

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 2:5 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Assigned To Be Ministering In A Priestly Fraternity

READ: 1 Peter 2:5, with vv.2:1-4 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has designed and intends that purifying ourselves is to result in us true believers living in holiness, serving God effectively, and possessing a deep sincere brotherly love for one another. (v.1:22)
 - - Valued and chosen by God the Father, Jesus has been and is actively involved in orchestrating the continued and further administration and implementation of God's plan and program, even up to and beyond the present time of today. (v.2:4)
 - - True believers have a continuous active personal relationship with the living Jesus, which Jesus intensely desires that non-believers would have as well. (v.2:4)
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v.5 - READ

[Lesson Question: With a thorough understanding of and consideration of verse 4, analyze what the phrase "you... like living stones" means and its ramifications.]

SECTION POINT: God has assigned that each true believer hold and be active in fulfilling a specific role in His plan and program, like Jesus does.

"you... like living stones"

- - From previous verse 4, Jesus is "the living Stone" - He is not 'like' a living stone, He is "the living Stone", who was, and is, and continues to function as the cornerstone for God's plan and program. (see the previous sermon-or-lesson "1 Peter 2:4" on the website www.BelieverAssist.com for additional information on this topic of 'Jesus is "the living Stone"')
- - Here in verse 5, in a somewhat different distinction, we true believers are "like" or "as" or "in that manner" of a "living stone", therein suggesting that Jesus is our example and perfect model that we are to imitate and strive to be "like", as "living stones". (Strong's #5613)
- - This concept "you... like living stones" also suggests that each true believer is a specific part of God's plan and program.
- - We each hold a specific place in His program, in conjunction with holding a specific function in His program, like each of the stones in a stone building occupies a specific place within its structure and serves to support the other stones within its structure.
- - Therefore, God values each individual true believer as important to His plan and program and therein He assigns each individual true believer a specific role to serve in and fulfill in His plan and program.
- - We are "living" and not static, meaning we are to be active and functioning in our specific role in God's program that He has ordained for each of us, as likewise affirmed

in Jesus' instruction in John 15:16a, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last."

- - Being active and functioning in our specific role in God's program means that God has ordained that each of us true believers is to be an extension of Jesus, "the living Stone".

- - As an extension of Jesus, we are to be collaborative-ly working in the same manner towards the same goals and the same outcomes that Jesus did and continues to do, for the advancement of God's plan and program and Kingdom.

- - However, an appropriate and warranted conclusion to the contrary is that believers sitting in the pews and waiting for someone else to do the work of the ministry that they are suppose to be doing is not acceptable to God.

- - Their inactivity and non-functioning for God's Kingdom in effect serves as a dead stone or dead weight that hinders and drags down the activities and the moving involvement of what God is trying to get accomplished for His program through the rest of His active believers.

- - The inactivity and non-functioning of those believers corresponds to another related reality cited in James 2:17 that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead".

- - On a related side note: Non-believers technically are not "like a living stone", and in fact God regards them as being utterly spiritually dead, which we all were at one time in our past. (see Ephesians 2:1-5)

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe what God intends for true believers individually and corporately as He works to "build [them] into a spiritual house".]

SECTION POINT: God has assigned that each true believer appropriately function together with other true believers as a spiritual house, that strives to accomplish the objectives and goals that God has for their spiritual house.

"you also... are being built into a spiritual house"

- - In addition to and connection with the dynamic in verse 2:2 that we true believers individually are to be "growing up in [our] salvation", God has ordained and designed that "also" we collectively "are being built" and woven together into an alive and functioning "spiritual house".

- - This alive and functioning "spiritual house" can be defined as a community or organized group of believing workers that endeavors to accomplish specific spiritual objectives and goals in God's plan and program.

