

## Developing a Common Identity

## 1 Peter 2:1-12

### 1 Peter 2:1-12 Introduction

- We live in a society that values individualism and independence.
- We live in an age that is perhaps the most individualistic ever.
- Technology, while uniting the planet, bringing 7 billion people closer to one another than was ever dreamed possible, paradoxically has the ability to separate and isolate any number of people who are sitting in the same room.
  
- In the midst of all this individualism, independence and isolation, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that as Christians we can only grow in the context of a group.
- We are born into the world as individuals, but we are born into families, communities and larger societies.
- We are likewise born again as individuals, but we each need other believers.
  
- For God's children, independence is not the ideal toward which we strive.
- We are utterly dependent upon God.
- We are interdependent with respect to one another.
- This may not come naturally to us, but we need to see our need and then work toward a sense of common identity.

**When Christians grow properly, they don't grow alone. They grow together with others and share in the life of the group.**

### 1 Peter 2:1-12 Outline

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### Children of the Same Father 2:1-3

- 2:1 laying aside all malice
- Peter's wording has the force of a command, but he describes this "laying aside" as an already accomplished act, "having set aside..."
  - Malice = evil in general
  - Deceit = fraud or craftiness
  - Hypocrisy = pretending, phony behavior
  - Envy = jealousy or ill will
  - Evil speaking = backbiting or defaming someone
- Envy is frequently the hidden source of a lot of evil speaking about others.
  
- 2:2 as newborn babes
- For a newborn, milk is not really optional.
- It's not a fringe benefit or potential bonus.
- Milk is a requirement and every child across the board needs it to survive.
- The newborn, thus, craves milk, and it turns the desire into a demand that absolutely must be satisfied.

- 2:2 Such should be our desire for “the pure milk of the word” or “the pure spiritual milk.”
- We should eagerly desire our necessary spiritual nourishment.
- pure milk of the word
- The word Peter chose for “pure” is the exact opposite of the word “deceit” in v.1.
  - Deceit = *dolos*
  - Pure = *adolos* = unmixed, unadulterated, sincere
  
- 2:2 Technicalities of translation aside, what exactly is the “milk” Peter is talking about?
- Wayne Grudem of Phoenix Seminary says of this verse,
  - *“Several contextual considerations favor a reference to the written word of God, the Scriptures, whether read or listened to.”*
  
- Here’s how Warren Wiersbe see it:
  - *“If we stop feeding on the Word, we stop growing, and we stop enjoying (“tasting”) the grace that we find in the Lord. When Christians are growing in the Word, they are peacemakers, not troublemakers, and they promote the unity of the church.”*
  
- But nobody has said it much better than Pastor Chuck Smith.
  - *“God’s word is spiritual food. We grow by it. If I want to be used of God, it is important that I fill my mind, my heart, and my life with the word of God. To have a working knowledge of God’s word is vital. That’s why we teach the word of God from Genesis to Revelation at Calvary Chapel. We desire the pure milk of the word that we might grow thereby.”*  
*Pastor Chuck Smith, The Word for Today Bible*
  
- 2:3 When we first taste the Lord’s grace, His extreme kindness towards us, our natural reaction is to want more.
- If we nurture that particular desire, God doesn’t disappoint us.
- He continues to provide a fuller, richer and more personal comprehension of His grace.
- We should nurture every longing within us that causes us to want more of His word.
  
- 2:4 Jesus gave Peter the nickname “Rocky.”
- It’s only appropriate that he is partial to stone and rock comparisons.
- Peter begins with the Lord. We need to bring ourselves to Him as a starting point.
- We are joined to Him.
- Our standing as Christians, then, depends upon the status of Christ.
  
- 2:5 The word house that Peter uses may mean not only a residence, but may also refer to the family that lives there.
- Peter describes a living temple which is also the ‘household’ of God.
- It is made up of those who are brought near to God as His sons and daughters.
  
- 2:5 In Europe, where my family and I used to live, many of the old churches contain the tombs of kings, queens and other nobility.
- Images of the dead are frequently carved in stone on the lids of these massive coffins.
- In the dim light and motionless air of bygone centuries, it can all seem kind of creepy.
- The temple Peter describes here is completely different from these.

