

Series: 1 Peter

Sermon #3: Identity as Priests

1 Peter 2:1-10

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- April 25, 2021

“Different” Video Link:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/hes4tvzz0p8wyyw/Sermon_Intro_Different_Series.mp4?dl=0

If you can hear this message, listen closely. To the exiled, misunderstood, or upside down, this is your message of hope. When problems come, use them. When enemies persecute you, love them. These struggles are a fire refining you into gold. Look around. You are not forgotten. You are not alone. Challenge what is expected of you. This world is not your home. You are different.

I'll start with a story. Little Johnny's mom looked out her window and saw him with the three little kittens, and he was holding church. He had them sitting down in a row and he was preaching at them. She was so proud—maybe she has a pastor in the making. And then she heard the kittens meowing really loud and scream and hiss. And so, she runs to the window to see what's happening, and he is dunking them in this tank.

And so, she says, “What are you doing?”

And he says, “I'm baptizing them.”

“No, you can't do that to kittens. They're afraid of the water.”

And Johnny says, “Well, they should have thought of that before they joined the church.”

Anybody feel like a kitten sometimes in church? That's happening in 1 Peter where maybe some of the people that joined the church thought, *This is great. I have a new set of friends, I feel like I can be safe here, and look what's happening.* And then the culture changes.

And that happens in contemporary church times as well: you join, things are working

nicely, and then persecution arises or difficulties and trials come about. And you start to realize, *Wait a minute ... is this normal? Is this natural?*

And Peter is saying, *Oh, yeah. It's always been a part. I guess maybe you should have known that Jesus said, "You'll be persecuted if you follow me."*

And when I was looking at the passage this week, I was praying for this week and the next two weeks—we'll be looking at chapter 2, verses 1 through 12, which are so dense with meaning and application, I want to spend three weeks on it. I'm praying that this could be an "aha" moment for some people when they come to realize that God has chosen them and then crafted them for a purpose; that God values them, who they are, and has made them special for such a time as this.

Because when you look at these verses, chapter 2, verses 1-12, you'll see that it says that God has chosen us and that He knights us. He gives us this title and with that title we have a special purpose. We have a reason to exist.

And in the context of when this was written, the people that Peter is writing are starting to lose their confidence in what they're doing and why they're doing it. And Peter is going to send this message that God chose you, He's knighted you, and He's given you this great purpose. And it's because they're being worn down by the pervasive hatred and persecution in the culture.

And it's not even general; it's very specific. Nero and his lying media machine that he had going is accusing the Christian church of doing things and being things that they're not. And it's a simple conversation to stop the lies, but it's almost like today—it's almost hard to have a simple conversation. And they're projecting these lies so that they can justify the inhumane, perpetual persecution that the Christians are having to endure.

The three prominent lies were that they were a superstitious group; that they were cannibals (believe it or not); and that they were incestuous.

They said the Christian church was superstitious because they believed in miracles and their chief magician was this Jesus, and that they believed in magic.

They believed they were incestuous because the Christians would have a love feast. And a love feast would be like our potluck dinners. We gather together because we love each other and we have a feast. But in a culture that is saturated with pornography, there's only one meaning of the word "love." And they were told that Christians were getting together to have sex with their brothers and sisters.

And finally, they were considered cannibals because they met for communal meals—communion, the Lord's table. And they're reciting the Savior saying, "This is my body. Take and eat from it."

Now the point is that the people in power who had influence on the culture were projecting shame and lies upon the Church so that they could continue to catch them and destroy them and kill them.

And Peter's response to this is probably contrary to what a lot of people would think. He doesn't tell them to fight back. He reminds them of who they are and what their purpose is. He tells them about who they are because their identity will lead to their actions. Who you are will determine what you do. That's his big point of emphasis here.

And in the first chapter we looked the issue of identity where he says, *Look, you guys are exiles. You're foreigners. This isn't home. Home is in heaven. You are part of the kingdom of God and you're not supposed to be kind of fitting in here. It's supposed to feel like you're out of place.*

So, that was his early identity label that he put on them, so that who they are would help determine what they did. And now he's going to continually add these new pronouncements of who they are and how much they're valued by God. Because again, as I say, who you are affects what you do. There's power in identity.