- - The community of true believers in a church, or in a ministry, or in a denomination, or around the world, or throughout all of time can each be defined as a "spiritual house". (cf. v.19 in Ephesians 2:19-22)

- - With Jesus as our highest leader and chief cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4,5,6), we are to function collectively and collaborative-ly as this spiritual house - in a sense, a cohesive family unit and solid structure that holds together in loving unity and continues to function together in incredible harmony, even in the midst of persecution, or turbulence, or disruption, such as a worldwide pandemic, for example. (cf. vv.20,21 in Ephesians 2:19-22)

- - We stay focused on and resolute in accomplishing the tasks that directly contribute to the accomplishing of the spiritual objectives that God has for our spiritual house locally.
- - By implication, straying away from or outside of the objectives and goals that God has for our spiritual house locally is not acceptable to God, and in reality is a dereliction of duty and an act of disobedience to His will.

- - Each true believer occupies a space or segment of the material that is used to construct this spiritual house.

- - We each are to contribute to its structure and functioning.

- - We are being molded, shaped, and fitted so that we each fulfill our part, our specific function that we individually are being designed, trained, equipped, empowered, and authorized to perform and fulfill.

- - We are in process - "are being built into" - God is working to transform us individually and form us corporately into what will be useful for His kingdom and useful for the spiritual house that we each are a part of.

- - This 'transforming on an individual level' and 'forming on a corporate level' is a progressive process, wherein there are members of this spiritual house in various stages of spiritual development who hopefully are substantially and consistently moving forward along the spectrum of spiritual growth towards spiritual maturity. (v.2:2)

- - Likewise, there are spiritual houses that hopefully are progressively becoming more in tune to what God has for them to do corporately as a whole spiritual house, and that they are becoming more effective, and efficient, and productive at accomplishing what God has for them to do corporately as a whole spiritual house.

- - On a related side note: Non-believers technically are not a member of this spiritual house of God, however each non-believer should be regarded, and treated, and cultivated as a valued potential and possible future member. (see Matthew 28:19; Luke 19:10)

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe what is meant by "to be a holy priesthood", taking into consideration that this functioning is to be occurring in a "spiritual house" that is being built. Then, while considering those determinations, analyze, describe, and fit in the concepts in the remaining end of verse 5. Be diligent to keep in mind that all of the concepts in verse 5 are directed at ordinary true believers in a church or ministry - the "you".]

SECTION POINT: God has assigned that each true believer appropriately function together with other believers in their spiritual house as "a holy priesthood", sacrificially doing spiritual ministering that is acceptable to God.

"to be a holy priesthood,"

- - The purpose for this construction, as stated here in verse 5 of "being built into a spiritual house", is "to be a holy priesthood".

- - Herein, we each have an additional assignment by God - to become and function appropriately as a "holy priesthood" in this "spiritual house".

- - In the original Greek, the word translated as "priesthood" carries the meaning of being a "priestly fraternity", suggesting here to be functioning as a priest alongside and

in conjunction with other believers in our spiritual house, who are likewise to be functioning as priests. (Strong's #2406)

- - Now this does not mean we are to be like monks in a monastery, walking around in dark brown robes, droning a low dull hum or chant, and repeatedly greeting each other with the same pious-sounding platitude.

- - On the contrary, we each individually and collectively are to be spiritually alive and lively functioning in active ministering to both believers and non-believers, according to how God has assigned us individually and corporately as a spiritual house.

- - As a priest in a priestly fraternity, we each individually and corporately are to represent God, advocating for and promoting God's way of doing things, for the benefit of other people.

- - This means that each ordinary true believer in their spiritual house has been assigned this priestly duty, with their own type of duty and functioning corresponding to the spiritual giftedness that believer has received.

- - From this verse, clearly this priesthood is not the duty for **only** the pastor and the elders of the church or the director of a ministry - it is a duty for all true believers in every spiritual house.

- - On a related side note: Non-believers technically cannot function as a true priest in God's "spiritual house", nor should they be allowed to function as one in a true "spiritual house", nor should they masquerade as one either.

- - Within the true "spiritual house", non-believers furthermore should not be allowed to function in a leadership role, nor a teaching role, nor an authority role, but rather they should be limited to no more than being a helper in logistical situations, such as setting up chairs and tables, preparing food plates, carrying boxes, cleaning up after an event, perhaps playing an instrument on the music team, and etcetera.

