



Towards the end of chapter 1, Peter began to talk about the church – an everlasting community who have been “born again” by the “living and enduring word of God” (1v23).

In this Sunday’s passage (2v4-10), Peter continues to reflect on what the church is and how wonderful it is. This is particularly encouraging when, in the West, the church can appear to be struggling and in decline.

1 – what we’re becoming: a spiritual house (2v4-5)

Peter begins by telling us that we are “being built into a spiritual house” (v5). It is worth noting that Peter begins by addressing the church as a whole, rather than individual Christians. He tells us that we are the bricks and God is the builder, and that he is building us into a new home for himself and us. This home will be even greater than the temple. Within this ‘holy home’ we will find meaning and purpose as we live as priests, offering our lives and worship as “spiritual sacrifices” to God (v5).

2 – what we’re built on: Christ the cornerstone (2v6-8)

But this picture has an edge. It is not simply a happy, amorphous, ‘soft around the edges’ community. Everyone is welcome to this community, but there are entry requirements. However, those entry requirements are very low: we need only “come to” (v4), “trust in” (v6) and “believe” (v7) him, for Jesus has paid the great cost for us to enter his people with his precious blood (1v19). But though the entry requirements are low, the cost of not meeting them is astronomically high. For Jesus is “the cornerstone” Peter tells us in v6. The building stands, and only stands, upon him. Take Jesus out of the church, or attempt to enter the

church without coming through him, and you will find yourself standing in a pile of dust, as many sadly do.

3 – who we are: God’s special possession (2v9-10)

After the shock and sadness of hearing what happens to those who stumble on the rock of Christ (v7-8), Peter returns to the present tense to remind us who we are, giving us a list of identity statements for us to enjoy taken from Exodus 19 (“a chosen people”, “a royal priesthood”, “a holy nation” and “God’s special possession”, v9) and Hosea 2 (“a people” and those who “have received mercy”, v10). Though the church may look weak, and is not what it will one day, God has already made it something incredible. And we are only at the beginning of seeing how God will glorify himself through it.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. In what ways do you feel the church to be struggling and weak?
→ In what ways have you felt encouraged by the church lately?
→ Why is it so easy to get discouraged?
2. Why do you think Peter addresses the church *as a whole* here before he addresses believers more individually later in the letter?
→ In the highly westernised West, how should that shape how we think about the church and ourselves?
3. How is it both a challenge and a help to remember that God is the builder, not us?
→ Are there other places in Scripture/stories of individuals that make the same point?
→ How have you seen this dynamic play out in your life?
4. What do you think it means that Christ is the “cornerstone” of this “spiritual house”?
→ How is it a great encouragement to know that he is the cornerstone?
→ How might we be tempted to make Jesus something less than the cornerstone in how we think of and practice our faith?
5. Which of Peter’s statements about us as Christians in v9-10 do you find most encouraging, and why?