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I Am a Priest



If you could have a direct line to a notable figure in our society, whom would you choose?

QUESTION 1

#BSFLmore

As servants of Christ, we are His representatives.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

You can't just enter the White House. You must have an appointment, and your name has to be cleared by security. But while Abraham Lincoln was in office, people simply went into the White House each day, hoping for an audience with the president. You just waited in line with everybody else—and hoped.

This routine allowed for one exception. Lincoln's youngest son, Thomas ("Tad"), was famous for his undisciplined "run of the house," even interrupting cabinet meetings on occasion. Lincoln adored his son, so Tad always had direct access to his father.

Most of us will never have direct access to the president of the United States, but as followers of Christ, we have direct access to the God of the universe. At one time in biblical history, only certain people had special access to God; they were called priests. Even today, when we hear the word, a specific image of what a priest looks like comes to mind.

But Peter called all believers priests since they each have direct access to God. Let's consider what exactly that means.

WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

1 Peter 2:4-5 (CSB)

⁴ As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—⁵ 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.

Nothing is more awkward than a middle-school dance. As a sixth-grade boy, I primed and primed, nervously getting ready for my first middle-school dance. When I was finally ready, my dad drove me to the school, and the closer we got the more nervous I became. As I got out of the car, my father looked me in the eyes and said, “Son, I want you to remember who you are. I want you to remember whose you are. And never forget what your last name represents.”

I knew what he was saying: I was a part of a family. I represented more than myself at that school dance; my life also represented my dad. In the same way, for those who have trusted Christ, He has brought us into His family—and we represent Him every day of our lives.

As followers of God and members of His family, our lives are built on the foundation of who Jesus is. We build our lives on the One Peter described as “a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God” (v. 4). Jesus is no insignificant pebble! He is the foundational stone upon which everything else is built.

When we build our lives on the strong foundation of Jesus Christ, we function as “living stones” that make up “a spiritual house” and “a holy priesthood” (v. 5). Let’s look at the primary functions of a priest.

- » **Priests have the privilege of coming into the presence of God.** In the Old Testament Law, the priest was the one who went before God with the sacrifices from the people. In Christ, however, we each have the privilege of approaching the throne of God (Hebrews 4:16); access isn’t limited to a select few. Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice to make this possible, but as priests, we still offer sacrifices; ours, however, are “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”

How should we understand the metaphors described in these verses?

QUESTION 2

(v. 5). We give ourselves fully to Him. The apostle Paul had this to say about our lives: “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship” (Romans 12:1).

Being “a living sacrifice” (v. 5) is something we do daily. This act of sacrifice and “being built to be a holy priesthood” (v. 5) happens “as you come to him” (v. 4). It’s important to recognize that coming to Him is not a single action, as in the moment of salvation. The verb “come” refers to continuous action, as we regularly come to God in fellowship. When we come to God in a continual relationship and spend time with Him, we grow as His priests, making personal, “spiritual sacrifices” (v. 5) as God becomes more precious to us.

- » **Priests have the privilege of representing Christ and serving others.** The sacrifice we offer can be expressed in another way. “Therefore, through him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15a). We should naturally have a word of praise on our lips! As the Old Testament priest represented God to the people, our words and actions represent Christ. The fruit of our faith goes far beyond just our words. Faith calls us to action, and a life of faith being lived out cultivates fruit that pleases God.

1 Peter 2:6-8 (CSB)

⁶ For it stands in Scripture: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ⁷ So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, “The stone that the builders rejected—this one has become the cornerstone,”⁸ and “A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over.” They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this.

In the eighth century B.C., the prophet Isaiah quoted this declaration from the Lord God, “Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be unshakable” (Isaiah 28:16). Then, almost eight hundred years later, Peter wrote with an elevated level of clarity because he knew Isaiah was pointing to Jesus. Jesus is God’s “chosen and honored cornerstone” (v. 6).

In what ways do people stumble over Jesus and His message today?

QUESTION 3

In modern-day construction, we treat a cornerstone in a ceremonial sense, placing it in a prominent corner of the building, typically with an inscription. In biblical times, the cornerstone played an even more critical role in construction. The right stone had to be placed in the right spot in the right way because it set the standard for placing all other stones and building materials.

Construction today calls for a variety of foundations, depending on the surface of the ground and the type of building. When it comes to constructing our lives, we must start one way—and only one way. Jesus must be the cornerstone of our lives. “The one who believes in him will never be put to shame” (v. 6).

Unfortunately, not everyone chooses to build his or her life on Christ. Quoting Psalm 118:22, Peter noted that some people outright reject Jesus as the cornerstone. These people will stumble and fall over that stone because they disregard and disobey the truth. These people refuse to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and they will miss the blessings and benefits that come from making Him the cornerstone of their lives. To reject Jesus Christ is to reject life itself—eternal life. Stumbling and falling over the opportunity to build one’s life on Christ has consequences.



1 Peter 2:9-10 (CSB)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Not everyone rejects Jesus. In referring to those who trust Jesus and accept Him as the cornerstone of their lives, Peter called them “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his

Which of the descriptions of God’s people in verse 9 most resonates with you? Why?

QUESTION 4



***How can we work
as a group to praise
God and declare
His goodness
intentionally?***

possession” (v. 9). Each of those phrases is rich in telling us what it means to be a follower of Christ, and each points to the fact that our lives ought to look drastically different from the rest of the world.

One way to understand this idea is with a sports metaphor. If we made a list of NBA players who were privileged enough to win three championship rings in their basketball careers, most of us would fail to include Dickey Simpkins. Normally we think of Hall of Fame basketball players such as Patrick Ewing, Allen Iverson, Charles Barkley, Elgin Baylor, John Stockton, and Karl Malone. But none of these players ever won a single championship—much less three. These guys were great individual players, but they were never on a championship team.

Most sports fans have never even heard of Dickey Simpkins, but he is a three-time world champion. Sure, he may have been the eleventh or twelfth man in the rotation, but he happened to play on a team that was led by Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and the rest of the Chicago Bulls in the late 1990s. While his individual performance wasn’t as highly celebrated as his teammates, Simpkins was on the winning team.

Because we are in Christ, we are on the winning team. It has nothing to do with our individual performance or efforts; Christ gained the victory for us through His death and resurrection. “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (v. 10). We were once in darkness, but we were called “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v. 9). God has made us His priests—“a royal priesthood” (v. 9)—and as His representatives we can do nothing less than offer thanksgiving in our hearts and praise on our lips.

QUESTION 5

"It is the most secure place in the world to be connected to Jesus."

JENNIE ALLEN, *PROVEN*

LIVING STONES



***Who in your life needs to see a clear representation of Christ?
Check all that apply.***

- Coworker
- Family member
- Friend
- Neighbor or acquaintance
- Other: _____

What steps can you take this week to represent Christ in your words and actions?

LIVE IT OUT

Believers have direct access to the God of the universe. How will you respond to this privilege?

- » **Express praise.** Thank God for His gracious gifts and for the privileges we have to come before Him with prayer needs and to be His representatives.
- » **Pray for others.** As you connect with family and friends this week, ask how you can be specifically praying for them. Make a prayer list, and commit to take these needs to Christ regularly.
- » **Proclaim Christ.** Identify one way you or your group can proclaim the goodness of Christ and the salvation He offers. Who needs to see a visible demonstration of God's people serving others for the sake of the gospel? Whom can you encourage with a testimony of what God has done in your life?

As Christ-followers, we've been given the task of representing Christ in our homes, our workplaces, and our relationships. **This week, look for opportunities to share how Christ has brought you from darkness into a relationship with Him.**



My thoughts