

The Priesthood of the Believer

1 Peter 2:4-10

MPS: God makes His people a royal priesthood to demonstrate and declare His glory through the gospel.

OBJ: Every person can understand the Doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers by three roles.

INTRO Jesus promised, "I will Build my church." The God who builds His church is Triune in nature. He builds by revelation of His nature in worship and service, community and mission. Today, we begin looking at the stones with which He builds.

TRANS How many of you as Christians believe God has called you to be a priest? Hold up and put on white collar.

READ 1 Peter 2:4–10

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you 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. ⁶For 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." ⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," ⁸and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

*⁹But 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. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. **1 Peter 2:4-10***

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TRANS In three days we will celebrate Reformation Day. When the world celebrates spiritual darkness, the church remembers the day that began a *throwing off* of darkness for the church. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther delivered his 95 Theses to the door at Wittenberg. This event catalyzed a turn in history of throwing off shackles from the church that led to a whole new way of understanding and relating God, by a new way of relating to the Holy Scriptures. One of the cardinal doctrinal principles of Luther's 95 These was the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The Doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers states that every person has access to God through Jesus Christ, the great high priest, and do not need a human priest or mediator. Martin Luther purported, "All baptized believers are called to be priests".¹ John Calvin held that, "the priesthood of all believers was not only a spiritual privilege but a moral obligation and a personal vocation."² And finally, as one other commentator explains, "It (priesthood of the believer) means that every Christian has immediate access to God, that he serves God personally, that he ministers to others, and that he has something to give."³ The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers forms for us what Peter tells us in this passage. Christians are made living stones by Jesus that are being built into a spiritual house for the habitation of God.

TRANS I want to spend our time looking at this teaching from the Scriptures and to see how important it is for each one.

A Biblical perspective of the Priesthood of every believer

The first encounter with a Priest in the Scriptures occurs in Genesis 14:18-20. Abram returns from a battle and encounters this Priest-King Melchizedek. He honors Him as God's representative by giving him a tenth of all that He has. We do not know much about Melchizedek. What we know of Him is from this encounter, and from Hebrews; "*He is without father or*

¹ Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers", First Things. October 31, 2016. <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/the-priesthood-of-all-believers> Last Accessed October 26, 2018.

² Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers", First Things. October 31, 2016. <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/the-priesthood-of-all-believers> Last Accessed October 26, 2018.

³ Edwin A. Blum, "1 Peter," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 230.



mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever." (Heb 7:3) Melchizedek was a unique priest of eternal order, who we will return to in the New Testament. God used him to bless Abraham, from whom he would birth a nation of His chosen people, the Israelites.

Priests hold a regular presence in the Scriptures. God called His people out of Egyptian bondage to be a Kingdom of priests. (Ex 19:5-6) He then called Moses up on the mountain to receive what we now know of as the Ten Commandments. Moses was on the mountain for forty days. And as is too often customary, the people became impatient. They demanded that Aaron form an idol, and they began to worship it. It was a 'really bad day' when Moses came down and found the people in their idolatry. God made it clear to Moses that because of their idolatry they could not all be priests. He gave the priesthood to Aaron's household and the tribe of Levi. The Aaronic priesthood was installed to facilitate the people in worship before God, to show them the right way to God, but to constantly remind them that they were not God and that there was a distinct separation between them and God. Only the tribe of Levi were priests until the time of Jesus.

God's will was for all His people to be priests.⁴ The priestly institution itself was needed only because the sin of the people had not yet been finally dealt with, and an intermediary was required between Israel and God lest His holiness break out and destroy His sinful people (Ex 19:24).⁵ When Jesus came and died, he ushered in a new and better covenant. Hebrews tells us that a change in priesthood means a change in the law as well. (Heb 7:12)

Jesus came as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. His Kingdom is eternal and He has a better covenant. (Heb 7:17,22) Christ Jesus has made all who are in Him the priesthood that God always intended His people to be. No longer need we rely on an intermediary who is a sinner like us; rather, the Lord has become the mediator between Himself and His own in the person of the God-man Jesus Christ (9:15).⁶ **Christian, because of Jesus Christ you are made a priest unto God.**

God makes His people a royal priesthood to demonstrate and declare His glory through the gospel.

