

2 PETER

How to Use This Discussion Guide with Your Group

Start with a prayer, and then read the introduction from the sheet. Read the portion of the text from your Bible or an app (use whatever translation you're comfortable with, but we suggest the New Living Translation (NLT) or the English Standard Version (ESV)). Then read the summary paragraph(s) and talk through the questions for that section. You can work through this guide in one session or spread it out over several – whatever works for your group. As you read and discuss, consider how what you're reading applies to your life today. Don't forget to close with prayer!

INTRODUCTION TO 2 PETER

As the Christian movement gained steam, churches began to encounter more false teachers in their midst. Second Peter was written to warn about one of these groups—people who were essentially saying that Jesus would not return, so they could live any way they liked. Against this view, 2 Peter argues that the Day of the Lord is surely coming, and that believers should live in light of this truth.¹

CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND ASSURANCE

Read 2 Peter 1:1–21 in your Bible.

Peter introduces himself as 'Simeon' Peter—the fisherman whom Jesus called to become his disciple and apostle. He seems to be writing to Gentile Christians, and is full of joy that Jews and Gentiles are now united in Christ (1:1).

Peter wants to remind his readers of God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ. He also wants to encourage their growth in holiness, understanding, fellowship and service.

God has provided all the resources needed to develop Christian life and holiness (1:3). But we must play our part. To our faith, we must add goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection and love (1:5–7). These qualities don't make us right with God (that happened when we first believed), but they produce the fruit of our relationship with him (1:8). We commit ourselves to follow Jesus, become like him and finally enter his eternal kingdom (1:10, 11).

Peter knows that he will soon die. He wants to ensure that his readers will remember his teaching (1:12–15). It is sound teaching, based on the things he witnessed. Peter was one of those who saw Jesus revealed as the Son of God, transfigured with heavenly glory on the mountain (Mark 9:1–8). They heard the voice of God the Father acknowledging his Son, in words which echoed a coronation psalm (Psalm 2:7).

¹ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016).

The coming of Christ was predicted by the prophets. Their message had been like a lamp shining in darkness, or the Morning Star (Venus) heralding the dawn (1:19). They didn't invent their predictions, but were inspired by God's Spirit—like sailing boats responding to the wind (1:21).²

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR 1:1-11

1. As a teenager, what did you desire to do most: Career-wise? Sports-wise? Relationship-wise?
2. How have your desires change since then?
3. From verses 3-4, what is "everything we need for this life"?
4. With *everything* given to us, why must we "add to our faith"? And with what effort (vv. 5, 10)?
5. What seven qualities are we to zealously desire? How does each fit with the one mentioned before it?
6. Why is this moral progress and productive knowledge (v. 8) so desirable for believers (vv. 4, 10-11)?
7. In what way are verses 5-10 a prescription for one who is feeling disappointed or unfulfilled?
8. Of the seven qualities in verses 5-7, which two do you possess in the greatest measure? How can you grow in one of the other qualities? How can your church help?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR 1:12-21

1. How are you like a tent: Always pulling up stakes, moving on? Resistance to winds of change? Cozy with some, cold to others?
2. What event of Jesus life does Peter recall (vv.16-18)?
3. Why (and how) does Peter establish his own authority (v. 16)? Likewise, why does Peter defend the authority and inspiration of the prophets? What problem does this imply his readers may have (vv. 20-21)?
4. If so much prophecy has already been fulfilled in Christ's first coming, how then are we to regard prophecy yet to be fulfilled?

² Andrew Knowles, [The Bible Guide](#) (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 681.

5. If you could have been with Jesus at one event in his life, which would you choose? Why?
6. If a non-Christian asked you to prove the scriptures are God's word, on what would you base your answer? How does that answer affect your Bible study habits? Your witness? Your lifestyle?

FALSE TEACHERS

Read 2 Peter 2:1–22 in your Bible.

Peter warns his readers that there are false prophets at work in the church. They are dangerous because they confuse the truth of Christ with lies. They encourage Christians to be 'free' by behaving in impure ways. And they charge money for their teaching (2:1–3).

Peter says that God judges such wickedness. In the past, he cast rebellious angels out of heaven (2:4), punished the ancient world with a flood and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire (2:4–6). But he was also merciful to those who were righteous, and rescued Lot who was trapped in a godless society (2:7). Peter shows how God separated good from bad. The false teachers need to watch out (2:9, 10).