The Power of Identity

Identity is a big word these days. It's pretty popular to use it. Let's just define it so we can see how it's being applied in the Bible.

Identity is your self-definition, what's going on in your head, that's defining who you are, what value you have, what meaning and purpose you should have in your life. Usually some tapes are playing in there. It's words that are running through there reminding you of what you ought to be or what you ought to be doing or whether you're of good value or of little value.

For a lot of us, the tape that we're playing in our head belongs to our parents. And the reason is because—I think the titles of "father" and "mother" go all the way back to creation and to the nature of a father and a mother. They were made to have tremendous power, for good or for bad; for evil or for righteousness. And so, some of us are trying to rewrite those tapes or erase them or tape over those.

But parenting is profoundly influential in how we value ourselves. A moment that I had growing up that was very tender will display this. My younger sister Mary was trying out for cheerleader or something comparable to that in seventh grade. So, she is walking home from that tryout and she was not chosen to be on that team. And walking home she's just trying to be a good soldier. She's biting her lip. She's just trying to compose herself, because it's really hurt her in a lot of different ways. We lived at the middle of a hill, and so, when she crested that hill, our mother and I were in the driveway doing something with groceries. And mom saw her. And when their eyes met, you could see Mary starting to shake. She was out. She had gone as far as she could go courageously. And so, my mother ran to her, and when they joined together, mom went down on her knees, and they just hugged. And Mary wept. And there was the moment. Here is the point of the power of the title of "Mother." She spoke into her soul at a tremendously vulnerable time where Mary might be re-evaluating her worth, her value, her identity. And mom said, "No, no, no, it doesn't matter what the people at the school think. It doesn't matter whether you make that team or not. What matters is that you are loved. You are valued. It's all good. This is just a transition."

So, you can see the power of that, right? That's a good example. Some of us don't have good examples and we have to constantly be renegotiating in our own minds. What's in our head? What's telling you what your worth and what your purpose is? Is it the crowd—what people think of you? Sometimes I think the cruelest person we ever have in our heads is in the mirror. He's the meanest person influencing our lives in this area of identity.

And Peter comes in and says, *What if we had the Holy Spirit get in there? What if Yahweh God had something to say about that?*

Because here's the thing. In this time and this culture, we are bombarded with a multiple billion-dollar industry that tells you at every turn, *Are you enough? Are you man enough? Are you strong enough? Are you pretty enough? Are you thin enough?*

All of our marketing and campaigning and all this effort to sell things—because if you're not man enough, you can buy this. If you're not thin enough, we can supplement there. It's all for sales. And the point is now is like never before in human history. We've been questioned, and sometimes it's on really trivial things, like appearance.

And Peter says, *What if God's Spirit was in that mind of yours playing around? What if you were not conformed to this world, but rather transformed by the renewing of your mind, by*

listening to God's Spirit in your life? And He speaks Bible. Did you know that? The Spirit's first tongue is Holy Writ. And He'll speak to you if you'll listen.

Who You Are:

- 1. Chosen and Precious**
- 2. Exalted Title with Its Responsibilities**

And the passage today comes to us and it says this: According to Yahweh, this is who you are. You are chosen and precious. You get this exalted title that comes with awesome responsibilities. That's what he's saying. While the world tries to shame the Christian and the Church and look down and mock us, God Almighty comes in and says, *You are chosen exiles. You are God's precious building blocks. You are chosen priests, part of a royal priesthood. That's who you are. And who you are leads to what you do.*

Value: We Are Precious, Chosen Building Blocks

So, Peter starts with value. He's going to start with value. He's going to say, *This is how much God would spend on you, if you would.* And he says, *You are His precious, chosen building blocks.*

Let's talk about value. How do you determine value? There are multiple ways, but certainly the one that's pretty common to us right now is the market approach. And the market approach is what a knowledgeable and willing buyer is willing to spend to get that widget. That's what it's worth. If someone is willing to pay that and they're reasonable and they have the money, that's what it's worth.

And listen, we know that can be relative. We have a phrase—"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." That makes perfect sense ... if they're a reasonable person, sure, then that's what it's worth.

Or how about this one? "One man's junk is another man's treasure." So, it could be trash to you. One man's trash is another man's treasure.

