

# First Peter

2:1-10

## Introduction

**Milk** and **mortar** may not seem to go together... But they were the perfect combination for the apostle Peter to describe your spiritual growth. One describes your growth as a Christian; the other describes your growth as a Church.

1. A Christian is likened to a "newborn" baby. If a baby is going to grow, he or she will need the nourishment of "milk." The Christian will likewise need the nourishment of the "milk of [God's] Word."
2. A Church, comprised of many Christians, is likened to a building - specifically a building made of stones which would be mortared together. You are still an individual - a "living stone." But you are being "built-up" into "a spiritual house" as God places you in the building with others according to His design.

You are a Christian; "you" are the Church. God desires that you grow as a Christian, and He has designed that we grow as a Church. We're babies that need milk, and we're a building being mortared.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Grow When You See Yourself As A Baby Needing Nourishment, and #2 You Grow When You See Yourself As A Building Nearing Completion.

### #1 You Grow When You See Yourself As A Baby Needing Nourishment (v1-3)

When Christians hear words like "baby" and "milk" they automatically think it's a negative. "Give me the meat of God's Word, not the milk; milk is for babies!"

That is not how Peter used this metaphor. Regardless your maturity, he saw *all* Christians at *every* stage of their growth as "newborn babes" with regard to the **appetite** you should have for God's Word.

Peter is going to describe your appetite for God's Word in verses two and three. Before he does he warns you in verse one about things that will ruin your appetite for it.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,

"Therefore" looks back to Peter telling you to "love one another fervently" (1:22). One of the ways you obey the command to love is by "laying aside" the things listed. "Laying aside" can be translated *get rid of*. The things listed here are part of your flesh. Now that you have been born-again, you can and should get rid of these them.

Peter listed five things that seem to build upon one another when you indulge in them:

1. It starts with "all malice." Malice is any attitude or activity that wishes or causes actual harm to someone.
2. "All deceit" is acting with deceitfulness towards the person you have malice against.
3. "Hypocrisy" is masking your malice towards the person by acting righteously.
4. "Envy" is your disgust when good rather than evil happens to the person you have malice against.
5. "All evil speaking" is your continuing campaign to harm them by slandering them to others.

Peter saw these habits as things that would ruin your spiritual appetite for God's Word. Think in terms of your physical appetite for a moment. In fact, let's think back to Thanksgiving... You were looking forward to that great meal; but some of you ruined your appetite munching on junk food prior to sitting down to the table! Kids are especially susceptible to this - and not just at Thanksgiving. You want them to eat sensibly at dinner. But by the time they sit down, they've devoured so much junk food they are no longer hungry.

1 Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

You should always see yourself as a "newborn baby" with regards to your appetite for God's Word. You can be fifty years old in Christ but should always "desire" the Word of God like a newborn baby desires it's milk.

It should be "the pure milk of the Word." "Pure" means *free from all impurities*. We just saw that your fleshly indulgences can ruin your appetite. There are always ways to spoil the milk itself.

When a newborn is nursing, the mother needs to be extremely careful what she ingests because it will affect the quality of her milk. God's Word doesn't change; but the things we allow into our minds and hearts can definitely spoil our appetite for God's Word.

The teaching we listen to can also be a source of impure additives to God's Word. Some Church's have added so much of man's tradition and regulation to God's Word that it gives you a sour stomach and stunts your growth.

It's better to keep things simple. That's why we like to read God's Word verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter.

1 Peter 2:3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

This is a quote from Psalm 34:8 which says, "O taste and see that the LORD *is* good..." "If" means *since*; they had indeed "tasted" that the Lord is good and gracious.

Do you have a favorite food? Something that even now, as you're thinking about it, starts your mouth watering? Something you could never get tired of eating?

The Word of God **is** that food to your inner man, to your spirit. If you are a Christian you have tasted it. It is seasoned with goodness and grace that thrills your heart. It satisfies but always leaves you longing for more, looking forward to your next meal.

Peter said, "that you may grow thereby." Recently there have been in the news several cases of child abuse in which the foster parents withheld nourishment from the children resulting in their severely stunted growth. We are shocked at the pictures of the kids and their reported weights.

