

LifeChange

A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*A life-changing
encounter with God's Word*

2 PETER & JUDE

*Stand firm in the faith,
secure in the promise that Jesus
will someday return.*

OVER 2.5 MILLION SOLD

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NAVPRESS 

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2 Peter & Jude

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24 23 22 21 20 19 18
19 18 17 16 15 14 13

CONTENTS

How to Use This Study	5
Background: Introduction to 2 Peter and Jude	9
Map of the Roman Empire	9
Comparative Chart of 2 Peter and Jude	15
One—Overview of 2 Peter	21
Outline of 2 Peter	29
Two—A Fruitful Life (2 Peter 1:1-11; Jude 3)	31
Three—Eyewitnesses and Prophets (2 Peter 1:12-21)	43
Four—False Prophets and True Believers (2 Peter 2:1-16; Jude 4-12)	53
Five—What Could Be Worse? (2 Peter 2:17-22; Jude 12-16)	65
Six—Certain Judgment (2 Peter 3:1-10; Jude 17-19)	73
Seven—Living in the Last Days (2 Peter 3:11-18; Jude 20-25)	83
Eight—Final Results (Jude 1-25)	93
Outline of Jude	105
Nine—Review	107
Study Aids	113

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AUTHOR: DIETRICH GRUEN

SERIES EDITOR: KAREN LEE-THORP

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

Most guides in the LIFECHANGE series of Bible studies cover one book of the Bible. Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to the book.
2. To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible without structured guides.
3. To give you all the historical background, word definitions, and explanatory notes you need, so that your only other reference is the Bible.
4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole.
5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take sixty to ninety minutes to complete on your own. The guide is based on the assumption that you are completing one lesson per week, but if time is limited you can do half a lesson per week or whatever amount allows you to be thorough.

Flexibility

LIFECHANGE guides are flexible, allowing you to adjust the quantity and depth of your study to meet your individual needs. The guide offers many optional questions in addition to the regular numbered questions. The optional questions, which appear in the margins of the study pages, include the following:

Optional Application. Nearly all application questions are optional; we hope you will do as many as you can without overcommitting yourself.

For Thought and Discussion. Beginning Bible students should be able to handle these, but even advanced students need to think about them. These questions frequently deal with ethical issues and other biblical principles. They often offer cross-references to spark thought, but the references do not give obvious answers. They are good for group discussions.

For Further Study. These include: (a) cross-references that shed light on a topic the book discusses, and (b) questions that delve deeper into the passage. You can omit them to shorten a lesson without missing a major point of the passage.

If you are meeting in a group, decide together which optional questions to prepare for each lesson, and how much of the lesson you will cover at the next meeting. Normally, the group leader should make this decision, but you might let each member choose his or her own application questions.

As you grow in your walk with God, you will find the LIFECHANGE guide growing with you—a helpful reference on a topic, a continuing challenge for application, a source of questions for many levels of growth.

Overview and details

The study begins with an overview of the books of 2 Peter and Jude. The key to interpretation is context—what is the whole passage or book *about?*—and the key to context is purpose—what is the author’s *aim* for the whole work? In lesson 1 you will lay the foundation for your study of 2 Peter by asking yourself, “Why did the author (and God) write the book? What did they want to accomplish? What is the book about?”

In lessons 2 through 7, you will analyze successive passages of 2 Peter and Jude in detail. Thinking about how a paragraph fits into the overall goal of the book will help you to see its purpose. Its purpose will help you see its meaning. Frequently reviewing a chart or outline of the book will enable you to make these connections. In lesson 8, you will look at the book of Jude as a whole.

In lesson 9, you will review 2 Peter and Jude, returning to the big picture to see whether your view of the books has changed after closer study. Review will also strengthen your grasp of major issues and give you an idea of how you have grown from your study.

Kinds of questions

Bible study on your own—without a structured guide—follows a progression. First you observe: What does the passage *say*? Then you interpret: What does the passage *mean*? Lastly you apply: How does this truth *affect* my life?

Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clear-cut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don’t let your study become an exercise in knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God’s Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray,

“Lord, what do You want me to see here?” “Father, why is this true?” “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember.