Peter denounces the false teachers. They are subhuman, arrogant, ignorant, decadent, dissipated and seductive (2:10–14). Like the prophet Balaam, they have sold themselves for money (2:15–16; Numbers 22:31–35). They lack substance—like springs without water or mist in a gale (2:17). They have returned to the sin from which Christ so recently delivered them: 'The sow is washed only to wallow in the mud' (2:17–22).³

1. If people have pets that are like them in some way, what does your choice of pet say about you?
2. What "beasts" and other "things which go bump in the night" are you afraid of? Why?
3. Having just commended true prophets (1:12-21), who does Peter now condemn? Why?
4. If it is so plain the Judgment awaits these false teachers, why does anyone follow them (vv. 2-3, 14, 18-19)? If they are so evil, why do you think God allows them to teach in His church? Isn't God's goodness or greatness brought into question by delaying their judgment?
5. In response to that implied question, Peter recites God's track record in dealing with evil: What examples are cited in verses 4-9?

³ Andrew Knowles, [The Bible Guide](#) (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 681.

6. If neither angels, the ancient world, nor Sodom and Gomorrah were spared from God's Wrath against sin, who does God protect from judgment (v. 9)? Why? How is that a particular comfort to Peter's audience?
7. Who are the gross sinners in verses 13-16? What are they like? On what basis is Peter assured they will be paid back in kind?
8. What other imagery does Peter use to further denounce the false prophets (vv. 17-19)?
9. What "freedom" do they promise: Freedom from sin? From laws? From judgment? From ethical obligations to others and to Christ? All of the above? How is their idea of freedom different from true Christian freedom?
10. What do verses 20-22 imply about a person's salvation? Can one lose it? Or were these people never converted? Why do you think so?

11. How do you know when a preacher is exploiting you with stories they have made up, or feeding you empty promises as "springs without water"? How could the dangers mentioned by Peter affect you now?
12. Do such false teachers upset you as much as Peter? Why or why not? Which preacher do you trust more than others? Why?
13. Amidst all this bad news, what good news is there? Would it be truly good news if there were no judgement?
14. In your experience, does grace ever come through perverse channels (such as the heretics and wicked been depicted here), or only through pure vessels: Always? Sometimes? Never? Why is that?

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Read 2 Peter 3:1–18 in your Bible.

Peter has written a previous letter. This may be the letter we know as 1 Peter, or another letter that has been lost (3:1).

Peter now turns to the question: Will Jesus return? Some laugh at the idea, believing Jesus will never keep his promise (3:2–4). But Peter puts a different view. The God who once judged the world with a flood, is now preparing to judge it by fire (3:5–7). Humans are impatient at God's delay, but their timescale is not the same as God's. If God is slow in bringing the world to an end, it is only because he is allowing more time for people to repent. When he finally acts, he will do so as swiftly and unexpectedly as a thief (3:8–10). Burglary is an image which Jesus also uses to describe the suddenness of his return (Matthew 24:43).

Peter tells his readers that heaven and earth will be dissolved, and everything exposed to the judgment of God (3:10). Far from causing fear, this should encourage us to holiness. Beyond the destruction of this world lie the heaven and earth of God's new creation (Revelation 21:1).

Peter closes his letter by urging his readers not to be passive believers. While they await the Lord's return, there is much to do in building holy lives and right relationships.

Paul has also written about the delay in the Lord's coming, although his letters have sometimes been misunderstood (3:15, 16). If we treat our salvation carelessly, we will lapse back into immorality, confusion and guilt (3:17). If we aim wholeheartedly for Christian growth, we will develop the love, understanding and likeness of Jesus Christ (3:18).⁴

1. When did your dad promised a fishing trip, a ballgame or graduation present and then failed to deliver? How did that make you feel?
2. When told, "Wait until your birthday," or "Christmas isn't here yet," and "You'd better be good until then," how did that affect your behavior while waiting?
3. Following the digression of chapter two, to what things does Peter now return?
4. What "must" the reader first understand (see also 1:20-21)?
5. Why does God's creation of the earth support Peter's contention that he will also destroy the Earth (v. 10)? Why is that so difficult for people to believe? What does this tell you about their perception of God?
6. What frustrations does God's patience produce? How is God's patience a benefit (vv. 9, 15)?
7. How does God view of time different from the readers' view? In this context (vv. 10-16), is Peter addressing the certainty, the timing or the manner of Christ's coming? How is that an effective inducement to God's Godly living now?
8. How does Peter's reference to Paul also encourage his readers in right behavior?
9. What is Peter's final antidote to the false teachers of his day (vv. 17-19)?
10. If you were in charge of the world clock, would you slow it down or speed it up? Why?
11. If you were in charge of creating, destroying and redeeming the world, which of these would you take more time doing? Why?
12. In football strategy "the best defense is a good offense," meaning if the other team never gets the ball they can't score against you. How is Peter's strategy like that in his defense against those who would lead us away from the truth? What can you do to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord"?

⁴ Andrew Knowles, [*The Bible Guide*](#) (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 681–682.