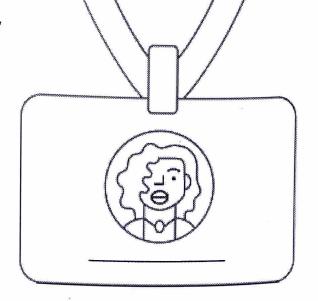


Session 2

Confident in Identity

1 Peter 2:4-10



Read - 1 Peter 2:4-10 c

*As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and, 'A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for. ³ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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What	Does	the	Bible	Say?	I
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2. In 2:4-10, Peter describes the Christians he's writing to in several different ways. Either as a whole group or in pairs, identify the different descriptions he uses. What aspect of their Christian identity was Peter wanting to help them grasp with each one?

Description	Meaning			
e.g. Living stones (2:5)	They become part of the 'spiritual house', built around Jesus. Each one of us has a role to play as God's Spirit lives amongst us.			

- 3. Their identity was based on Jesus and what he had done for them. How does Peter encourage them to keep trusting Jesus in 2:4-6?
- 4. Take a look at Exodus 19:5-6.
 What phrases or ideas has Peter borrowed from Exodus and applied to the Christians he is writing to?

Why might he have done this?

5. The first readers of Peter's letters were living in the Roman Empire. What challenges might they have faced in maintaining their Christian identity described in 2:9–10?

Early Christianity in the Roman Empire

The Roman Empire was huge, spanning significant chunks of Asia, Europe, and Africa. There was enormous diversity within it: groups of people with differing customs, cultures, and gods. This created an ongoing challenge for the rulers of the Empire: maintaining peace and social cohesion. Generally speaking, emperors maintained a policy of religious tolerance, allowing local people to continue worshipping their local gods. Back then, most people believed that if you didn't worship the local deities, they might become angry and ruin your harvest, or send a nasty plague, or kill you – so allowing people to continue their regular worship was a smart move, politically speaking.

In addition to worshipping their local gods, subjects of the Empire were required to pay homage to Caesar by declaring that he was 'Lord'. Going above and beyond in emperor worship increased a city's likelihood of receiving financial or political favours. Failing to do so, however, would bring the wrong kind of attention.

Going Deeper Q

6. Exodus not only speaks of what God saved his people from (slavery in Egypt), it also speaks of what God saved his people for (to be a people who would know him and make him known). But what does God say about their identity and purpose when they were in exile, in Jeremiah 29:4-14?

What does this show us about the identity and purpose of God's people, wherever they are and whatever the circumstances?

7. Why do you think Peter focuses on their identity so early on in the letter?

Why not just focus on telling them to live good lives?

Living it Out (6)

- 8. Which aspects of your identity as God's 'chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession' are a particular encouragement at the moment? Why is that?
- 9. Like Peter's first readers, there are probably people on your frontline who don't believe in Jesus or think he's particularly special. In what way might the truths that Peter has dwelt on help you be more confident as a Christian on your frontline?
- 10. What's your takeaway from the discussion a truth to celebrate, a fresh insight to embrace, a distorted perspective to repent of, a commitment to offer, an action to take?

My takeaway:	

Prayer Time 👑

- Take a few moments just to reflect again on how you have been affirmed in your identity and purpose through the discussion. Thank God for what has encouraged you.
- In pairs or as a group, share one implication of your discussion for your frontline, and pray for each other.

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Terms

Spiritual house (2:5)

Israel longed for a renewed, more glorious temple.
The community of Jesusfollowers (made up of Jews and Gentiles) has become the place where God's glory and presence dwells.

Chosen people (2:9)

Even though they were predominantly Gentiles, through their relationship with Jesus they have become part of God's people, part of Israel's story, fully wrapped up into God's rich purposes for the world.

Royal priesthood and holy nation (2:9)

All of God's people share in the privilege and responsibility of reflecting God's holy character to the wider world and helping bring people into relationship with God.