- - The immediate goal is to expose the non-believers to the Word of God, to the gospel, and to the pervasive love within that spiritual house (v.1:22) so that they eventually place their faith in Jesus and become actual members of God's "spiritual house". After they have genuinely placed their faith in Jesus, then they can begin to move towards participating in the doing of ministry work and ministering in this "priesthood".

"offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

- - Doing "priesthood" ministering involves "offering spiritual sacrifices" - which can simply be defined here as taking actions wherein something that God wants is "brought up" to Him, presented to Him, and offered to Him by giving it over to Him to use or to cause to be depleted (used up) for whatever purposes and in whatever manner that He has determined for it. (Zodhiates, p.166, with *AHD* - "offer")

- - Obviously, "offering spiritual sacrifices" to God comes at a cost to the believer who is doing the offering of a sacrifice, giving something away that is in his/her possession and has value, but personally receiving no expected or requested or required earthly benefit or reward or compensation in return.

- - And obviously, the sacrifice needs to be something that God wants given over to Him, which in the context here needs to be of a "spiritual" nature, or presumably have some distinct significant tangible spiritual content or spiritual element in it or attached to it.

- - The sacrifice also needs to be "acceptable to God", meeting His requirements, such as integrity, manner, motives, purity, love, content, and etcetera. (example: the offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-7)
- - The sacrifice must go "through" or by means of "Jesus Christ", our master "living" "cornerstone", and our divine "mediator" and intercessor between God and us believing humans. (1 Peter 2:5,4,6; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Romans 8:33-34)
- - This implies that both the sacrifice itself and the believer that is offering it are to be under the guidance and direction of Jesus, under His oversight, authority, provision, sustaining, protection, and care. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- - Another implication is that the sacrifice needs to be for God's purposes, and bring praise and exaltation to God and Jesus Christ, without seeking to gratify one's own sinful desires or enhance one's own position or status or benefit.
- - Therefore, pastors, and church leaders, and believers should **NEVER** be desiring, or thinking, or speaking, or acting, or manipulating to "make themselves look good!!", nor accusing and verbally attacking anyone for supposedly "making them look bad!!".
- - In the context here of believers functioning as "a holy priesthood in a spiritual house", the "offering [of] spiritual sacrifices" to God can be doing or engaging in or accomplishing any one or more things of a large variety of things that directly relate to doing this spiritual ministering, such as giving some of one's time, or efforts, or finances, or material possessions.
- - Notice that this "offering [of] spiritual sacrifices" to God is to be an ongoing process, occurring again in some manner in the near future, and then again after that, and then again after that, and so on.
- - On a related side note: As a matter of technicality, this "offering of spiritual sacrifices" by non-believers is not regarded by God as "acceptable to Him".
- - Technically, God regards non-believers as His "enemies", who are currently storing up the eternal consequences of His "wrath", to be pour out on them on Judgment Day - unless they genuinely place their faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of their own sins, wherein they then permanently "receive reconciliation" to God "through" Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:10,9,11,1)

BIG IDEA: God has assigned that all true believers in a church or ministry appropriately work together to sacrificially produce spiritual ministering, all of which needs to be acceptable to God.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you here who are true believers, are you actively fulfilling the specific spiritual ministering functioning in God's plan and program that He has already assigned and gifted you to do?

- - Are you giving up or sacrificing some of the kind of life that you desire, in order to instead substantially engage in ministering to other people, while always being careful to conduct yourself in a manner that is "acceptable to God" and imitates Jesus?
- - Are you sufficiently knowledgeable about spiritual gifts, so that you are correctly discerning and determining what type of ministering functioning you are to be doing so that God is empowering you through your spiritual gift(s) as you are ministering?
- - Are you teachable and pursuing training on how to do ministering?
- - Are you actively supporting and serving and collaborating with the other believers here in your ministering functioning that God has assigned you?
- - Are you patient with and nurturing of other members of this spiritual house who are in various stages of spiritual development and who need encouragement and assistance in moving forward along the path of spiritual growth towards spiritual maturity?
- - Is God successfully transforming you into what is useful for His kingdom and useful for the spiritual house that you are a part of here?

