

Study through 2 Peter

Introduction

“Alertness”

All is not well in the professing church. There are dangerous people and dangerous doctrines abroad, and God’s people need to be alert. The church is suffering from a false view of separation, as well as a false view of cooperation. Too often we are aiding the enemy and injuring the brotherhood through attitudes and actions that are contrary to God’s Word.

“Discernment”

2 Peter can help us exercise discernment and detect the counterfeits that have secretly entered the church. It can also help us discover the false doctrines that these apostates are teaching, doctrines that today are passing for Christian truth. *Warren Wiersbe*

Lesson 1 A Fruitful Life 2 Peter 1

Sometimes it’s easy to forget that God has provided us with everything we need for life. Instead, we seem to focus on what we think we lack. Ask God to show you all He has provided you for a fruitful life in Him as you begin this lesson.

The Christian life begins with faith. Peter called it “like precious faith.” It means that our standing with the Lord today is the same as that of the apostles centuries ago. They had no special advantage over us simply because they were privileged to walk with Christ, see Him with their own eyes, and share in His miracles. It is not necessary to see the Lord with our human eyes in order to love Him, trust Him, and share His glory. From the very outset of his letter, Peter affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ. “God” and “our Savior” are not two different persons; they describe one person, Jesus Christ. Paul used a similar expression in Titus 2:10 and 3:4.

Peter reminded his readers that Jesus Christ is the Savior by repeating this exalted title. A savior is “one who brings salvation,” and the word salvation was familiar to the people of that day. In their vocabulary, it meant “deliverance from trouble,” particularly “deliverance from the enemy.” It also carried the idea of “health and safety.” A physician was looked on as a savior because he helped deliver the body from pain and limitations. A victorious general was a savior because he delivered the people from defeat. Even a wise official was a savior because he kept the nation in order and delivered it from confusion and decay.

Read 2 Peter 1

This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. ²May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. ³By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. ⁵In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. ⁸The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. ¹⁰So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. ¹¹Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹²Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. ¹³And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. ¹⁴For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, ¹⁵so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone. ¹⁶For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." ¹⁸We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, ²¹or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God. 2 Peter 1 NLV

Pray and answer the following questions:

1. What are some of the ways we use savior to describe people in society today? What are the unique ways the title savior applies to Jesus? Why is this critical to our faith?

2. When you are born into the family of God by faith in Christ, you are born complete. The false teachers claimed that they had a “special doctrine” that would add something to the lives of Peter’s readers. Why is the message from these false teachers dangerous? What happens when believers start to think they need more than what God has already given?

3. Choose one verse or phrase from 2 Peter 1 that stands out to you. This could be something you’re intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further. Record your insights here.

“Going Deeper”

4. Review 2 Peter 1:5–7. What are the seven characteristics of the godly life? How do they work together to produce godliness? Choose two of them and describe how growth in one strengthens the other.

5. Review 2 Peter 1:8. Why is fruitfulness such an important character quality? How do we become fruitful?

6. How does Peter confirm the dependability and durability of God’s Word in 2 Peter 1:12–21? How does a firm foundation of faith help believers with discernment? Why is discernment so important to the life of individual Christians?

“Going Forward”

7. How do you grow in fruitfulness? What is God’s job in this process? What actions are necessary on your part?

8. What does remembrance mean to you? How does remembering your past help you live in the present? What are the dangers of looking backward too much? How do you find balance between remembering and moving forward in faith.

“Real Life Application Ideas”

9. What spiritual impact does living and working among sinful people have on you?

10. “Write a prayer below inviting God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you’ve noted above. Be honest about your desires and fears.

11. During the coming week, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you from what you’ve read and studied.”

Study through 2 Peter

Lesson 2

False Prophets and True Believers

2 Peter 2:1-16

The picture painted here in chapter 2 is not pretty! When you read the epistle of Jude, you will find him using similar language. Peter knew that the truth of God's Word and the false doctrines of the heretics simply could not coexist. There could be no compromise on his part, any more than a surgeon could compromise with a cancerous tumor in a patient's body.