Study aids

A list of reference materials, including a few notes of explanation to help you make good use of them, begins on page 113. This guide is designed to include enough background to let you interpret with just your Bible and the guide. Still, if you want more information on a subject or want to study a book on your own, try the references listed.

Scripture versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible.

Use any translation you like for study, preferably more than one. A paraphrase such as *The Message* can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

Memorizing and meditating

A psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes during each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it over to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return to your passage as often as you can during your day, for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For group study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and businessmen’s studies. Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later years any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per week. However, feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or, omit some questions in a lesson if preparation or discussion time is limited. You can always return to this guide for personal study later. You will be able to discuss only a few questions at length, so choose some for discussion and others for background. Make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each lesson in the guide ends with a section called "For the group." These sections give advice on how to focus a discussion, how you might apply the lesson in your group, how you might shorten a lesson, and so on. The group leader should read each "For the group" at least a week ahead so that he or she can tell the group how to prepare for the next lesson.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all of the background and discussion questions to be covered. If the group decides not to take an hour per week for private preparation, then expect to take at least two meetings per lesson to work through the questions. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray with one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another to resist temptation, assure each other that the other's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. Spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons. Then discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow such sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down each other's applications and prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Notes taken during discussion will help you to remember, follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and clarify a total view of an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating. Some groups choose one member at each meeting to take notes. Then someone copies the notes and distributes them at the next meeting. Rotating these tasks can help include people. Some groups have someone take notes on a large pad of paper or erasable marker board so that everyone can see what has been recorded.

Pages 116–117 list some good sources of counsel for leading group studies.

BACKGROUND

Introduction to 2 Peter and Jude

Map of the Roman Empire



Because of their close relationship, it is expedient, even necessary, to introduce 2 Peter and Jude together because they share so much in common. Both strongly denounce false teachers and apostasy. Both are preoccupied with eschatology (the doctrine of last things), although 2 Peter more so than Jude. Both use peculiar imagery understandable and useful to ancient Jewish Christians, but sometimes opaque to modern readers. These two epistles written to the church at large struggled to gain acceptance into the New Testament, but for different reasons.

Authorship, authenticity, and date of 2 Peter

The author of 2 Peter represents himself as “Simon Peter” and an “apostle” (1:1). His use of the first person underscores a claim to be an eyewitness to the Transfiguration of Christ (see 1:16-18). The author alludes to a previous correspondence with his readership (see 3:1), which many take as a clear reference to 1 Peter. And he refers to Paul as a colleague (“our dear brother,” 3:15). Since the apostle Peter was likely martyred at the hands of Roman Emperor Nero (ruled AD 54–68), and if this letter attributed to Peter is authentic, it must have been written sometime prior to AD 68.

However, many scholars doubt that the apostle Peter is the author of the letter bearing his name. They cite many reasons.

- The author had a fluent grasp of Hellenistic Greek which the uneducated fisherman from Galilee did not.
- The letter seems to borrow substantially from Jude, which many believe could not have been written before AD 68.
- The author apparently lived sometime after the first generation of believers (“our ancestors”) had passed away (but see note at 2 Peter 3:4, page 75), and when Paul’s letters were a collected body of work (but see note at 2 Peter 3:15-16, page 87). These two events had not yet happened by AD 68.
- The author’s concern for apostolic tradition and Scripture twisting sound like universal issues of the “late” first century, rather than the local issues of the first-generation early church.
- If the letter was authentic, why did the Roman church take almost three centuries of debate before accepting it into the New Testament canon?¹

Before we cast aside all such scholarly theories as missing the plain meaning of the text, it should be noted that many works purported to be from the apostle Peter clearly are not, as their content requires a second-century date. A virtual library of pseudo-Petrine literature honors the memory of the chief apostle and trades on his authority: the popular *Apocalypse of Peter* (about AD 135), the widely read *Preaching of Peter* (early second century), the Docetic *Gospel of Peter* (about AD 190), the legendary *Acts of Peter* (second half of second century). These works were alleged sequels or deliberate take-offs of 1 Peter.² Still, as some scholars point out, “No other known writing is as much like 1 Peter as 2 Peter.”³

The difference in style between the literary Greek in 1 Peter (which most scholars agree is authentic) and the rough Greek in 2 Peter may be explained by a change in *amanuensis* (scribe or ghostwriter). The first time around, the uneducated Peter used Silas (see 1 Peter 5:12) as his intermediate agent in writing. For 2 Peter, written just before his death, Peter could have had someone else transcribe his notes who had less command of the language.

The differences in style between 1 Peter and 2 Peter, however significant, may also be accounted for by new subject matter, new format and intent of the letters, new time and occasion of the writing, and new sources or models that he drew upon.

The fact that 2 Peter was finally included in the New Testament canon after such long debate offers more reason to affirm its authenticity. The fact

that 2 Peter seems to borrow from Jude does not dictate a late date or another author, but could be an argument for dating Jude earlier than 2 Peter, which softens, expands, and applies Jude's harsh rhetoric.

Second Peter is one of the seven epistles (one to the Hebrews, one from James, two from Peter, and three from John). But the question remains open whether the work is a genuine piece of correspondence with *particular* communities in mind (perhaps directed to the same Jewish Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, as in 1 Peter). Just as likely, the work could be directed to the church as a whole.

Authorship, authenticity, and date of Jude

Jude had a much easier time being accepted into the New Testament canon of Scriptures than 2 Peter. Yet Jude quotes non-canonical sources like the apocryphal *1 Enoch* (see note at Jude 14-15, page 101) and the *Assumption of Moses* (see note at Jude 9, page 98). By freely drawing illustrations from these unapproved sources, Jude was tainted in some theological circles.

Jude ("Judah" in Hebrew or "Judas" in Greek) says he is "the brother of James" (Jude 1). But that still leaves room for speculation, since both names were common in biblical times. *Who's Who in the Bible* identifies seven men by the name of Judas or Jude⁴ two were related to a James. Of the two most likely Judas figures, one was an apostle (see Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13)—not Judas Iscariot. But Jude tacitly denies being an apostle (see Jude 17), unlike Peter. The other likely Jude was a brother of Jesus from the household of Joseph and Mary (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

However, the author Jude says nothing about a brotherly kinship with Jesus, nor anything about his famous parents—an experience he would have shared with James who was equally silent on this point in his book. Perhaps out of humility and reserve, both authors claim to be no more than "servant[s] of Jesus." Yet the Gospel writers and Paul did not hesitate to make the connection.

As the younger brother of James, who was stoned to death in AD 62 by the Sanhedrin,⁵ Jude would have lived a decade or two longer. That means his letter could be dated between AD 70 and 80. But the date of Jude's composition depends upon its relationship to 2 Peter.

If 2 Peter (the longer of the two) is an expansion of Jude for a different audience and occasion—which seems more likely than the other way around—then Jude would have to have been written first, before Peter's death and soon after James's death. A composition date around AD 65 fits all the criteria. And while there are those who believe that "Jude" was a pseudonym and did not compose the letter himself, most scholars agree that "there is nothing in the letter that requires a date beyond the lifetime of Jude the brother of the Lord."⁶

Ancient Gnosticism and its modern-day heretical cousins

The error that both Jude and 2 Peter combat was not the fully developed and systematized form of Gnosticism that prevailed during the second century,

but a rudimentary form of Gnosticism plaguing the early church in Paul's day and in John's day.

Because Gnosticism had no central authority or canon of scriptures, its teachers held a bewildering array of views, from asceticism to licentiousness. Common to most views is a dualism that pits God, who is spirit, against the material creation, which is viewed as evil. The human body, comprised of matter, is therefore evil. As a result, there is no resurrection of the body, but, at death, the spirit is believed to travel through space and unite with God. The body was treated most harshly, especially by the ascetic branch of Gnosticism.