**You should be just as shocked to think that your spirit might be shriveled from lack of nourishment!** Whatever your level of

maturity, you should cultivate your appetite for the Bible to be like the appetite a newborn baby has for its milk. Get rid of the fleshly habits that ruin your appetite; and be careful you are getting the pure Word.

You are to see yourself as a baby... And you are to see yourselves (plural) as a building.

## #2 You Grow When You See Yourselfes As A Building Nearing Completion (v4-10)

There is no such thing as an independent Christian in the New Testament. It is either implied or commanded that you be involved with other believers in a local Church. The Church is likened to a building comprised of many stones. Each of us is one of those living stones being mortared into the building by God's design.

Peter was well-versed in the Old Testament. He quoted from the psalms and from the prophets Isaiah and Hosea to describe God's building. Verses six through eight are a commentary explaining verse four. Then verses nine and ten are a commentary on verse five.

Let's look first, then, at verses four, six, seven and eight.

1 Peter 2:4 Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious,

"Coming to Him" is a technical phrase that would be used to describe priests approaching God in the Temple to offer sacrifices. *Every believer is seen as a priest who is now able to come into the very presence of God!* Peter returned to that thought in verse five; but first he needed to explain how it was that God was no longer worshipped exclusively in the Temple at Jerusalem.

He identified Jesus as "the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him." This is a quote from Psalm 118 that he repeated in verse seven. To explain what he meant, he quoted from the prophet Isaiah, saying,

1 Peter 2:6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*"

1 Peter 2:7 Therefore, to you who believe, *He is precious*; but to those who are disobedient, *“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,”*

1 Peter 2:8 and *“A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”* They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

The reference to the rejected stone had a long tradition among the Jews. They recalled that when Solomon built the Temple, all the masonry work was performed at a distance from the site so that the sound of hammers, axes, and other tools was not heard. Early in the construction a huge stone was delivered from the quarry. Considerable work had been done upon it but no one could identify where in the building it belonged. It was put aside as a misfit and lay on site unrecognized and useless. When the building began to take shape and its capstone was called for, someone remembered this rejected stone which, when placed in the gap, was the perfect fit.

The memory of this incident was put into Psalm 118:22 and is quoted here. When Jesus was on the earth He applied this Scripture directly to Himself. Peter and Paul both picked-up on this imagery. The chief cornerstone of the earthly Temple was a type of Jesus Who would be the foundation of a spiritual temple.

The tabernacle in the wilderness, and later the Temple at Jerusalem, were never meant to be the permanent place where God would dwell among His people on earth. They were a type to communicate His desire and design to dwell among you and within you:

1. God first dwelt among His people by His presence in the Tabernacle and (later) the Temple.
2. He next dwelt among His people in the Person of Jesus Christ Whom the Bible says was God made flesh dwelling among us.
3. After Jesus rose from the dead He promised to send God the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Christians are now the true temple of God on the earth.

I don't have to tell you that this was a major change! Instead of going to the Temple at Jerusalem and having a priest offer sacrifices on your behalf, **you are the temple of God and can offer your own sacrifices!** (This is why any religion that has an independent priesthood should be considered abominable).

Before Peter explained this more fully, he finished his thoughts about those who rejected Jesus as the living stone. He said that the "builders" who rejected Jesus "stumble." Then he said they were "disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

This is one of those Scriptures that causes us to pause. There are those who take it completely out of its context and say that it teaches God "appoints," or *predestines*, certain men to disobedience so that they cannot ever be saved. They see this verse as one of the proof-texts that God predestines some men for heaven, but others for Hell.

God does not predestine anyone for damnation. The key is to always keep verses in context. This was not the first time Peter used these words. Peter and John had been used by God to heal a lame man who waited everyday at the gate of the Temple. Afterwards they were arrested by the Jewish leaders. When the leaders questioned Peter about the healing, he rebuked them by quoting Psalm 118:22, "this is the Stone which was rejected by **you** builders, which has become the chief cornerstone."

**Peter applied these words directly to the leaders of the nation of Israel.** Instead of receiving Jesus as the chief cornerstone they officially rejected Him. They had Him crucified by the Romans. God is now dealing differently with His elect nation. They are "appointed" for "disobedience" in the sense that their Temple was destroyed and they are being disciplined as a dispersed and despised people all over the earth.