The theme of "deception" runs throughout the entire chapter. To begin with, these teachers' message is false; Peter called what they taught "destructive heresies". The word heresy originally meant simply "to make a choice," but then it came to mean "a sect, a party." Promoting a party spirit in a church is one of the works of the flesh. Whenever a church member says to another member, "Are you on my side or the pastor's side?" he is promoting a party spirit and causing division. A false teacher forces you to make a choice between his doctrines and the doctrines of the true Christian faith.

Peter's purpose was not just to denounce the apostates; he also wanted to encourage the true believers. He once again reached back into the Old Testament and cited two examples of deliverance.

First, God delivered him from the pollutions of the world around him. For 120 years, Noah faithfully proclaimed the Word of God to people who would not believe it. He and his family were surrounded by moral and spiritual darkness, yet they kept their lights shining. God did not protect Noah and his family by isolating them from the world, but by enabling them to remain pure in the midst of corruption. Through Jesus Christ, we too have "*escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*" (2 Peter 1:4).

Abraham took his nephew, Lot, with him when he left Ur and went to the land of Canaan, but Lot proved to be more of a problem than a blessing. When Lot had to choose a new area for his home, he measured it by what he had seen in Egypt. Abraham took Lot out of Egypt, but he could not take Egypt out of Lot. Lot "*pitched his tent toward Sodom*" and then finally moved into Sodom. God even used a local war to try to get Lot out of Sodom, but he went right back. That is where his heart was.

Read 2 Peter 2:1-17

But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves.² Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered.³ In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

⁴ For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell, in gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the day of judgment. ⁵ And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. Noah warned the world of God’s righteous judgment. So God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood. ⁶ Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people. ⁷ But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. ⁸ Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. ⁹ So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment. ¹⁰ He is especially hard on those who follow their own twisted sexual desire, and who despise authority. These people are proud and arrogant, daring even to scoff at supernatural beings without so much as trembling. ¹¹ But the angels, who are far greater in power and strength, do not dare to bring from the Lord a charge of blasphemy against those supernatural beings. ¹² These false teachers are like unthinking animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed. They scoff at things they do not understand, and like animals, they will be destroyed. ¹³ Their destruction is their reward for the harm they have done. They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals. ¹⁴ They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed. They live under God’s curse. ¹⁵ They have wandered off the right road and followed the footsteps of Balaam son of Beor, who loved to earn money by doing wrong. ¹⁶ But Balaam was stopped from his mad course when his donkey rebuked him with a human voice. ¹⁷ These people are as useless as dried-up springs or as mist blown away by the wind. They are doomed to blackest darkness. 2 Peter 2:1-17 NLT.

Pray and answer the following questions:

1. What are some examples of division in the church today? How does this usually play out?
2. How do we differentiate between false doctrine/methods and simply issues of preference or taste? What are today’s greatest heresies?

“Going Deeper”

3. What are the nonnegotiable's of the Christian faith?

4. How can religion become a tool for exploiting weak people? In what ways are false teachers merchandisers rather than ministers?

5. What are some ways even good churches become tempted by greed? What are some practical ways to avoid falling for that temptation?

6. How did God choose to deliver Noah from the judgment of the world? Why Noah? How does his story point toward our salvation in Jesus?

7. Have you ever felt exploited by religious leaders? Without naming names, describe that situation. How did you respond to the circumstance? What guidance would Peter have given to you for that situation?

“Going Forward”

8. Think of one or two things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is all about quality, not quantity. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try).

9. Do you want to learn how to better respond to authority you disagree with? Be specific. Go back through 2 Peter 2:1–16 and put a star next to the phrase or verse that is most encouraging to you. Consider memorizing this verse.

“Real Life Application Ideas”

10. Take a personal inventory of the authorities in your life—everyone from your supervisor at work to your small-group leader to the politicians who lead your community. How do you relate to each of them? What role does your faith play in your relationship with each of them? Think about how you can demonstrate a godly attitude in each of those relationships, then spend time in prayer, asking for wisdom as you encounter authority.

11. Write a prayer below inviting God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you’ve noted in the Going Forward section. Be honest about your desires and fears.

