

“Living Hope: New Identity, New Purpose”

1 Peter 2:1-12

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Introduction:

1. Peter uses a literary “inclusio,” beginning (verse 1) and ending (verses 11-12) this passage by calling Christians to put aside sinful behaviors and to put on sincere, brotherly love toward one another and the outside world. As in chapter 1, Peter is exhorting Christians to holy behavior.
2. This holy behavior is rooted in and based on who we are in Christ and who we are as God’s people. This is vital because our identity in Christ informs our purpose and our conduct.

Built On (verses 4, 6 – 8)

1. A Christian’s identity comes from being connected to or built on the “*living stone...chosen and precious*” of Jesus Christ—his incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Our identity no longer comes from our old way of life, our culture, our socio-economic status, our job, our education, etc. Our identity is Jesus, who is our life and hope.
2. To support the imagery of Jesus as the “*living stone*” and the “*cornerstone*,” Peter quotes from Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14. What Peter and Isaiah are saying is that being a Christian means placing all our trust and hope in Jesus. It means building our entire life on him.
3. As a Christian, Peter states that it is an honor to be built on Jesus Christ. As an unbeliever, Jesus becomes a stumbling block and an offense. This explains our present experience in this world. Like Jesus, unbelievers often reject, mock and hate us. The world is offended by the message of a crucified Savior and offended by those who follow him.

Built With (verses 5a, 9-10)

1. The living hope we have as Christians isn’t only a matter of a personal, private relationship with Jesus. Our new life in Jesus involves a life together with God’s people.
2. American Christianity can be very individualistic. We tend to view our faith in terms of our own life and our own plans. But Peter is calling us to realize that our identity as a Christian can never be separated from the “group plan” God has for his people.
3. To support this truth, Peter quotes from Exodus 19:5-6 and applies all the descriptions given to Israel to the church – a “*chosen race*”, a “*people for his own*”

possession,” a “*royal priesthood,*” and a “*holy nation.*” Through Jesus, God is saving a people comprised of men and women from every tribe and tongue.

4. The most important allegiance and source of identity that we have is not the nation or race we belong to. Through faith in Christ, we are part of a holy nation of people who belong to God. For a Christian the most essential answer to the question, “Who am I?” is “I am a follower of Jesus Christ, and I belong to the people of God.”

Built For (verses 5b, 9)

1. Our identity, built on Jesus and with God’s people, informs our purpose in life. Verse 5 tells us this purpose: “*to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*”
2. What does it mean to offer spiritual sacrifices? Verse 9 explains that we are to “*proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*” The driving purpose of our identity in Christ and with God’s people is to proclaim the awesome glories and worth of the God who rescued us from darkness, death and hell, and showed us mercy.
3. Hebrews 13:15-16 says that spiritual sacrifices also involve using our lips to acknowledge the name of Jesus, extending acts of kindness, giving generously, and caring for fellow Christians. These spiritual sacrifices please God and bring him much glory.

Fellowship Starters:

1. On what have you built your identity? Have you built it on your ethnicity, your education, your socio-economic status, your job, etc.—or on Jesus Christ?
2. What is the impact on your spiritual life when you either forget who you are in Christ or replace your identity with something other than Jesus Christ?
3. How have you tended to view your Christianity in individualistic terms—my devotional life, my faith, or my relationship with the Lord? In what ways is the Lord calling you to identify and engage with His people?
4. Do you have any relationships marked by sin (malice, slander, deceit, envy, etc.)? What must you do to repent and be reconciled?
5. How can you grow in proclaiming the “*excellencies of him who called you out of darkness...*” (1 Peter 2:9) with unbelievers in your family, neighborhood or workplace?