An intricate branch of Gnosticism was championed by Valentinus, who came to Rome in AD 140. He propagated a theory of divine emanations and spiritual hierarchies. One of his groups became the so-called *pneumatics*, or spiritual Gnostics, who taught that it didn't matter what you did with your body, leading to deliberate self-indulgence and licentious behavior.⁷

Salvation is understood by Gnostics as an escape from the body, not by faith in Christ or even by good works, but by special or secret "knowledge" (in Greek, *gnosis*, hence "Gnostics"). Christ's humanity was denied in one of two ways. Either Christ only seemed to have a body, a view called Docetism (from the Greek *dokeo*, meaning "to seem"), popularized by the heretic Marcion. Alternately, Christ descended as a dove upon the man Jesus for his adult ministry, from baptism and to Gethsemane, but since only a man could die, Christ on the cross needed a Redeemer too. This view is called Cerinthianism, after its chief second-century spokesman Cerinthus.⁸

Second Peter and Jude were not addressing these intricate, systematic views of Gnosticism, but we can see that some heretical seeds were germinating in the early church and had to be uprooted by Christians taking a stand on apostolic truth.

While both 2 Peter and Jude take a strong stand against early forms of Gnosticism, Peter also takes aim at new errors on the horizon, notably, doubts about the Second Coming and the denial or misuse of authoritative Scripture. These attacks do not come from forces outside the church but from internal factions. Peter also ponders the final cosmic showdown and gives a reasoned explanation for why the catastrophic end of the world is delayed.

The mutual appeal of 2 Peter and Jude is as urgent today as when they were first written. We still need to know truth, as apostasy is more rampant, not only in New Age religions, but also in the amorality of the modern post-Christian age. By basing their case for sanctification on the bedrock of Scripture and the certainty of judgment, 2 Peter and Jude address a question that has divided the Church for two millennia. Historically, Christians have struggled to maintain the proper balance between law and gospel, between discipline and grace. Imbalance toward one produces either a view of complete freedom from the law or legalism and moralism on the other.

Portrait of Simon Peter

Simon was a common name, the Greek version of the Hebrew name *Simeon* (see Acts 15:14). Simon was born in Bethsaida, near the north shore of the

sea of Galilee. His family members were Jewish fishermen, like many of their neighbors, although many Samaritans and Greek-speaking Gentiles also lived in Galilee. Simon probably received “the normal elementary education of a Jewish boy in a small town”⁹—that is, he learned to read a little Hebrew and enough Greek to do business, and he spoke Aramaic and common Greek fluently. He was not trained in Jewish Scriptures and law as a rabbi, nor in literary Greek (see Acts 4:13). Before meeting Jesus, Simon may have followed John the Baptist (see John 1:35-42).

Simon was one of Jesus’ first and closest disciples. He was always listed first among them (see Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:12-16; 9:28; Acts 1:13), and he may have been their leader (see Luke 22:31-32). Jesus renamed him *Cephas* (Aramaic), or *Peter* (Greek), which means a pebble or a small rock. This name suggested Peter’s future strength, endurance, and foundational position in the church, and his dependence on the church’s true Rock, Jesus (see Matthew 16:16-18; Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Peter 2:4-8).

Peter seems to have remained the leader of the apostles after Jesus’ death (see Acts 1:15-26), although he was leader among equals (see Acts 15:13-22). The first twelve chapters of Acts show Peter leading the disciples’ proclamation of the risen Christ. Paul called Peter a “pillar” of the Jerusalem church during this period, from about AD 33–47 (see Galatians 2:9).

Paul and Peter agreed at one point that Paul would evangelize Gentiles and Peter would evangelize Jews (see Galatians 2:7). But Peter did preach to Gentiles in Caesarea (see Acts 10:1–11:18). We don’t know what Peter did after AD 47, but 1 Peter suggests that he worked in Asia Minor at some point.

Early sources say that Peter spent the last years of his life in Rome. In AD 64 a fire broke out in Rome, destroying much of the city. Many people suspected that Emperor Nero had ordered the city burned, so that he could rebuild it in a modern style. Nero found scapegoats in an unpopular religious sect—the Christians—who were social outcasts and already suspected of wicked practices. As the Roman historian Tacitus wrote some fifty years later, “a huge crowd was convicted not so much of arson as of hatred of the human race.”¹⁰ They were executed horribly.

