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# I AM A PRIEST



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

**QUESTION #1**

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*As servants of Christ, we are His representatives.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

You can't just enter the White House today. You have to have an appointment, and your name has to be cleared by security. While Abraham Lincoln was in office, however, people simply went into the White House each day, hoping for an audience with the President. They 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 that word "priest," a specific image of what a priest looks like comes to mind.

But as we'll see in 1 Peter 2, Peter called all believers priests. Let's explore what exactly that means.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## 1 Peter 2:4-5

**<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

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 men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.” Jesus is no insignificant pebble! He is the foundational stone upon which everything else is built. We are to build on Him as our one solid foundation. (See Matt. 7:24-27; Eph. 2:19-22.)

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.” Let’s look at the two primary functions of a priest.

- 1. 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 all have the privilege of approaching the throne of God (see Heb. 4:16); access is not 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.” We give ourselves fully to Him.
- 2. Priests have the privilege of representing Christ and serving others.** Just as the Old Testament priest represented God to the people of Israel, our words and actions represent Christ to the world. We represent Him as members of His family and as priests within His kingdom. 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.

*How should we understand the metaphors described in these verses?*

**QUESTION #2**

## 1 Peter 2:6-8

**<sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”<sup>7</sup> So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”<sup>8</sup> and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.**

In the eighth century B.C., the prophet Isaiah quoted this declaration from the Lord God: “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste’” (Isa. 28:16). Almost 800 years later, Peter wrote with an elevated level of clarity because he knew Isaiah was pointing to Jesus. Jesus is God’s “cornerstone chosen and precious.”

In construction today, 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 a 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.

Modern construction 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. “Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Unfortunately, not everyone chooses to build their lives 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.

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

**QUESTION #3**

## PICTURING PRIESTS

*What does it look like to live as a priest of Jesus Christ in today's world?  
Select the image below that best represents how you understand your role  
as a member of the "holy priesthood" described in 1 Peter 2:5.*



*What are some specific actions you should be taking  
in your everyday life as a priest of Jesus?*

A large, empty white rectangular area intended for writing answers to the question above.

In 1979, a hopeful musician named Paul Hewson submitted a tape to RSO Records. In response, he received this short letter: “Thank you for submitting your tape of ‘U2’ to RSO. We have listened with careful consideration, but feel it is not suitable for us to present. We wish you luck with your future career.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul Hewson—you might know him better by his stage name “Bono”—and his three band members learned quickly what it was like to be rejected, but this rejection didn’t prevent U2 from moving forward. The band went on to win 22 Grammy Awards, sold more than 170 million records worldwide, and become one of the world’s best-selling musical groups of all time.

Peter wasn’t writing about stumbling over failed business opportunities. 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 deadly and eternal consequences.



## **1 Peter 2:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

*What word or phrase from these verses do you resonate with most? Why?*

### **QUESTION #4**

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 own possession.” 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. Allow me to use a sports metaphor and say that, as believers, we put on a new jersey and become a part of God’s team.

In October 2010, over a billion people watched the miraculous rescue of 33 Chilean miners who had been trapped more than 2,000 feet underground for over two months. Jose Henriquez was one of the miners.

The media gave Henriquez nicknames like “The Pastor” and “Spiritual Guide.” The names resulted from the testimonies of the rescued miners. They reported that twice every day while they were stuck in the mine, Henriquez would pray over them and lead them in devotions, using passages he had learned from God’s Word. A local pastor remarked, “That knowledge of the Word...helped him because he did not have it to read.”

When asked about it, Henriquez said, “I believe that the key to all this was in the Word of God, in having believed God.... That’s why I say to the whole world that the Lord wants them to believe in Him to believe in His Word.” As a result of Jose’s leadership, several miners gave their lives to Christ, and millions heard the gospel on live network television through listening to his testimony.

After being rescued, Jose Henriquez was the first to return to work in the mines. Returning was one way he thanked God for rescuing him.<sup>2</sup>

Mines are dark places, especially when there seems like no hope of escape. As Christians in today’s culture, we also were once in darkness, but we were called “out of darkness into his marvelous light.” God has made us His priests—“a royal priesthood.” We are His representatives. Therefore, we can do nothing less than offer thanksgiving in our hearts and praise on our lips because of all that He has done.

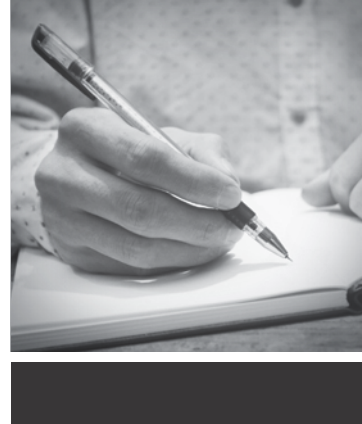
***How can we work as a group to intentionally praise God and declare His goodness?***

**QUESTION #5**

# LIVE IT OUT

How can you serve Christ this week as His priest and representative? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Express thanks.** Thank the Lord for saving you and including you in His royal priesthood. Thank Him for empowering you and equipping you to live on mission and in service to Him.
- ▶ **Pray for others.** Interceding for others before God was a part of the priest's duties. Contact family and friends and ask how you can specifically pray for them. Make a prayer list and regularly intercede for others in prayer.
- ▶ **Proclaim Christ.** As a priest, you represent Christ to others. Identify one way you—or your group—“may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”



Following Christ means having a direct line to Almighty God. It also means representing Him through our actions and attitudes. Are you committed to both of those opportunities?

*My thoughts*

1. [nextshark.com/this-is-a-rejection-letter-u2-got-from-a-record-label-back-in-1979/](http://nextshark.com/this-is-a-rejection-letter-u2-got-from-a-record-label-back-in-1979/)  
2. [cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/october/from-darkness-to-light-a-miners-story](http://cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/october/from-darkness-to-light-a-miners-story)

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLmore**