

1. Can you think of someone you know who has rejected Christianity? Why did they reject it? How did their rejection make you feel?

Try to identify if it was something about Jesus or something about Christians in general or church or their own lifestyle. Don't worry if no one has something to say, just move on.

2. **Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.** Peter refers back to several OT passages here. Read Dan 2:31-35 (a dream about the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar and his reign); Isa 28:14-18 (a rebuke of Israel's leaders and their trust of other nations and their gods for their security); Ps 118:19-24 (in praise of God for his rescue from enemies); Isa 8:11-17 (God urges those who trust him not to be like the majority who fear mortals more than Him). What is it about "rock" or "stone" that is so appropriate when describing what God is doing in this world?

Rock/stone conveys the image of strength and permanence, of something lasting to build on, a place to be secure as opposed to things that break and are temporary – even if they look impressive, even if many place their trust in them.

3. With all of that OT background in mind, why is the "Stone" such an appropriate metaphor for Jesus?

He's the rock 'not made by human hands' (Dan 7) that rises up to fill the earth, his kingdom being the only one that will endure into eternity. He is permanent, strong, secure – but so that we don't think this is merely God's kingdom, Peter writes that he is a "Living" stone – because he is the Living One in whom we have a "living hope" (1:3). Others put their hope in different things which eventually are shown to be false hopes.

4. What does it mean that Jesus is "the cornerstone"? How is it that God 'laid him in Zion'?

The cornerstone is the stone that the whole building is built according to – if it's poorly cut or positioned, the building might collapse. This "stone" was 'laid' in Zion by Jesus being crucified and resurrected there – all that God is building in this world is built on that. No other 'foundation' (belief system, religion, etc) will last into eternity.

5. List the ways that Jesus is described in this passage. In what ways are we like him? (NB v.7 is better translated, as NASB "This precious value, then, is for you who believe") How are we different?

Jesus: Living Stone; rejected by men but chosen by and precious to God; cornerstone, stumbling block to some, worthy to be trusted by all.

Us: Living stones, (rejected by men – see 2:12, 20b, 3:16), chosen by God (v9), precious to God (v7 – see NB above)

Jesus is the foundation, we are the building he establishes

6. Priests in the OT offered blood sacrifices as a symbol for how God dealt with the sin of the people. All blood sacrifices are finished, fulfilled in Jesus' sacrifice of himself once for all (Heb 10:3-14). But there are a few references in the NT to our 'sacrifices'. What are they? Read Heb 13:15-16; Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17, 4:18.

Perhaps choose one passage each, read quietly and answer, then report back to the whole group. Heb 13:15-16 (praise of the Lord); Rom 12:1 (our 'bodies' – godly lives); Phil 2:17 (your faith), 4:18 (gifts to gospel work).

How do these verses help us understand what Peter means by "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God"?

See also v.9 – it is not a 'religious' activity but our whole lives lived in honour of God, telling others of his goodness in Jesus, living godly lives, advancing the cause of the gospel.

7. In v.8 it sounds like those who reject Jesus had no choice – they were "destined" to it. But vv7-8 are better translated in the present tense: "But to those who are unbelieving ...They are stumbling because they are disobeying the message..." What difference does this make to how we think of those who are rejecting Jesus?

That they are currently rejecting Jesus is within God's sovereign plan. That does not mean that they cannot change. We are living proof that those who reject Jesus can change!

8. v.9 "declare the praises" is literally "make known his excellencies". How do we 'make known God's excellencies'? Does anything hinder us? What can help us do this more?

This is essentially retelling the gospel, talking about God in a way that makes plain how great he is! Talking about what he's done in Christ, especially how we have benefitted. Pressure from our unbelieving friends can keep us silent. Hearing again what God thinks of Jesus and that he's made us for telling out his greatness (ie 1 Peter 2:4-10) can spur us on to be what we are.