Study through 2 Peter
Lesson 3
What Could Be Worse?
2 Peter 2:17-22

“It is a frightening fact that many people who are now zealous members of cults were at one time attending churches that at least professed to believe the Christian gospel. They participated in the Communion service and saw the death of the Lord Jesus portrayed in the loaf and the cup. They even recited the Apostles Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Yet today, these people will tell you that they feel free now that they have been “liberated” from the Christian faith.

At the same time, you will meet people who have rejected all religious faith and now profess to enjoy a new freedom. “I used to believe that stuff,” they will boldly confess, “but I don’t believe it anymore. I’ve got something better, and I feel free for the first time in my life.”

“Faith is only as good as the object. A pagan may have great faith in his idol, but the idol can do nothing for him. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, that faith will accomplish something, because God always keeps His promises. *“There hath not failed one word of all his good promise”* (1 Kings 8:56).

Peter used three vivid illustrations to emphasize the emptiness of the apostates promises. The Greek word in 2 Peter 2:17 actually means “a flowing spring” rather than a tranquil well. It is the word our Lord used when He ministered to the Samaritan woman and that John used in describing the satisfaction the saints will experience for all eternity (Rev. 7:17; 21:6). A spring without water is not a spring at all! A well is still called a well even if the water is gone, but a spring ceases to exist if the water is not flowing.

There is in mankind an inborn thirst for reality, for God. “Thou hast made us for thyself,” said Augustine, “and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.” People attempt to satisfy this thirst in many ways, and they end up living on substitutes. Only Jesus Christ can give inner peace and satisfaction.

Read 2 Peter 2:17-22

These people are as useless as dried-up springs or as mist blown away by the wind. They are doomed to blackest darkness. ¹⁸They brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. With an appeal to twisted sexual desires, they lure back into sin those who have barely escaped from a lifestyle of deception. ¹⁹They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you. ²⁰And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before. ²¹It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life. ²²They prove

the truth of this proverb: “A dog returns to its vomit.” And another says, “A washed pig returns to the mud.” 2 Peter 2:17-22 NLT

Pray and answer the following questions:

“Going Deeper”

1. What does 2 Peter 2:18 reveal about how false teachers are able to attract followers even though they really have nothing to give? How is this still true today?
2. What kinds of people fall for the false religions of today?
3. Why are people who have been “burned” by church susceptible to cults and false religions?
4. What can today’s church do to attract followers who otherwise might be tempted to pursue a false religion?
5. “Where do we go to discover the truth about ourselves, our world, and our God?”
6. What happens to us when we face this truth honestly? How does this truth direct us in everyday living?”

“Looking Inward”

7. Take a moment to reflect on all that you’ve explored thus far in this study of 2 Peter 2:17–22. Review your notes and answers and think about how each of these things matters in your life today.

8. Faith is only as good as its object. What are some objects you’ve put your faith in that weren’t so reliable? What are some things you do to focus your faith on Jesus?

9. Have you ever fallen for a false religion or followed a teacher you later learned was teaching false truth? What appealed to you about that teaching? How did you discover the truth and turn away from the false teaching? What are some ways to safeguard your faith?

“Real Life Application Ideas”

10. Think of one or two things that you have learned that you’d like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is all about quality, not quantity. It’s better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don’t try).

11. Do you want to learn more about why freedom in Christ is better than any other kind of freedom? Be specific. Go back through 2 Peter 2:17–22 and put a star next to the phrase or verse that is most encouraging to you. Consider memorizing this verse.

12. The best defense against false teaching and the influence of false teachers is knowing what you believe. Spend some time with a close friend or mentor going over the basics of faith—the nonnegotiable, foundational truths. If you discover areas of uncertainty, work together to shore up your understanding of faith so you can stand strong when confronted with anyone who might preach a false gospel. Also, pray for wisdom in reaching out to those who are captured by false teaching.

Study through 2 Peter
Lesson 4
Certain Judgment
2 Peter 3:1-10

It is possible to have a pure and sincere mind and yet have a bad memory! Peter wrote this second letter primarily to awaken and arouse his readers. It is easy for Christians to “get accustomed to God’s truth.” Eutychus went to sleep listening to Paul preach (Acts 20:7–10)! Our heavenly Father sacrificed so that we might have the truth of the Word and the freedom to practice it, but too often we take this for granted and become complacent. The church needs to be awoken regularly so the enemy doesn’t find us asleep and take advantage of our spiritual weakness.