So, when we look at this passage, we have to consider that. Here are a couple of good examples. Jeffrey Koons—I would love to meet this man. Because years ago, at his young son’s birthday party, a clown made balloon animals. And Jeffrey Koons thought those were beautiful, and they are. And so, he made balloon animals. He’s an artist. But they were twelve feet tall. Here’s one right here.



It’s called the “Orange Balloon Dog” because it’s an orange balloon dog. And I bring that up, because in 2013 he sold it for \$58.4 million. And that was the largest art sale of a living artist when that happened in 2013. And he held the title as the highest-making living artist selling art. Until 2019 when he sold his balloon bunny for \$91 million.



So, this should be a lesson to all you dads out there. When you have your little kid's birthday party and you're drifting off and wishing you could be somewhere else, look around. It could be right there, like \$160 million because he made smart out of it.

1 Peter 2:4-6

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. ⁶ 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.”

So, here's the thing. What somebody is willing to pay for it—yeah. But here's another thing. Man's trash is Yahweh's treasure. I want you to see when we look at this passage how man's trash is Yahweh's treasure. That's what to look for. Verses 4 through 6: “As you come to Him, the living stone--rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him--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. Just like it says in Scripture, ‘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.’”

Look how it says that Jesus is rejected by humans. It says, “As you come to Him, the living Stone--rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him--you also are living stones, rejected by the people.” The idea here is He's building a building. He wants you to imagine what takes place in a rock quarry. You've probably seen this when you've seen people's houses get siding with rock, with some Austin stone. And they're picking that.

In this case, it's not just laypeople here that reject Him. God's appointed appraisers—Levites and priests and Pharisees and Sadducees—they're picking up Jesus and they're looking at Him and they're saying, *Umm ... you know, he's not exactly what I expected. He's not doing what I wanted him to do. I don't know ... I don't think Jesus is measuring up.* So, they throw Jesus out. Not just regular people, but people who knew what to look for. They pass. They throw Him back. He's rejected.

Not fitting in so good down here? Do you ever feel like you're not valued, that you're not worth much? Feeling rejected? Some of you have been rejected by your own family. Your own family shames you and doesn't want to be with you. I just want you to see that you're in really good company, because that's how Jesus feels. This is not His creation. This is His creation after we wrecked it. And this is the high cost of treason. The things of great value are trashed. And the wisdom of man is the foolishness of heaven, and the foolishness of heaven is greater than any wisdom of man. It's not the way it's supposed to be.

1 Peter 2:6

“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.”

And so, while everyone else rejects this precious stone, it says that the Father looks at Jesus and chooses Him and inspects Him and says that He is worthy, He is valuable, of great value. And He says this: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, chosen and a precious cornerstone. The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”

The stone that other people threw away because it wasn't even good enough to get in the building is the stone that the Father says, *No, this is the cornerstone.*

There are two applications for the cornerstone. One, it is the single-most important building block of a building. And sometimes it is put in the corner of a building, and in that case, it becomes the standard of everything else that will be built after that. And if it's crooked, the whole building is crooked. If it's off, the whole building is off. It's the standard of what is real and right and true.

The other assignment that a cornerstone has is that often it's used in an arch like we have right here. And at the very top it's called the cornerstone. And all the stones are pushing into that stone to hold it together. The cornerstone is the strongest stone. It brings stability.

What the world considers without value and without strength, God the Father says that it's priceless and it's powerful. And now he uses that same analogy about what is Jesus' place, and he says that's us. We are living stones. We are like the cornerstone. Again, let's go back to the quarry. It's a man building something and he's looking at each stone. We are chosen. We are

inspected. And then what does the man do? Then he starts chipping away at it and fitting it, customizing it, making it the way it was meant to be so that it will fit in this construction pattern. It's not random. We've been chosen by God. We've been shaped and cut, pulled out of a quarry of death and imprisonment to sin. We've been pulled out of that. And the Church now is the cornerstone Jesus Christ, and all of us are the living stones and are bricks toward that eternal experience.

And if that weren't enough, then he says, "The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." Culture—they put us to shame. Are you feeling that? I'm feeling that. And Peter says, *No, you'll never be put to shame.* And in the Greek, it's a wonderful phrase, because it's a double negative for emphasis. It goes like this: "Never indeed will he be ashamed."