*This is in no way anti-Semitic!* God loves the Jews... And individual Jews can be saved just as Gentiles can be saved. As a nation, however, they are destined for disobedience as a discipline until Jesus returns in His Second Coming.

The apostle Paul describes all of this more fully in chapters nine through eleven of Romans. Peter's words were a summary of God's dealings with the Jews in light of their national rejection of the Messiah. The words are not about any individual destiny or predestination.

As I said, this was a major change! No need to go to the Temple and no need for a priest to offer sacrifices on your behalf. **You** are the Temple in two ways:

1. You are God's temple *individually* as He dwells within you in the Person of the Holy Spirit.
2. You (plural) are God's temple corporately as He dwells among us by His Spirit in our assemblies.

Peter alluded to the Church as an assembly of Christians in verse five:

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The kind of stones Peter was talking about were quarried from a rock-pit. Every person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior is quarried from the rock-pit of sin. You are then mortared into place by God's grace.

The thing that first strikes me is that we are stones and not bricks or boards. Bricks and boards are manufactured to exact specifications. If you are building a brick planter, you will most likely get bricks that are all one size and shape. Likewise you order your wood in its pre-manufactured sizes.

Stones are not like that. They are all different shapes and sizes; they are all very individual. **You**, as a living stone, are individual to God and unique.

It requires a great deal of skill to form and shape stones into a building. And these are living stones - indicating that their shape is constantly changing!

Living stones make for an interesting building. A living stone is never quite finished. Jesus goes on chiseling, grinding, buffing, smoothing you - all while you are mortared with other living stones. Together by His skill we are being built-up a spiritual house.

The Temple had priests who offered sacrifices on behalf of the people. *That has all been done away with!* **You** and **I** are the "priesthood" and we "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

What can you offer to God as a sacrifice?

1. According to Romans 12:1-2 you can offer your body as a living sacrifice. You are not a volunteer; you are a servant.
2. According to Hebrews 13:15 you can offer the praise of your lips.
3. According to Hebrews 13:16 you can offer your good works you do for others.
4. According to Philippians 4:10-20 you can offer your money and other material possessions.

The nation of Israel should have experienced all these blessings but instead their leaders chose to reject Jesus in favor of their ritual religion. They would rather have their Temple and their separate priesthood on earth than be God's temple on earth. As we read in verse eight, "They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they were also appointed." They stumbled over Jesus. He was not what they expected. Having rejected Him, God confirmed their rejection by giving them over to their disobedience and appointing them to discipline.

In contrast to the nation of Israel is the Church:

1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Israel was and is God's "chosen" nation. He is not through with the physical descendants of Abraham. But God has currently chosen a new "generation" of people. It is all those who receive Jesus as their Savior, whether Jew or Gentile. Jesus called this new generation the "Church." It is the spiritual house which is being built on the foundation of Himself as the chief cornerstone.

The Church is further described as a "royal priesthood, a holy nation." These words are a direct quote from Exodus 19:6. This was to be

Israel's earthly destiny; and it will be again. For now, in these last days, the Church has taken Israel's place as His priests and His people in the spiritual house He is building on the earth.

You are "His own special people" until Jesus returns to take the Church home to heaven. You are His priests and people "that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are the ones who are charged with the task of sharing Christ with unbelievers. Rather than a drudgery, it is said to be a delight - "proclaim[ing] the praises" of Jesus.

Do people get from your life that God is praiseworthy?

You were once in "darkness" but are now walking in "His marvelous light." A person walking in the dark is tentative... Gets lost easily... Stumbles and falls. Your relationship with God has brought you into the light of His revelation about His plan and purpose for all things - including your life and your future. You can turn-on the light wherever you find yourself.

The word for "proclaim" could be translated *advertise*. **You are an advertisement for God!** You are to publicize His attributes.

One of the attributes you are to publicize is His mercy upon all men everywhere:

1 Peter 2:10 who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

You could never *attain* mercy. You could never earn or deserve it. But you "obtained" it by faith in Jesus Christ. You should walk in the light and go about as an advertisement that publishes God's mercy toward all mankind.

Conclusion

How is your appetite for the milk of God's Word? What is your attitude toward being mortared into God's building? Your answers to these questions will determine your spiritual success.