Although the disgusting executions made many Romans feel sorry for the Christians, the spectacle encouraged others to harass the sect. According to early Christian sources, both Peter and Paul were executed within a few years of the fire in Rome. A third-century Christian, Origen, records that Peter was crucified upside down, feeling unworthy to die as Christ had died.

Relationship between 2 Peter and Jude

Many scholars have noted the close relationship between 2 Peter and Jude, but none more than J. N. D. Kelly, who calls attention to “their startling resemblances in subject-matter, vocabulary and phrasing, and even order of ideas.”¹¹ But a closer inspection of the text will confirm that 2 Peter is secondary and Jude is primary. Kelly notes these similarities and differences,¹² which we can see in the two-column comparison stacking the similar passages side by side:

- Jude's style is more spontaneous, vigorous, and harsh.
- The Greek version of 2 Peter is belabored, tedious, toned-down.
- Both catalog examples from biblical history, but while Jude is careless about their chronological order, 2 Peter is very correct.
- While both denounce sin in severe terms, 2 Peter also shows examples of hope, as in the rescue of Noah and Lot.
- In their attitude to Scripture, Jude plays it looser, even quoting from non-canonical sources, whereas Peter deletes these colorful details with his stricter view of the Old Testament canon and his view of an emerging New Testament canon (consisting of Paul's letters).

See for yourself how many points of verbal correspondence—and points of dissimilarity—you can find in the following chart comparing 2 Peter with Jude on page 15.

1. J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 235.
2. Kelly, 236.
3. Donald Burdick and John Skilton, "1 & 2 Peter," *The NIV Study Bible*, ed. Kenneth Barker, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 1897.
4. Publications International, Ltd., 1995.
5. Josephus, *Antiquities*, xx. 200.
6. Burdick and Skilton, 1918.
7. E. M. Yamauchi, "Gnosticism," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Sinclair Ferguson, David Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 272–274.
8. Burdick and Skilton, 1906; also Yamauchi, 272.
9. Irving L. Jensen, *1 and 2 Peter* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 7–8.
10. Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44.5 in F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 401.
11. Kelly, 225.
12. Kelly, 227.

Comparative Chart of 2 Peter and Jude

2 Peter

Jude

(1:1) Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

(verse 1) Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

(1:2) Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

(verse 2) Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

(1:5) For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

(verse 3) Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.

(1:12) So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

(verse 5) Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

(2:1) But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.

(verse 4) For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

(2:2) Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

(2:3) In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

(verse 5) Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

2 Peter

(2:4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment;

(2:5) if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;

(2:6) if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

(2:7) and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless

(2:8) (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—

(2:9) if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

(2:10) This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings;

(2:11) yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord.

Jude

(verse 6) And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

(verse 7) In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

(verse 8) In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.

(verse 9) But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

2 Peter

(2:12) But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.

(2:13) They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.

(2:14) With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood!

(2:15) They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness.

(2:16) But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

(2:17) These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

Jude

(verse 10) Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand; and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.

(verse 12a) These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves.

(verse 11) Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

(verse 12b) They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.

(verse 13) They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame, wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

(verse 14) Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones

(verse 15) to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

2 Peter

(2:18) For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

(2:19) They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

(2:20) If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

(2:21) It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

(2:22) Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

(3:1) Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.

(3:2) I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

(3:3) Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

Jude

(verse 16) These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

(verse 17) But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.

(verse 18) They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”

(verse 19) These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

2 Peter

(3:14) So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

(3:18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Jude

(verse 24) To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

(verse 25) to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

OVERVIEW OF 2 PETER

When a letter from a beloved friend living faraway or nearing death arrives, you read it more than once. The first time through, you read it quickly, looking for general impressions. The second time, you may read it more slowly, taking time to savor each word, perhaps reading it aloud as if to a friend. The third time through, you read more carefully, noting things you want to remember and respond to.

If the letter proved to be the last will and testament of a close friend, you'd keep it for many more readings, reflections, or recitals. This overview study of 2 Peter asks you to read and re-read this brief letter several times, each time with a different purpose or approach.