Because God’s Word is true, we must pay attention to it and take its message seriously. New converts must be taught the Word and established in the doctrines of the faith, for new Christians are the apostate teacher’s primary targets. But older Christians must also be reminded of the importance of Bible doctrine and, in particular, the doctrines that relate to the return of Christ. Prophetic teaching must not lull us to sleep. Rather, it must awaken us to live godly lives and to seek to win the lost.

Read 2 Peter 3:1-10

This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. ²I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. ³Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. ⁴They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.” ⁵They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. ⁶Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. ⁷And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. ⁸But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.

⁹The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. 2 Peter 3:1-10 NLT

Pray and answer the following questions:

“Looking Inward”

1. Review 2 Peter 3:1–4. Why did Peter emphasize the unity of the Word of God?
2. Why is it important to keep all the Scriptures in mind when trying to discern God's plan?
3. Why do the apostates scoff at the coming judgment? What is their argument against Jesus' second coming? In what ways are they willfully ignoring a great deal of evidence?
4. How were the scoffers ignorant of what God was like? Why do people tend to make God in their own image?
5. What is longsuffering? How is God's longsuffering significant to both believers and nonbelievers alike?

6. Respond to the following statement: “The purpose of prophetic truth is not speculation but motivation.” How does this prove to be true in Peter’s second letter?

“Going Forward”

7. Think of one or two things that you have learned that you’d like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is all about quality, not quantity. It’s better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don’t try).

“Real-Life Application Idea”

8. Peter preached the importance of diligence in study and also in preparation for Jesus’ second coming. What are some ways you practice diligence in your own life?

9. Consider all the places where your faith intersects with daily routine, such as work, caring for your family, interacting with friends and neighbors, spending time online, and so on. If you find areas where you’re lackadaisical rather than diligent about growing your faith, decide a course of action to change that. Practice good habits wherever your faith life matters most so you can grow closer to God and discover His will for your life. Note your thoughts here:

10. Write a prayer below inviting God to work on your mind and heart. Be honest about your desires and fears.

Study through 2 Peter
Lesson 5
Living in the Last Days
2 Peter 3:11-18

For years, nuclear scientists, ecologists, and social scientists have been predicting a catastrophic end to the world as we know it. Conspiracy theorists, cult leaders, science fiction writers, and politicians predict a radical new world order in its place.

The apostle Peter two thousand years ago, also predicted a disintegrating universe, but he doesn't leave us floating on some cold abandoned death star called Spaceship Earth. With convincing optimism, he foresees the day after the "day of the Lord" when a new heaven and a new earth will be established. Peter's prediction makes all the difference in the world.

Read 2 Peter 3:11-18

But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, ¹² looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. ¹³ But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. ¹⁴ And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. ¹⁵ And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him. ¹⁶ speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction. ¹⁷ I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends. Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. ¹⁸ Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen. 2 Peter 3:10-18 NLT

Pray and Answer the Following Questions:

“Looking Inward”

1. The “day of the Lord” is day like on other. How does Peter describe that day?
2. The fiery destruction and disintegration of the heavens and the earth is unique to the New Testament. How should we live as we anticipate the last days that Peter describes?
3. How does “ the longsuffering of the Lord” effect the end times?
4. In 3:15-16 Peter mentions Paul and his writings. What did Peter say about Paul? How about his writings?
5. What did Peters readers “all ready know”?

“Going Forward”

6. If they already have this knowledge, why do some of them still fall prey to “the error of the wicked”? Does this still happen today? If yes, In what ways?

7. Have you known people who, despite their knowledge of God, have fallen prey to false teachings? If yes, how can you guard against that yourself?

8. If you were in charge of the world's end time's calendar, would you speed it up or slow it down? Why?

9. Think of one or two things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is about quality not quantity. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work in many and do poorly.

10. Are you ready for Jesus return? If so, what gives you this confidence? If not, what is holding you back from being ready? What role does the Holy Spirit play in preparing us for Jesus return?

“Real –Life Application Ideas”

11. Go back through 2 Peter 3 and mark the phrase or verse that is most encouraging to you. Share it with your group.