

1st and 2nd Peter

Student Copy

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Week 1: Overview & Introduction

Key Passage for the Course: “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:10-11)

Placing 1-2 Peter in the Larger Story

With Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension the church has been launched into the world. Starting in Jerusalem and spreading around the world, the church encounters opposition, misunderstanding, and persecution. Writing to Christians scattered throughout modern-day Turkey, Peter calls the early Christians “exiles.” This term probably has a double meaning, one theological and one cultural. With the remnant of Israel exiled in Babylon in the background, Peter envisions the church as God’s true Israel, exiled in the world. However, as a community of those who are spiritually foreign and socially marginalized, the church is also a community of exiles within their own culture.

1. These two letters apply the hope of Christ to global unrest, cultural turbulence, personal suffering, destructive teachings, and everyday turmoil. Do any such conflicts affect your life? Explain.
2. As you begin this study of 1 Peter, what do you hope to learn? Ask God to reveal fresh insights and show you how to live them out.
3. Looking at the Table of Contents, what themes catch your attention? Do any particular passage come to mind?
4. There are some strange and difficult texts in 1-2 Peter. Are there any specific questions you hope to have answered through this study?

5. The following video is designed to provide key insights into the book of 1 Peter. By watching and listening to this video, you will be better prepared to read, study, teach or preach the book of 1 Peter.

Week 2: Hope that Lives into Holiness (1 Peter 1:1-2:3)

The Big Picture: 1 Peter 1:1-2:3 inspires us with the truth that what we believe about the future return of Christ ought to have profound effect on us in the present.

1. Read 1 Peter 2:9-12; 5:12-14 and consider how these texts fill out what Peter means by describing his readers as “exiles.” Why would this identification be meaningful to Peter’s audience? Is it meaningful to you?
2. Peter opens his letter with a rich Trinitarian formulation (1:2). What role does each member of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) play in the verse? How does their work convey grace and peace? How does it give hope?
3. All three persons of the Trinity collaborate so that we may be born again into a hope that is alive. Why do we need a new birth? According to verses 3 and 23, how do we obtain this new birth?
4. Both Peter and Paul explicitly state that God “chooses” people for salvation. What does this mean? What should be our response?

5. We often view suffering as an impediment to joy, but Peter insists that trials can result in “inexpressible” joy. How is that possible? Peter compares suffering to the smelting of metallic ore. How does this metaphor help us understand how to rejoice in hard times?

6. According to verses 10-12, Old Testament saints anticipated the sufferings and glories of Christ. Can you think of any examples of such saints? How do we benefit from these saints’ anticipation? Why do you think angels marvel as they observe redemptive history?

7. Verse 13 begins with “therefore,” indicating that everything that precedes this verse is the basis for what Peter will say next. Summarize the basis for Peter’s command in this verse and consider how it impacts our call to holiness in verse 15.

8. What is the biblical definition of holiness?

9. How do 1:18-22 and 2:3 show us that holiness involves not just getting far from sin but also include getting close to God? How might this insight tweak your approach to holiness?

10. In what ways is holiness a communal endeavor? In which of these ways do you need to grow? What steps can you take to do so?

Week 3: The Importance of an Eternal Perspective

(1 Peter 1:13-2:10)

Read 1 Peter 1:13-2:10 and answer the following questions.

1. What do you think is the reason behind the human preoccupation with trivial concerns and living for the here-and-now?
2. What truths from the referenced passage encouraged Peter's audience to find their hope in their eternal blessings?
3. This passage echoes the frequent New Testament command that believers must love one another (1:22). Describe the kind of love we are called to show to one another. Why is this important, especially in a situation like the one faced by Peter's original audience? Verses to consider: John 13:34; Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:1-8; Heb. 13:1; 1 John 3:11).
4. What is meant by "a living stone"?
5. Peter talks about "coming to Christ as to a living stone" (2:4). Compare that thought with the following words of Jesus in John 15:1-11.