First impressions

1. Read 2 Peter in one sitting, so you can see the letter as a whole. You may want to read it through again in another translation, or even aloud to get a general impression. What are some examples of the kinds of news Peter shares?

good news worth shouting about

bad news worth watching out for

news to pray about

2. What other initial reactions or first impulses do you have after reading it?

3. a. What do you notice about the mood of 2 Peter? (Is Peter angry, concerned, joyful, stern . . . ?)

- b. Does Peter's mood change in the letter?
(Where? Why?)

4. Think about *how* Peter says what he does. How would you describe the *style* or *delivery* of this letter? (Is he helpful, argumentative, personal, encouraging . . . ?)

5. a. Repetition or *how often* an author uses certain words or phrases gives a clue to the author's intent in writing a letter. What words or phrases occur over and over? (Hint: Don't get hung up on the exact wording used, which may vary from translation to translation. Instead go for broad themes. A different version can help you notice new things that make a confusing passage clearer or a familiar passage fresher.)

b. What main themes or topics are suggested by these repeated words?

Broad outline

6. If your impression of 2 Peter is still unclear after reading it twice, a broad outline can help sharpen it. Think of a short sentence or phrase that captures the main point or gives a title to paragraph divisions or other bite-sized Scripture portions. The first one is done for you as an example. (Paragraph divisions, even verse numbers and sentence punctuation, were not in the original Greek or Hebrew manuscripts, but were added centuries later for ease of reading. The divisions in your Bible may differ from the ones given here, so feel free to alter the ones below if necessary.)

After titling the bite-size portions, cluster them and give an overall title to each chapter or main block of Scripture (1:1-21; 2:1-22; 3:1-18).

1:1-21 _____

1:1-2 Abundant grace and peace from knowing Jesus

1:3-4 _____

1:5-9 _____

1:10-11 _____

1:12-15 _____

1:16-18 _____

1:19-21 _____

- 2:1-22 _____
- 2:1-3 _____
- 2:4-6 _____
- 2:7-9 _____
- 2:10-12 _____
- 2:13-16 _____
- 2:17-22 _____
- 3:1-18 _____
- 3:1-2 _____
- 3:3-7 _____
- 3:8-10 _____
- 3:11-13 _____
- 3:14-16 _____
- 3:17-18 _____

After doing this outline procedure on your own, compare your sentence summaries or titles with each other and with the outline on pages 29–30. There is no single correct answer, so discuss in your group why you prefer one sentence summary over another.

Study Skill—Outlining

Outlining a passage will sharpen your focus and increase your retention of the main points. Outlining also helps us understand the flow or train of thought in the book. If it appears some points are subordinate to others, or if some points are mere particulars in relation to a larger general point, you can indicate that in your outline by using capital letters or Roman numerals for main points, and letters or numbers for secondary points.

An outline of 2 Peter might begin like this:

(continued on page 26)

(continued from page 25)

I. Provisions for a fruitful and holy Christian life (1:1-21)

A. Through the knowledge of Jesus (1:3)

1. Necessary for life and godliness

B. Through His promises (1:4)

1. We participate in God's nature
2. We escape the world's corruption

C. Through our moral virtues we "possess" (1:5-9)

1. [any supporting detail you want to include]
2. [another supporting detail]

D. [the main idea of 1:10-11]

- 1.
- 2.
- ...

II. [the main idea of 2:1-22]

7. Drawing from your own first impressions and outline summaries, what do you think was Peter's main purpose for writing this second letter? (See 1:12-15; 2:1-2; 3:1-4,8,14,16-18.)

Study Skill—Rhetorical Devices

People usually write letters or address an audience with a particular purpose in mind or some result they want to accomplish in the lives of their readers or listeners. Sometimes writers or speakers underscore their purpose by addressing their audience with a "reminder," with a rhetorical question or statement ("Verily, verily, I say unto you"), or with some other rhetorical device that says, in effect, "This is it. Don't miss this point."

8. If you have not already done so, read the historical background of this study guide. How did the introductory material get you to rethink some of your presumptions about the text?

9. In your initial readings of 2 Peter, you may have come across concepts you'd like clarified or questions you'd like answered as you go deeper into this study. Jot down your questions here to serve as personal objectives for your study. (Some of your questions may be answered later in this study guide. The resources listed in the Study Aids on pages 113–117 may help you answer the tougher questions.)