TRANS back to 1 Peter 2:4-10 And this is the priesthood to which Peter refers when he writes that Christ-followers are *like living stones* and are *being built up*. Peter was very familiar with this language of "stones". Remember where we began the BUILD series and what transpired there. Jesus told Peter he was a "small stone" because of his confession "Jesus is Lord". But on the cornerstone of this truth, Jesus would build His church. **All who confess "Jesus is Lord" with their life are made living stones who are being built into a spiritual house for God's habitation.**

Peter's phrase "*As you come to him*" connects the previous section to what follows. He writes to those who "*have tasted that the Lord is good*" and explains what happens to those who come to faith in Christ. Jesus became our Great High Priest. (Heb 6:20) And in Him all who follow by faith become His nation of priests. Each individual is made a living stone but are built together into one spiritual house. Jesus Christ brings a person's identity from only individual, as "*living stones*", into a covenant with other Christians as they are "*built up as a spiritual house*". **The priesthood of all believers means that the Christian life is lived in covenant with other Christians and holds individual responsibility for the whole church.**

OBJ Three roles define every Christian's responsibility as priests.

1. Worship – honor God in all with all.

Christians are chosen by God to proclaim His glory. The first responsibility of every Christian is a life of worship. This is what Peter means when he states that we are "*living stones*". Leviticus was written as an instruction manual for how priests were to lead people in relating to, or worshipping, God. Romans 12:2 states that we live as sacrifices unto God. **Honoring God with one's whole life forms the first and principle responsibility of every Christian.**

⁴ Watchman Nee, *The universal Priesthood of Believers*. (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc. 2017), 18.

⁵ "A Royal Priesthood in Christ", *Reformed Bible Studies & Devotionals*. (Ligonier.org) <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/royal-priesthood-christ/> Last Accessed October 25, 2018.

⁶ "A Royal Priesthood in Christ", *Reformed Bible Studies & Devotionals*. (Ligonier.org) <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/royal-priesthood-christ/> Last Accessed October 25, 2018.



Every Christian enjoys personal communion with by direct access to God. No man requires a priest to relate to God. Jesus entered the presence of God's habitation, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, destroyed the curtain of separation and made all who believe in Him the people of God's new habitation. (Heb 9; 1 Cor 3:17) [The Spirit within you testifies of God's closeness to you because of the finished work of Jesus Christ for you.](#) But the Spirit's presence grants no one the use of this access as they please or only for personal purpose, pleasure or gain. No one who truly knows God by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ lives as an end unto themselves. [Salvation, the knowledge of God, holds the inherent practice of communion and community, ministry and mission.](#)

ILLUS Old Testament Priests led the people in right worship in many ways, including participation in personal sacrifices. The Father would bring the sacrifice for the family. The Priest met Him at the altar and walked him through the sacrificial process, the prayers and reminders of God's faithfulness.

Hebrews instructs Christians to serve as priests in worship among the church today.

*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, **Heb 10:19-25***

Christian, your glad confidence in worshiping God because of Jesus is a confidence for all those around you. Your drawing near with your whole heart, regardless of your sin or current situation, to let God have His way of holiness and righteousness on and in you is a help for others who may feel weak or unsure in their present moment. Your confession, no matter how weak you may feel, reminds others of God's faithfulness in holding them. Your "stirring up" of one another to good deeds, your prioritizing to meet together and staying focused on Jesus' good promise is a real and practical means of God's regular grace and another's sustained faith.