6. What does it mean to abide in Christ? (Hint: What is an abode?) Use a scripture reference for an example.

7. Compare the image of Jesus as the vine with Peter's image of Jesus as a living stone. How are they alike? Different? What do they reveal about Christ?

8. What is significant about the building terminology used in 1 Peter 2:4-8? What is God up to in the world? What is Christ's place in this cosmic plan? What is our role?

9. Peter charges his embattled readers to hunger for and crave God's Word. Why is this important? What are the benefits?

10. In a grand summary paragraph, Peter declares the calling of the church (2:9-10). How would you state his point in your own words? Are you living out this description? Why or why not?

10. What do you need to do to focus more on eternal things?

Week 4

Community Founded on the Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-12)

This passage demonstrates that Christianity is not a private religion but a public community united in Christ.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-12 to be able to answer the following questions.

1. Spend some time researching the concept of the “cornerstone” in the Old Testament.
2. What is unique about this cornerstone? How should its unique qualities impact the way you relate to God and your own faith community?
3. Spend some time researching the concept of the Temple in the Old Testament. When we reach the New Testament, how is the temple imagery expanded?
4. Peter brushes formalistic religion aside by focusing our hope on a person: “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious...” (v. 4). Are you ever tempted to do the opposite, sliding into formalistic religion instead of pursuing a Christ-centered faith?

5. Peter rattles off a list of communal descriptors of the church. Make a list of these descriptors and briefly note how each one challenges or affirms your practice of community.

6. According to verse 9, why do God's people exist? How can you and your faith community "proclaim the excellencies" of God in your own mission field?

7. In verse 11, Peter returns to the exile theme. What marks the exile here? Do you view holiness as something mandatory or as merely optional? According to verse 12, why should you keep your conduct "honorable?"

8. What kind of radically different conduct does Peter say is expected of believers (2:11-12) What are "fleshly lusts"?

Week 5

The Church that Affirms Authority (1 Peter 2:13-3:7)

In 1 Peter 2:13-3:7, Peter shows how Christians should relate to authority. He challenges revolutionary and capitulatory extremes by urging Christians to allow their response to be guided by faith, not dictated by circumstances.

Read through the passage for this study, then be prepared to answer the following question.

1. Since Christianity did not enjoy Rome's legal protection, many were skeptical of the early gospel movement, thinking it seditious and a threat to governing authorities. How does Peter point believers in a different direction? How does your attitude toward your various governing authorities compare?
2. Read and consider Romans 13:1-7. Do the apostles place any limits on our submission to governing authorities? How should believers respond if such authorities punish those who do good or praise those who do evil?
3. How would our attitude toward governing authorities change if you took Peter's counsel to heart: Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17)? Why should we submit to governing authorities?

4. It is surprising to some modern readers that Peter does not repudiate slavery. Instead, he exhorts slaves to submit to their masters, even if such masters treat them cruelly. According to verses 19-20, what benefit is there in honoring authorities even when they are unjust?

5. Given the false political impressions of Christianity in Peter's day, why might it have been wise for the apostle not to call slaves to revolt?

6. When we suffer unjustly, it can be tempting to lash out. What alternative example does Jesus provide (vv. 21-23)?

7. Even if we can escape suffering (and sometimes we can and should), lapsing into vengeance, gossip, murder, yelling, or hatred does not actually enable us to escape. The attempts to cope with unjust circumstances simply injure us and others more. How, then, does Christ's response to suffering provide a better example? Think of a time when you suffered unjustly. How can you apply Jesus' examples of showing mercy and hoping in God for justice to that experience?

8. Submission in marriage is a difficult and often misunderstood topic. What does it bring to mind for you? Read Ephesians 5:15-33. How does this description balance or change your impression of submission?

9. The exhortation to live with one's wife "in an understanding way" literally translates as "according to knowledge". What are some ways in which a husband's knowledge of God and of the gospel should affect his marriage?