- 2:5 We are living stones, and we are part of a continually growing house or household.
- In the temple Peter imagines here, the architecture itself is alive.
- God's house grows as new stones are added, but the older stones don't just sit there.
- The whole building grows into a holy temple of the Lord. (See Ephesians 2:19-22.)
- 2:6-8 Peter crowds several Old Testament references together here to make his point:
  - In 2:6 he cites Isaiah 28:16.
  - In 2:7 he cites Psalm 118:22. Jesus also referred to this verse in Matthew 21, right after telling the parable of the wicked tenants.
  - In 2:8 he cites Isaiah 8:14.
  - He closes by emphasizing that all of this is part of the eternal plan of God.
- 2:8 God controls the destiny of the unbeliever as well as the believer. See also:
  - 2 Peter 2:9, 12, 17
  - Romans 9:14-24 (Paul also cites Isaiah 28, as Peter just did above in v.6.)
  - But it's a corporate rather than an individual destiny. It need not refer to God actively choosing individuals to go to hell, though some admittedly teach that.
- 2:8 Peter H. Davids, commenting on the passages just mentioned says:
  - *"the text is referring ... to the irony that a group formerly estranged from God is now elect or "in," while a group that would seem to have as good or better a chance of being "in" is now "out," a mystery to which these authors ... can only respond, 'it is all according to God's inscrutable plan and under his control'"*
- 2:8 This entire passage may, however, prompt the question:
  - Why would God create a universe in which free moral agents were allowed to rebel against Him?
  - Answer: Perhaps because He is more glorified in allowing a significant measure of evil, enduring that evil for a time, using evil for good, forgiving those people who repent, and finally overcoming evil than by creating a universe in which no evil ever existed at all.

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#### **Priests of the Same Order 2:9-10**

- 2:9 Peter describes the church in terms that God used of the children of Israel back in the Old Testament. (Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 7:6)
- He first heard this theme of election applied to the church from Jesus. (John 15:16)
- When we think of God's election, we should always think of God's grace. God doesn't choose based on merit. (Deut. 7:7-8)
- 2:9 All of these privileges carry with them a big responsibility:
  - We are to "proclaim the praises" of God.
  - The word praises might better be translated "excellencies" (ESV), that is "excellences" or "superiorities."
  - We are to reveal all that is best about God to a world so lost, people might not even recognize His marvelous light if they were engulfed in it.

- 2:10 Here Peter uses pictures drawn from the Old Testament prophet Hosea.
- Israel rejected God, so He rejected His people.
- He did, however, promise to bring them back into fellowship with Himself.
- The church presently serves the purpose that Israel once served, but God's rejection of Israel is not permanent. (Romans 11:25-31)

### **Pilgrims on the Same Journey 2:11-12**

- 2:11 sojourners and pilgrims The sense is that we are resident aliens or foreigners.
- We are living in a world where we don't belong.
- This doesn't mean that we withdraw by pulling away from the rest of society.
- We do, however, look forward, taking our standards of behavior from our real home even while we are still here.
- 2:11-12 Our conduct here among nations is supposed to be so good, so pure and so God-honoring, that people who do not know God will glorify Him because of us.
- Let's make it a point to live in such a way that if anyone tries to speak against us, our good works will prove their accusations to be wrong.

### **1 Peter 2:1-12 Conclusions**

- We are children of the same Father.
- This means that together we form one family.
- Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking are things that can destroy a family.
- Therefore we should lay such things aside.
- And let's continue to drink in that pure spiritual milk of God's word which provides the nourishment we need to grow.
- We are stones in the same temple.
- Each one of us fits into a space that no other stone is intended to fill.
  - *Not all children in a family are alike, nor are all the stones in a building identical. In fact, it is diversity that gives beauty and richness to a family or building. The absence of diversity is not unity; it is uniformity, and uniformity is dull.*

– Warren Wiersbe, Be Hopeful
- We are priests of the same order.
- In the book of Hebrews we were taught that Jesus is our high priest.
- But we are also part of a royal priesthood.
- Through Christ we each have equal access to God and may proclaim His praises to a world that is lost in a darkness so dark, those in it may not even recognize light if they were engulfed in it (like the eyeless fish).
- We are pilgrims on the same journey.
- Though we are living in a world where we don't belong, we have not been abandoned.
- Jesus promised to be with us "even to the end of the age."
- Moreover, we are all on this journey together.
- Despite our shared sense of alienation, or maybe precisely because of it, we need to strive to develop a sense of common identity.