- - For those of you here who are not fulfilling your assignment by God, even though you may consider yourself to be an average ordinary believer, nevertheless, are you now willing to accept this assignment by God to be functioning like a priest by ministering alongside and in conjunction with other believers in a spiritual house?
- - Are you willing to now actively represent God, advocating for and promoting God's way of doing things, for the benefit of other people?
- - Are you ready to right now firmly commit yourself and persistently pursue your assignment by God to be functioning like a priest?

- - For those of you who hold a leadership position in a spiritual house, are you diligently and earnestly endeavoring to become more in tune to what God has for your spiritual house as a whole, and becoming more effective, and efficient, and productive at accomplishing what God has for your spiritual house?

- - For those of you here who are not a true believer, how is that working out for you, being currently spiritually dead, not acceptable to God, and regarded by God as His enemy?
 - - Is it enjoyable and fulfilling for you walking around spiritually dead like a zombie?
 - - Is it enjoyable and fulfilling for you wandering around in life aimlessly and futilely, with no connection to God?
 - - Is it enjoyable and fulfilling for you to technically be at war with God as His enemy?
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - What kinds of "spiritual sacrifices" would entail functioning as a holy priesthood? List as many as you can think of, being careful to list only those sacrifice activities that have spiritual content or element to it.
 - - What kinds of spiritual sacrifices would not be acceptable to God? List as many as you can think of or that you have seen believers try to pull off as acceptable.
 - - - Two Biblical examples: lying to the church (Acts 5:1-11), and teaching false doctrines and myths (1 Timothy 1:3-7).]
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[A Sidebar Note For Pastors, Elders, Church Leadership, And Ministry Leaders, regarding the subtopic "**to be a holy priesthood**,":

- - Obviously, ordinary true believers are not going to adequately know how to be a priest in this manner and function appropriately in a priestly fraternity of this kind (as described above), so they will need to be thoroughly trained how to do ministering work that is within their spiritual giftedness, and how to do their ministering work in conjunction with other co-priests in their spiritual house. (NOTE: An 'Expository Essay' training document entitled "Spiritual Gifts" is available for free on the 'Doctrines' web-page of this web-site, www.BelieverAssist.com .)

- - Therefore, church leadership should be intentionally, actively, and continuously endeavoring to train ordinary believers on how to do ministering - "**to be** a holy priesthood".

- - Certainly, this training would feature regular (perhaps) monthly group training sessions.

- - Implementation of that training would include giving them individualized hands-on monitored or supervised experience and opportunities to put their training to practical use - like Jesus did in sending out His disciples to do ministering that He had just got done verbally teaching and demonstrating to them how to do.

- - However, be warned that if no regular and extended training of believers is occurring in your spiritual house, then there will be produced a haphazard (disordered) conglomeration of ministry-attempt activities with corresponding mediocre-to-poor results, that are furthermore substantially hindered and plagued by disjointed dysfunction among the workers.

- - The priestly fraternity within your spiritual house will be ineffective and even counterproductive because these untrained believers will be proceeding by default according to their own perceptions, interpretations, limited understanding, naiveness, value system, biases, habits, and etcetera that are furthermore naturally and unwittingly tainted by their humanistic worldview and their sin nature.

- - This issue and reality of untrained believers operating from their own natural instincts necessitates that another imperative be implemented of ensuring that these untrained believers simultaneously receive likewise training in personal 'holiness' - being and living rightly before God while successfully abstaining from engaging in sinfulness - in order "**to be a holy** priesthood". (cf. vv.1:13-16)

- - The implication here in verse 5 is that this "priesthood" or 'priestly fraternity' must be conducted in a "holy" manner in order to be effective and productive for God's purposes, and in order to be "acceptable" to God, and subsequently in order to be beneficial for the spiritual house itself, in which the 'priestly fraternity' is being conducted.

- - For untrained believers to produce high-quality spiritual ministering that includes extraordinary God-empowered results, they must be trained to successfully think, speak, and conduct themselves in holiness. (cf. vv.1:13-16)

- - Without this training in holiness, they will otherwise naturally conduct themselves at whatever level of holiness that they each are currently comfortable with, which of course corresponds to whatever their own level of spiritual maturity is currently - or immaturity, as sharply declared in previous verses 2:1-2.]

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