APPL Maybe, the greatest "disease" of American Christianity and the church is the individualism with which we approach our faith in Christ through the church. How we fail to consider one another, in faith and in failings. How we think only of ourselves and our needs. How we measure the church by personal standards, desires and needs, without consideration for others, and surely not for need of the world. [A Christian's priesthood status is never a "license to live, think, or act" with individual preference or priority.](#)

Christian, you are a priest of Jesus' Kingdom, a nation of priests. You are part of the whole church. Your worship needs the whole church, and the worship of the whole church needs you. Wherever you work, whomever you work with and whatever you do, because of Jesus it of eternal significance. All your life is a living sacrifice, a help for the church and a witness for the world. [Christian, your first responsibility is to honor God in all of life with all of life for worship. Are you stewarding your life in this way?](#)

2. **Intercession – stand in the gap before God and people.**

Christians are commissioned by God as His representatives. This is what it means that we are priests, we serve the unique role of representing God in this world. We know that those who trust in Jesus will never be put to shame, as Peter says in verse six. And, those who do not believe can only "stumble" by denying Christ. Christians live to appeal to the world for the One whom we represent. And, we appeal to the One we represent for the people among whom we live. [Christians are God's Ambassadors to the world.](#) (2 Cor 5:20)

Christians intercede first for the church among the world.

ILLUS Genesis 18 records Abraham praying for Sodom. Sodom was the poster-child of wickedness, sin and worldliness. It was God's intent to destroy the city and all its inhabitants. But Abraham interceded. His nephew, Lot, lived there. Abraham wanted to save Lot from God's total destruction. He stood before the Lord and prayed repeatedly for Sodom.(.22-32) And do NOT miss this: Lot and his family were saved because Abraham interceded.



READ Hebrews 12:12-16a

¹²Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶that no one is sexually immoral or unholy. **Hebrews 12:12-16a**
 Christians intercede to encourage each other to walk in holiness and righteousness, and exhort each other to flee from sin. (Heb3:13) **Christians stand before God on behalf of one another; and we stand before one another on behalf of God.**

Christians intercede for the world. This we know, Christian, that the one who does not repent and believe to build their life on the Rock will stumble and be crushed by it. Christians stand before all people of the world to share the gospel so all can hear and believe. Our life as a living stone and the church as our spiritual house are being built up to testify of the goodness of God in Jesus Christ. This is how Christians intercede before the world as a faithful witness to Jesus.

As a nation of priests, prayer is our first act of love; our first labor of mission. Who are you interceding for, Christian? And, who has you, helping you walk in holiness and stay away from sin? Christian, you are a nation of priests to intercede; to stand in the gap before God for believers to be rescued, and non-believers can hear and be saved.

3. Ministry – delivering the love of God through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christians are “charismaed” by God to serve in the church for the growth of the church. One scholar states, “The priesthood of all believers is a call to ministry and service; it is a barometer of the quality of the life of God’s people in the body of Christ and of the coherence of our witness in the world, the world for which Christ died.”⁷ Too many Christians go looking for a church that can do something for them, when what they need is a church that will do something with them. **Christian, you are empowered for God’s work.**

Ministry involves what you do and why you do it. We’ve already looked at some practical ways in which we serve one another, by encouragement, exhortation and prayer. When Christians minister to one another, we share God’s love in tangible ways. **ILLUS** I hold that one of our greatest long-standing ministries at LifePoint is one of our best and most practical. Meals of mercy is a simple way to bless another person by one of the most practical acts, providing something to eat when life is hard and heavy.

Jesus has served us in the greatest way. We’ve “tasted” his goodness. Ministry and serving provides a tangible expression of the spiritual reality that is taking place within us by manifesting it in the world. What we do, all we do, how we do and why we do brings great joy to us as it births hope, faith and joy in others through a simple expression of God’s love. **When we minister in Jesus’ name, the simplest word and deed makes the greatest impact.**

The priesthood of all believers is not an individual license, but a personal mandate for congregational identity, immersion, influence and impact for the glory of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Christian, you are a nation of priests to minister; to deliver God’s love through the gospel by meeting needs in His name.**

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⁷ Timothy George, “The Priesthood of All Believers”, First Things. October 31, 2016. <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/the-priesthood-of-all-believers> Last Accessed October 26, 2018.

