesus continues to build his church.

Holy Priests

Not only are believers building stones in God's Church; they are His priests. In the Old Testament, the Israelite priest functioned as a mediator between God and the people of Israel. The priest represented God to the people and the people to God. This was a huge responsibility reserved only for Israelites from the tribe of Levi.

Now, under the new covenant, Jesus is our High Priest. He is the ultimate mediator between us and God, and he calls us to be his priests on earth representing our community to God and God to our community. We are Christ's representatives in our circles of influence.

Spiritual Sacrifices

Verse 5 continues that as priests we have the responsibility to, "*...offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*"

What are these sacrifices? The Bible gives us a few examples. We are called to:

- Reject sin and present our bodies as a holy living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)
- Offer a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15)
- Give of our finances as a holy sacrifice to God (Philippians 4:18)
- Practice evangelism as a sacrifice to the glory of God (Romans 15:16)

We must never fall into the trap of thinking that these spiritual sacrifices are a way to earn our salvation. Our salvation has already been obtained for us by Jesus. Offering these spiritual sacrifices is our pleasure and privilege as followers of Jesus because they bring glory to his name and eternal rewards to us.

Do you believe?

In verse 6, Peter, quoting Isaiah 28:16, writes, “...*whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.*”

Believing is not simply giving verbal assent to the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is important, but true belief affects every aspect of our lives. Our belief informs our decisions. If you say you believe that Jesus is Lord of your life, then your decision making should reflect this.

We will not be put to shame for our belief in the gospel—that is a promise of God’s Word.

But for those who do not believe, the gospel is a stumbling and offense (see 1 Peter 2:7-8).

Today, Jesus is still rejected because what he taught is inconvenient. The things Jesus taught about marriage, finances, forgiveness and so much more are a stumbling block in our culture (see Matthew 5-7). If you stand for the Lord Jesus, you will also be a stumbling block.

Your True Identity

Verse 9 goes on to say, “*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*”

If you have believed in Jesus as Lord, this is your identity:

1. You are a **chosen race**: We are chosen by God to take on a new identity as part of His family (see John 15:16).
2. You are a **royal priesthood**: We are called by the King of Kings to be his priests here on the earth. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, we have full access to the throne of God, and we have a great high priest, Jesus, interceding for us.
3. You are a **holy nation**: We are a set apart nation—not “we” as Americans, but “we” as followers of Jesus, all 2.4 billion of us around the world. Our citizenship is in heaven (see Philippians 3:20).
4. You are a **a people for his own possession**: How much does God value us? Consider what he paid for our freedom: His own son. You are of infinite value to God because He gave

His only son for you. Not because He needs you, but because He chose you and bought you with the price of the precious blood of Jesus.

A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession—that is who you are. ***That is your identity.***

The Joy of Our Identity

In verse 10, Peter tells us why God has done this for us, “*that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*”

This identity comes with great privilege, great responsibility, and even greater joy. Every citizen of heaven is called to display Christ, to be salt and light in a dark world. We do this by living to glorify God with every facet of our lives, not just our Sunday morning church lives.

Do you know who you are? Are you maturing in your walk with the Lord and becoming more aware of your true identity?