



NEW LIFE: All Access Priest

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There are many ways to make introductions. One famous one is from the Princess Bride...
“Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

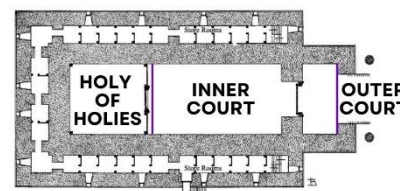
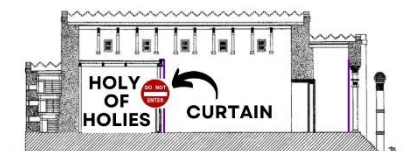
I guess that’s one way to do an introduction! How we are introduced to someone sets the stage for the relationship. It’s often very helpful to have a friend introduce us when we meet someone new. Get this—Jesus thought so too! One special job that we have as his children is to introduce others to him!

It has to do with our role- as a *priest*! I know you may not normally think of yourself as a priest, but hang with me. This is in the Bible! In Exodus, God tells the Israelites that, “you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (19:5-6 NIV). Then later God reminds them later in Isaiah saying, “and you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God” (61:6).

First we have to learn a little bit about what it meant to be a priest in the Bible. Mainly, they were *mediators*. That means they were like “middle-men” that acted between God and the people. They communicated blessings and teachings from God to his people, but they also performed rituals and sacrifices on behalf of the people to God. It was an important role and God set apart a special family called the Levites for the job. Let’s read more about this. READ Hebrews 5:1-4 & Hebrews 9:6-7.

1. What do you know about priests in the Old Testament? Why was their job important?

In the Old Testament under the Covenant God made with Moses, the temple was divided into three main areas. Only the priests could enter the Inner Court. Then, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and that was just one day per year! There was a large curtain that was placed outside the Holy of Holies that divided the room. This innermost place is where the presence of God would reside. Here’s what happened: READ Matthew 27: 50-53.



Some amazing things happened when Jesus died on the cross. Not only did many dead come back to life, but the curtain that blocked access to the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom! Something amazing has changed with Jesus!

2. What do you think it means that this curtain was torn?

With Jesus, everything has changed! Let's look at what is new. Read 1 Peter 2:4-5 & 9-10.

Notice what God is saying about a *new priesthood*. Before, the priests were a select family and they had many rituals to perform so that they could do their duties. Through Jesus, access to God's presence is now open to all of us. Read this:

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10: 19-22 NIV)

3. What is this saying about US as priests?

It may be difficult to think of ourselves as priests. However, there are a few things about the Old Testament priests that help us learn about our role as priests. First, we get to minister to the Lord. Just like the Levites, we can bring our offerings and come before the Lord in worship. We can spend time with him in his presence. Now that sin has been dealt with, there is no longer any separation or distance between us! We are one with the Father! With this amazing access, we minister to him with our worship and offer him our very lives!

But this isn't just for a select few. God wants a kingdom of priests! That means that ALL who are in Jesus have these privileges.

4. All God's children have access to Holy of Holies, but what keeps us away? Why don't we use our access to God more?

Not only did the priests minister to God, but they also ministered on behalf of others. In the same way we get to reflect God to others and introduce them to him! God even calls this a type of sacrifice saying, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (Hebrews 13:16)

In this way, we get to be "middle-men" for God. We help people get to see what he's like and show them how to connect with him. We also get to intercede for them by praying and helping meet their needs.

5. What are some of the ways that we get to be God's "body" to others on earth?

It's also important to notice that God didn't call us a kingdom of kings that *rule*, but rather, a kingdom of priests that *serve*. Serving is what marks the priests. They spent their lives on behalf of God and others rather than serving themselves.

6. What are some other ways that we are similar or different to the priests in the Old Testament?

GOING DEEPER>> READ HEBREWS 10:14. Think about the work God is doing in you and how you can serve others as a priest of God.