10. Although Peter uses only one verse to address husbands, the penalty for not honoring their wives seems to be steeper. What is it? Why does he warn husbands of this danger?

Week 6

Suffering Together (1 Peter 3:8-4:19)

In Peter 3:8-4:19 we discover the counterintuitive call not to seek revenge but to bless those who snub and marginalize us, just as Jesus did.

Read through the complete passage for this study, and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. Peter is now insisting on the importance of unity within the church. Read Ephesians 4:1-16 and reflect on why church unity is so important. According to Peter, what are four marks of unity? Why would these marks foster greater togetherness?
2. In 1 Peter 3:9-12, notice how this radical, familial unity produces people who bless when hurt. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and observe the blessings God promises. What happens when Abraham is blessed by God?
3. According to verses 9-12, why should we commit to being a people who bless others, especially when it is hard? How do our interactions within the church affect our witness outside the church?
4. Verse 15 is often used to justify a rational defense of the gospel that can at times lead to sharp and demeaning comments toward others. How do verses 14-17 challenge that approach, without invalidating the need for a rational defense? List the winsome ways in which we are to give a reason for our hope.

5. How does the imperative to “honor Christ the Lord as holy” affect the way in which we defend our faith to others, especially those who are hostile?

6. Verses 18-22 have puzzled commentators. How did Christ preach to “spirits in prison”? Read Jude 6 to determine who the spirits in prison are?

7. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus results in victory over evil and salvation for the repentant. How does the Noah episode symbolize what Christ accomplished? How does baptism mirror this? What gives us a clear conscience before God?

8. Peter exhorts us to arm ourselves with the same way of thinking as Christ. Are you willing to suffer and be ridiculed or “maligned” (v4) in order not to sin? Are there sins in this list (v 3) that you would rather commit than endure ridicule for refusing to participate in?

Week 7

Pray, Love, Serve (1 Peter 4:7-11)

In this section, Peter is reminding the readers of this letter that the return of Jesus Christ could be at any moment so they should be serious and watchful, maintaining proper eternal perspective on life. Peter utilized the persecution of his Christian brothers to wake them up to some of the great truths of the Christian faith:

- This world is not all there is.
- This world is not the believer's home.
- Believers have a guaranteed future that is too wonderful for words.
- Believers have a unique opportunity to serve each other and tell others about Christ.

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11 and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. Why does Peter charge his readers to be serious and watchful in prayer? (Verses to consider: Romans 13:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; James 5:7-8; Rev. 22-20).
2. What kind of love does Peter command believers to demonstrate? What is the difference between "covering over" sin and excusing sin? (verses to consider: Prov. 10:12; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5).
3. What does biblical hospitality look like? (Verses to consider: Gen. 18:1-8; Deut. 14:28-29; 1 Tim. 3:2)

4. What fact about spiritual gifts does Peter assume to be true?

5. Why is love greater than faith and hope?

6. What are some misconceptions about love in our culture? How do these wrong ideas compare with the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13?

7. Read 1 John 4:7-21. What extra insights does this passage give you into your Christian obligation to love others?

8. Peter twice refers to the glory that God deserves. How should the “glory of God” figure into a believer’s daily activities and schedule?

Week 8

Joy Even in Suffering (1 Peter 4:12-19)

This passage presents four attitudes necessary for triumphal living: Christians should expect persecution (and not be surprised by it); Christians should rejoice in the midst of difficulty; Christians should evaluate the cause of suffering; and Christians should entrust their lives to God.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. How do you explain that in most cultures, the church is actually thriving and flourishing? How is it that those who suffer for the name of Christ can endure it with joy?
2. How do you tend to respond to the daily difficulties in your life? Check the ways that apply to you.
 - grumbling
 - trying to fix it
 - discouragement
 - faith in God's plan
 - questioning, why me?
 - worry and anxiety
 - joy
3. What does it mean to partake of Christ's suffering?

11. Peter encouraged his persecuted brethren to “commit their souls” to their “faithful Creator.” Explain what this means as though you were giving encouragement to a friend who was going through suffering.