Your response

10. What does your group have in common with the original readers and hearers of 2 Peter? (Note: Readers today might have a different purpose for studying the letter than the author had in addressing his original readers.)

11. What could God be telling you and your group to do in the next several weeks through this letter?

For the group

The beginning of a new group study is a good time to lay a proper foundation for honest sharing of personal goals and concerns, as well as insights from your Bible study. One way to establish common ground is to share what each group member hopes to get out of this study of 2 Peter. As you take several minutes to share each other's hopes and expectations, have someone write them down. Weeks from now, you can look back at these goals to see if they are being met.

Take turns sharing some of what you wrote down from your first impressions (questions 1–5). Sharing from your notes will help members get comfortable with each other and establish common ground for your study.

Likewise, take several minutes sharing your sentence summaries or titles (question 6), as well as any comparisons and insights gained from looking at the chart in the background section. Don't try to harmonize all your answers, but discuss your differences. Learn why you prefer one sentence summary over another.

Consider the occasion or purpose of this letter (question 7). What difficult concepts would the original readers and hearers of 2 Peter have readily

understood, but that you will need more time and in-depth study to understand (questions 9–10)? Take your last ten minutes to share concerns. This input will affect how your group should pace future studies.

Share and pray about how your group will blend your different strengths and backgrounds. Some of you will have strong analytic skills, while others will be good at facilitating group discussion, or driving home a point of application. Give thanks for how God has put your group together, and be willing to help each other. Don't be embarrassed to give and request help. That's why you're studying this as a group, and not just as individuals.

How you divide the time spent in individual and group study will vary according to the group size and purpose, your familiarity with Bible study methods, the willingness of group members to do homework, and the "Optional Application" and "For Further Study" sections. The number of weeks you want to spend on the overall study will also guide your decision of how to pace yourself.

A good rule of thumb for this opening overview study is to allot twenty minutes for individual study and note-taking, then regroup for twenty minutes of sharing your first impressions and outline summaries. The remainder of your hour can be spent reviewing individual expectations and setting group goals.

This timeline assumes you assigned the "How to Use This Study" and the "Background" material as homework prior to this group session. If not, you will need another twenty minutes to review that.

Outline of 2 Peter

Purpose: To encourage believers to live holy lives as they wait for Christ's return.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 1:1-21 | Peter Describes Ingredients for Christian Growth |
| 1:1-2 | Peter identifies with Christ and greets fellow believers |
| 1:3-4 | Peter acknowledges that God provides for believers to know Him and live holy lives |
| 1:5-9 | Peter encourages readers to practice virtues |

- 1:10-11 Peter encourages perseverance to receive God's kingdom
- 1:12-15 Peter clarifies his reason for writing
- 1:16-18 Peter claims to see the Transfiguration of Christ
- 1:19-21 Peter reminds readers that a prophet's authority comes only from God through the Holy Spirit

- 2:1-22 Peter Warns Against False Teachers
 - 2:1-3 Peter describes false teachers and their destructive ways
 - 2:4-6 Peter reminds readers that God has always judged false teachers, even fallen angels
 - 2:7-9 Peter reminds readers that God has always rescued the righteous, even Lot
 - 2:10-12 Peter affirms that those who arrogantly blaspheme God will surely perish
 - 2:13-16 Peter rebukes corrupt, greedy prophets, including Balaam
 - 2:17-22 Peter warns that apparent believers will return to sinful lifestyles

- 3:1-18 Peter Describes His Hope in the Lord's Coming
 - 3:1-2 Peter restates his reason for writing
 - 3:3-7 Peter predicts that some will scorn the idea of judgment and moral accountability
 - 3:8-10 Peter explains that while the Lord's return is delayed, it will be both certain and sudden
 - 3:11-13 Peter urges the believer to look forward to the "day of God"
 - 3:14-16 Peter urges the believer to live a life of holiness, zeal, hope, and peace
 - 3:17-18 Peter summarizes his encouragement to avoid error and grow in grace