So, speaking of rocks and stones, let's think about Rome, the great emperor, the nation of Rome. Let's see. They were the ones who attempted to destroy the newlywed bride of the Lord Jesus Christ—His Church. They tried to take advantage of her when she was young. When you go to Rome, what do you look for? What do you view? What's there that's worth watching? The ruins. That's all they have left. Rome is in ruins. All the dead rocks are just monuments to what happens when you stand and try to fight the providential will of God. Meanwhile, the living stones are doing great, thank you very much. Thanks for asking. That's the power of God that's going on.

1 Peter 2:5

... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So, here's the thing. How do you feel about value? What do you think about your value? I'll tell you this. It doesn't matter. Because God's Word says otherwise. His Holy Spirit is trying to convince you of this, verse 5: "And you also, as living stones like Jesus, are being built up as a spiritual house." Now, notice why. "... so that you can be part of this holy priesthood and offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

So, his first part of identity is going to be this idea that you have great value, a precious living stone. And now, in these next few sentences, he is going to avalanche us with more

identity words. And each one of those identity words will be modified with words that exalt those descriptive terms. He's going to say, "You are a chosen race, you are a royal priesthood, you are a holy nation, you are a precious possession, a special possession." Look what he says about who we are, because who we are will affect what we do. Your identity determines your actions.

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen race, 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.

He says this in verses 9 and 10: "But you're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. And once you were not a people, and now you are the people of God; once you had never received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

A Chosen Race

Look at those descriptive terms. Look at those titles that are inflicted upon us. We are a chosen race. The gospel is so powerful, because when it touches a human soul, it affects his or her lineage. Do you see what's happening? It says "race", literally. In some of your translations it says "chosen people." It's a chosen race. So, all the tribes and tongues, socioeconomic statuses, whatever, male or female—all of that is eradicated. It doesn't matter anymore. Now it's just to be completely enjoyed, because our ancestry has changed. Mine goes back to Ireland—no, it doesn't. It goes back to Israel. It goes to Nazareth. I'm from Nazareth. That's my family background.

Can you imagine us at a dining room table? Say that we rented a whole back room together, and it's "red and yellow, black, and white, they are precious in His sight." There are old people there, there are young people, we have men and women there. We're all having a blast, just a fun time together.

A waiter finally comes in and says, "Look, how do you guys know each other?"

“Oh, we’re family.”

“Family? I guess you’re adopted.”

“Yeah, you could say that ... yeah. Let me tell you about the inheritance we’re going to have.”

We’re one family. We’re a chosen race. Think about this. We have the same surname. We’re Christians. What if that were our last name? Look how fun this would be. So, the term “Christian” originally started with the Romans calling followers of Jesus at Antioch “Christians.” And it was condemning to them. It was a derogatory term—*You Christians!* And now, we wear it like a badge. It would be fun if we all hyphenated our names—for me, it would be Matt Cassidy-Christian—and we’d go to the table together.

“We have a table for Christian.”

“Yeah, there are, I don’t know, millions of us, the same family. I know we don’t look alike, but that’s part of the fun of it.”

A Holy Nation

We are a chosen race. And then it says that we are a holy nation. The idea there is that we have a different constitution. We have a different authority. We have a whole different set of values, don’t we? When it comes to marriage, we have a different set of values and ambitions for marriage. Parenting? Some of you guys right now are in the thick of this about what you want to do for your children and what you feel like God wants you to do versus culture and the school districts around us. The value we have for human life, all of human life ... yeah. We don’t fit in so much because we’re part of a different nation, a holy nation.

It says we’re royal priests--not just priests, but royal priests. More on that later. That’s what we do here. Every believer’s a minister.

God’s Special Possession

But the fourth thing he says is that we are a special possession. And I love what the Living Translation says. It says that the people are God’s private possessions—special, private. Think of it as some super wealthy person in a movie you saw where they come into the lobby and this is their artwork and this is their fun stuff. And then they make a new friend, and they take them to the back. *And here’s my special possessions. This is my private set of wine. And this*

is my private, special artwork. That's you. That's me. We are God's artwork, hanging on His wall.

Special possessions—that means He bought us. What does it say it cost to buy you? According to verse 1:18, it says that He didn't pay your ransom with transitional, perishable things like gold and silver. No, your ransom was—here's this word again—the precious blood of Jesus Christ. That's what you're worth to God. That's what He's willing to pay.