Week 10

Humble Together (1 Peter 5:1-14)

In 1 Peter 5:1-14, Peter focus on the important relationship between elders and the church and on the essential ingredient of humility in order to pursue all that he has addressed in this letter.

Read the referenced scriptures and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. Define the word “Elder” and make a list of their responsibilities. Use scriptural references.
2. Why does Peter preface his exhortation to elders by commenting on what he has witnessed and what he will partake of (5:1)? How should this influence the way we read his words?
3. In verse 2 Peter ascribes spiritual authority to the elders of the local church. In light of verses 3-4, where does this authority come from? Read 1 Timothy 5:17-20, alongside 1 Peter 5:5-6. How should the church support their elders?
4. How should elder authority be exercised? Can you think of ways elders might domineer or lead for “shameful gain: today? According to 1 Timothy 5:1, 19-20, how should be respond to elders who misuse authority? In light of their weighty responsibilities, pause to pray for your elders.

5. Read 1 Peter 5:5-6. Why is humility such an important ingredient in order for the church to thrive? Notice the direction of grace. Which way does it flow? How are we able to be recipients of God's grace?

6. Considering the inheritance of 1 Peter 1:3-9 and the promises in 5:10, what does being "exalted at the proper time" mean?

7. What is the relationship between anxiety and humility in verses 6-7? Why do you think proud people tend to be more anxious than humble people?

8. Peter refers to his whole letter as "the true grace of God." How would you treat the Bible if you really viewed Scripture in this way? According to verse 12, how are we to respond to the true grace of God?

Week 11

Resisting the Devil (1 Peter 5:5b-11)

1. Research the definition of the following terms:
 - a. Satan
 - b. Adversary
 - c. Devil

2. Verse 8 reminds us that we have a great foe in our Christian life. Do you take this adversary seriously? List the various ways in which we can oppose the Devil, and reflect on how you can better practice these strategies.

3. How do verses 10-11 inspire confidence in our battle against sin, temptation, and the Devil? Read James 4:7 and notice the power we have in Christ to overcome the Devil. Be encouraged that the “lion” is on a leash and the Savior is coming back!

4. If God is all-powerful, and if this gospel is true, why the intense struggle and suffering with the enemy?

5. What is Satan’s final end? How does this fact encourage you to live victoriously today?

Week 12

Introduction to 2 Peter & Overview

Introductory Questions:

1. How does Peter describe an authentic Christian? (2:1:1)
2. What else does Peter tell us about an authentic Christian? See 2 Peter 1:4b
3. What does Peter exhort us as Christians to do? 2 Peter 1:5-7
4. Why is it essential for the Christian to develop his spiritual life in the manner outlined by Peter? 2 Peter 1:8; John 15:1-2.
5. The following video is designed to provide key insights into the book of 2 Peter. By watching and listening to this video, you will be better prepared to read, study, teach or preach the book of 2 Peter.

Week 13

God's Grace for a Life of Godliness (2 Peter 1:1-15)

Second Peter 1:1-15 presents a strong call to godliness, enabled by God's power working through His Word.

Read through the referenced scriptures and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. Peter begins his second book by talking about being diligent to grow in the knowledge of God. Consider your own "spiritual knowledge." On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "spiritual simpleton" and 10 being Bible scholar," how would you rate yourself?
2. Peter also opens the letter by referring to himself as "Simeon Peter" – Simeon is the Jewish spelling of the name Simon and is used only one other time in the New Testament (Acts 15:14). The use of this Jewish name underscores Peter's identity as the author of the letter. What other hints do you see in this opening section (vv. 1-15) that points to Peter as the author of this epistle?
3. Peter also begins by talking about the power of Christ. Why is this an important starting point? What does Christ's power do for believers? Verses to consider: Matt 24:30; Mark 5:30; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 12:9)
4. What does "partakers of the divine nature" mean? What does it not mean? Verses to consider: John 3:3; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Rom. 8:1, 9; John 1:12; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:17).