So, look at all these identity words. This is who God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who conspire together before the beginning of time to make us this way. It doesn't matter what other people say. He says “precious living stone, chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, special possessions.”

Titles Come with Responsibility ... a Calling, a Purpose

1 Peter 2:9

... that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

And those are titles. Those are like offices. This is the knighting I referred to. And they come with responsibility. You don't just get to keep it and hold it. Look what it says in verse 9: “... that you may get to declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness and into His wonderful light.” There's a responsibility.

If we didn't something with this, it would be like we're fat Thor. Remember in *The Avengers*—some of you guys saw it—and one of the last ones, Thor lost his way somehow and he's just fat Thor. And they find him—I think he's in a shack—and he's got such a big gut now that he can set his cereal bowl on his stomach while he eats and watches game shows. I mean, the whole joke of that is *Don't you have superpowers? Aren't you supposed to be doing something with those superpowers? I think you're actually a god on one of these planets. And you're watching reruns and eating cereal?*

Peter is saying, *Look, here's what you get to do with these titles.* It says, “You proclaim the excellencies of Him.” A couple of fun things—His excellencies means all that He's done and

all that He is. And the whole idea of “proclaim” there—or some translations will say “declare”—and the word means that as a royal priest, your job is to make Jesus well-known—what He did and who He is. In other words, we have a word for that here—advertise. Our job is to advertise. As royal priests, we want to tell everyone about the greatness of God. That’s why we’re still here, as a matter of fact.

Look at all that Peter is talking about in the context of his audience and some of us right now that are enduring suffering and enduring persecution. He’s saying, *Look, we’ll talk about how you’re supposed to live your life, but this is who you are. And that will lead to what you do.*

So, who do you think you are? Think about that. And what value do you have that you’re bringing to this? Who do you think you are? Here’s the answer. Who cares? Who cares who you think you are? That’s not what matters. What defines what’s true, the standard, is the cornerstone, the one who decides what has value or not, Yahweh God as revealed in the Holy Writ called the Bible. His Spirit has spoken to us and He said that you and I, followers of Jesus, are like Jesus.

And He says it throughout Scripture. In the New Testament, He’s constantly painting these pictures for us to say, *No, no, you’re like Him. You’re like Him, remember?* Look at these titles:

Jesus is called the Son of God; we’re sons and daughters of God.

Jesus is the great high priest; he just called us part of the royal priesthood.

Jesus is the Lamb of God; we’re called lambs, His sheep.

Jesus is the light of the world; we are just told that we’re the lights now.

Jesus is the living cornerstone, and Peter slides this right in and says, “You’re living stones too.”

So, who are you? And are you valued? And the answer to the question is that the Bible says that I’m like Jesus. I’m like Jesus.

So, you know what, let’s just practice that. Maybe go home and look in the mirror and do it, but right now I’m going to say, “Who are you?” and you say, “I’m like Jesus.” See how weird that is to say out loud. It’s true, but it might take some practice.

Ready? Here we go – “Who are you?”

“I’m like Jesus.”

Let me try that one more time. “Who are you?”

“I’m like Jesus.”

It feels good, doesn’t it? It feels good because it’s true.

Here’s a homework assignment. The next time you get pulled over by a policeman and they come up to your car, you say this: “Do you know who I am?” You just do that. They love when people say, “Do you know who I am?” You’re going to have a great story that goes with that. Don’t do that.

That’s who you are. What do you do? It says here that we’re royal priests and we are to live deeply spiritual, holy, sacred lives. That’s verses 1 and 2. We’re going to look at that next week. And while we’re doing that, we’re making Jesus famous. We’re advertising His glorious works and His nature. In other words, we’re on assignment. Listen to all those titles that we have. We’re on assignment. He chose us, gave us these titles. They come with job descriptions and they’re all true.

And so, when the devil comes into that head of yours and he’s playing old tapes back and he gets in there and says, “You know what? You can’t do this. You’re not good enough. Maybe later, but you’re just not that important.”

Then you just say, “You know what? I think that’s true too. But it doesn’t matter what I think and it doesn’t matter what you think, Satan. Because here’s what Yahweh says. Yahweh says that I’m part of a chosen race, part of a royal priesthood, part of a holy nation. It says here that I’m His special possession. He looked at me in that quarry, He picked me out of the hell that I was meant to go to, and He chose me, and He’s making me like Him. And so, I’m on assignment.” That’s how we are to live our lives.

One preacher I was listening to, just going through his sermon and figuring out how to make sense out of it—I loved what he did. He said we’re on call. And a lot of us know what it means to be on call, because for medical practices you’re always going to have one of those doctors in that group that’s going to be on call. And so, anytime you call, somebody’s going to call you back. Maybe not your doctor, but part of that group, right? We do that here at Grace. We do that same thing. There’s a pastor on call every week. It rotates so that it works in our schedule, but on that week, you’re going to get that call. You’re on call to do ministry.

At Grace, this whole section of Scripture is what we’ve preached for the last fifty-one years. Every believer is a minister. Let me just say this: every believer is a minister on call.

You're always on call. You're always looking for opportunities to be the priest that you are, to be bragging about and making Jesus famous. That's the point. You're always being this priest.

And so, you notice two doors down that the yard hasn't been mowed in a while and you're getting a little suspicious. That might be God's Spirit talking to you. I think you might have just started a mowing ministry. And maybe you can have a conversation when that person finds you mowing their lawn. There's so much ministry out there. But you have to be on call.

I missed this easy layup a few years ago because I didn't see it as being on call. I was literally on vacation and we were down at Corpus Christi where we go every year. And it's the first day, so we've got carts full of food. And there's a woman in front of me, ahead of me, and she's buying a can of cat food. And she's an older woman and she's been weather worn. She's been out in the Corpus sun for decades. Anyway, she's counting out her dollars and a couple of quarters and dimes and pennies, and she gets her number, and I'm standing there watching it all happen as she's buying her cat food. And I'm mostly thinking, *You know what? This could be going a little faster. We've got carts of melting ice cream here.*

And I get to my car and I'm driving to our place and I realized she didn't have a cat. Right. That's wasn't cat food. That was the only affordable people food that she could have. And it was because I was on vacation.

There's no vacation, you royal priests. We're always on call. We just have to be listening. The Spirit of God wants to tee these things up so you can win one big. And you can just see it if you're watching the person checking out in front of you. You might be the person that pays the twenty dollars to get them through that and the rest of the day.

Some of you will be called upon to not even leave this campus before you pray for someone, because you're going to hear something from God's Spirit, and you're going to look at someone and say, *You know what? I've been hearing this for two weeks now, and I'm going to go over. And the worst that could happen is I say, "Can I pray for you?" and they say, "I'm good."* That's not so bad.

Or you could open up a whole new ministry. Because that's who you are. You're a pastor. You're a minister. You're a royal priest. You see something, you hear God's Spirit, that's yours. Always on call, always ready to do ministry. Who are you? You're God's chosen, a living, precious stone. You're part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. At the end of the day, you're hanging on His wall in special section where His private things that He owns

are protected. And you will never be ashamed for following Jesus. And between the day you see Him face to face and now, just work hard. It's just like you bring Jesus to everything you do.

When you come to work, you show up early, you work hard. You're not part of the gossip train. You're part of the group that encourages. You're that person that people go to in order to be strengthened and built up. You pay your child support early and with extra. Why not? Just because.

You're light in darkness. And what's beautiful about our current circumstances is that it's getting darker. And the darker it gets, the more brilliant the light that shines. It doesn't take much to light it up.

So, do you understand who you are, according to God's holy Word? If you know who you are, you'll know what to do. Let's study this more next week. Join me in prayer.

Lord, I'd ask that You would empower Your Church, this church, to shine brightly on this hill, in the neighborhoods, in the workplace; to help us recognize that we're different. We have a different calling and a different purpose. And that You would reveal things that are right in front of us—opportunities to be different and to show the world, to advertise Your glory. We're pastors, we're priests, we're ministers.

Lord, I'd ask that we would see that suffering and even persecution are just part of being like You.

And I'd ask, Lord, that over our time You would help us not to conform to the world and what they say about us, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds and believe what You have stated and proved to be true. Infinite value, great worth, with eternal purpose. We pray in Jesus' name, because of Jesus. Amen.