5. Peter greets his audience as those who “have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:1). Read Romans 3:21-26 and consider the parallels between these two passages. Why do we have a standing before God equal to that of the apostles? Why does Peter include this in his greeting?

6. Verses 5-7 list qualities reminiscent of Jesus. List them, then make a note which are prevalent in your life and which are lacking.

7. Read 2 Peter 1:8; 2:20; 3:18. What is the goal of biblical knowledge?

8. Second Peter 1:10 calls us to be diligent in confirming our calling and election. Revisit 1 Peter 1 and locate similar statements there. What does it mean to “confirm our calling and election”? Why is this so critical?

9. If salvation and God’s eternal love are assured to the true believer, then why do so many Christians lack assurance? How does an unfruitful life aggravate these feelings of doubt? Verses to consider: Matt. 13:22; James 2:20-22)

10. What popular current philosophies or false teachings in our culture and in the church create problems for immature Christians who are not grounded in the faith?

11. The word translated “stir...up” means to awaken or stimulate. Why is Peter writing a “reminder”? Why do we need it?

Week 14

The True Word and False Teachers (2 Peter 2:16-2:22) Part 1

In 2 Peter 1:16-2:22, Peter both explains why the apostles' writings can be trusted over false teachers and also warns of the consequences of false teaching.

Read through the referenced scriptures and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. Define the word Apostolic.
2. Peter grounds his stirring reminder (1:1-15) not in clever philosophy or fanciful Greek tales but in the eyewitness testimony of Jesus, which Peter shared with other apostles. How does this set Christianity apart? Why does it lend credibility to apostolic writing?
3. Read Matthew 17:1-8 alongside 2 Peter 1:16-18. When Peter mentions Jesus' "honor and glory" at the transfiguration, what particular elements of the event might he be referring to? What do these elements tell us about Jesus and his kingdom (See Matt. 16:28)?
4. In addition to being taught by the Son of God, Peter points to a second source of reliability: "We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed" (2 Peter 1:19). The "prophetic word" is likely a broad reference to the Old Testament (see 2 Peter 1:20; 3:16). The word "confirm" is also used in 2 Peter 1:10. With these things in view, what does it mean for the prophetic word to be "confirmed"?

5. In 2 Peter 1:19, Peter says that we would do well to pay attention to the prophetic word in a particular way. Read Numbers 24:17 and Romans 13:11-14. How do these texts illuminate the way in which we should pay attention to God's Word?

6. In 2 Peter 1:20-21, Peter gives a third reason for the reliability of his writing. What is it? This text explains the process of biblical inspiration. Reflecting on this verse, explain inspiration in your own words.

7. With a firm sense of the reliability of apostolic writing, Peter turns his attention to false teachers. According to 2:1-3, what motivates these false teachers? What is their principal error?

8. What are some of the more common and dangerous examples of "false teaching" –according to Scripture–that are popular where you live? What makes them so popular?

9. How do you discern what is true and what is false? How do you determine what teaching you will listen to and what teaching you will reject?

10. Read Matthew 23:1-36. Do Jesus' words strike you as too harsh, too lenient, or just right? Why?

11. Write out a paragraph or so what you might say (that is, what points you might need to make) to a friend or family member who is involved in a false or heretical religious group.

Week 15

The True Word & False Teachers (2 Peter 1:16-2:22) Part 2

1. In 2 Peter 2:4-8, Peter identifies two threads of judgment and salvation across four cases. Identify the cases associated with judgment and salvation. What makes them distinct?
2. The first example of judgment (v. 4) may refer to those evildoers mentioned in Genesis 6:1-2 and/or Jude 6. What is Peter's primary concern in highlighting the judgment of these fallen angels?
3. The second example of judgment refers to Genesis 18-19. According to 2 Peter 2:10 and Jude 8, what two sins were being judged in that episode? Compare your answer to the sins Paul reviews in Romans 1:18-25. Why are these sins mentioned in particular?
4. Read 2 Peter 2:9. What is Peter's main point in describing these episodes of salvation and judgment.
5. Who are the "glorious ones" in 2:10? Read Jude 8-10. What do those who blaspheme these glorious ones reveal about themselves?

Week 16

The Day of the Lord is Coming (2 Peter 3:1-18) Part 1

Second Peter 3:1-18 teaches that the return of the Lord is certain and that it should change the way we live now.

Read through the complete text for this study and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1. Research the term “The Day of the Lord”. What is it referring to, when will it happen and what things will characterize the day of the Lord? Verses to consider: Isa 66:15; Dan. 7:9-10; Mic. 1:4; Mal. 4:1; Matt. 3:11-12; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)
2. Verses 1-3 underscore the importance of being reminded of the prophetic word (contained in the Old Testament) and apostolic teaching (which became the New Testament). Yet Peter has already mentioned that his readers are “established in the truth that you have” (2 Peter 1:12). If these Christians already know the truth, why is Peter reminding them of it?
3. Peter’s reminder comes with a warning: “Scoffers will come in the last days” (3:3). When are the “last days”? Consider the following passages as you answer: Daniel 12:1-3; Matthew 24:4-9; Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2; Jude 12.

4. Why are the scoffers so dangerous? According to 2 Peter 3:4, what is their primary objection? How has Peter already combatted this view (consider 1 Peter 1:3-5)?

5. How does Peter answer the scoffers' objection (2 Peter 3:5-6)?

6. If the universe was created out of nothing, why does Peter say God created the earth "out of water"? What is the relevance of a water-fashioned earth to this argument?

7. If God's "word" stands behind his use of water to create and destroy (2 Peter 3:5-6), what bearing does this have on the claim that God (in the form of Christ) is not coming back?

8. Read Psalm 90:1-4 alongside 2 Peter 3:8. What is Peter teaching about God? About humanity?

9. According to verses 8-9, why does Christ delay his return? How does this compare to the attitude of the mockers?

10. In verse 10, Peter describes the day of the Lord as a time of cosmic destruction and renewal. List the three realms he mentions and note what will happen to each.

Week 17

The Day of the Lord is Coming (2 Peter 3:1-18) Part 2

1. If we have “equal standing” with the apostles through the righteousness of Jesus (1:1), why does Peter tell us to be “diligent to be found by Christ without spot or blemish” (3:14)? Compare Philippians 2:14-15 as you answer.
2. What does 2 Peter 3:15 tell us about Peter’s view of Paul’s writings? What does it tell us about the study of Scripture?
3. What would it look like for you to take the warnings in verse 17 to heart? How should Peter’s description of his readers as “beloved” influence our response to these warnings?
4. Peter has emphasized the knowledge of God throughout the letter. Why does he close by adding that we should grow in the “grace and knowledge” of Jesus (3:18)? How can you do so in your local church?
5. Peter mentions a coming age that will feature “new heavens and a new earth.” What does this mean? (Verses to consider: Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 20:1-21:1)

Week 18

Summary and Conclusions

1. In what ways are you looking forward to Jesus' second coming? Why?
2. What more about the "day of the Lord" do you learn from Paul's teaching?
3. Write out a paragraph and comment on this statement and be prepared to share with the class: *"Those who do perish and go to hell, go because they are depraved and worthy only of hell and have rejected the only remedy, Jesus Christ, not because they were created for hell and predetermined to go there. The path to damnation is the path of a non-repentant heart; it is the path of one who rejects the person and provision of Christ and holds on to sin."*
4. Why do so many people reject the loving provision of God? (Verses to consider: Eph. 2:1-10).
5. In what way can you use our culture's current fascination with the end times to be a witness for Christ?

6. As you think back over the epistle of 2 Peter, what specific lessons or principles stand out to you? Why? How can you be a “doer” of these portions of God’s Word?