

A photograph of a forest of tall, thin trees, likely pines or firs, with a bright sunburst effect in the background. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that filters through the trees. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The trees are silhouetted against the bright light, creating a dramatic and serene atmosphere.

GROW IN THE WORD

2 Peter

a four-week group study

The questions in this study are based on the [Grow in the Word Women's Workshop](#) led by Colleen McFadden at Bronx Household of Faith on Sept. 12, 2020.¹ Although some of the questions here are a bit more detailed than those in her handouts, they are largely applications of her threefold emphasis: *Context, Structure, Jesus Christ*.

The questions in this study are intended to model one way to apply the approach taught in the workshop, in this case, to a New Testament epistle. You don't need to answer every question; the goal is to grow in your understanding of the *context, structure, connection to Christ, and application* of the section of 2 Peter you're studying. Please refer to your notes/handouts from the workshop for clarification or more direction.

This booklet divides the study of 2 Peter into four sessions. Each session has four main parts (one page per part), except the last session, which adds one final wrap-up section for the whole study. The four parts are:

- Reading the Word in its **context**
- Reading the Word in its **structure**
- Reading the Word in light of **Jesus Christ**
- **Applying** the Word you've read

By God's grace, your knowledge of and therefore your love for the God of Scripture will grow deeper, richer, and stronger as you seek to understand what he reveals in the book of 2 Peter. God bless your study together!

Studying as a Group

The most effective approach to using this study is probably for each member to work through the questions individually throughout the week, and then to get together with the group to compare notes. If that's not possible you can certainly work through the study together! If you do that, you might find it necessary to only answer the most relevant questions from each part of the session.

An alternative to using this booklet would be to use the basic questions included in the booklet from the Grow in the Word workshop, and to merely use *this* booklet as a supplement.

¹ Some questions are also taken/adapted from David Helm's *One-to-One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian*, 88–89.

SESSION 1: 2 PETER 1:1–15

Before you read...

Pray.

Read the following excerpt:

The epistles are first-century letters, all written in Greek. They make up the bulk of the New Testament...The epistles are all written to specific churches or individuals, and the timeless truths they teach about God and the gospel and the Christian life are worked out in these specific situations. (One-to-One Bible Reading, 61)

It is important to keep in mind that these New Testament letters, including 2 Peter, are written to specific readers who are facing specific situations at their time in history. In many ways our circumstances are similar to those of the earliest Christians. But at times we may face very different situations than they faced. This is important to remember so that we don't interpret Peter as saying things to us that he could not have meant when he wrote to them, given their circumstances. Trying to discern and then keep in mind the circumstances that might have prompted Peter, for example, to write his letter will help you apply the truths of the epistle to your own circumstances, rather than making your own circumstances the major interpretive framework of Peter's letter.

Reading the Word in its context

- 1) Given the literary genre of 2 Peter, what themes/features might you expect?

- 2) *Literary context:* Read the entire book of 2 Peter together.
 - a. What are some of the different “sections” of the book? (It might be helpful to think in terms of *topics*: “What major topic does Peter focus on first? Second?” etc.)

 - b. Are there other New Testament or any Old Testament passages mentioned or alluded to? What part do these allusions play in the section? (background information? supporting evidence? fulfillment of prophecy? illustration? etc.)

- 3) *Historical Context:* Focus on 1:1–15
 - c. What clues are there about the author and his circumstances? Are there other parts of the Bible you already know or should look at to help you understand the author's role and goal?

 - d. What can you learn from these verses about the person or situation to which the letter is written? (You could ‘cheat’ a little and draw on the rest of the book.)

 - e. Make sure you know who the pronouns refer to. Who might “ours” in v. 1 refer to?

Read 2 Peter 1:1–15 (once out loud, then once quietly on your own).

- 1) Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text? Are there key connecting words (for, therefore, but, because, so that, etc.) that indicate the logical connections between ideas or sections?

- 2) Does the “greeting” in vv. 1–2 introduce any words or concepts that are already picked up and expanded upon in the rest of this section?

- 3) Are there words or phrases you need to look up? You can try one or more of the following...
 - a. Look for them elsewhere in Peter’s two letters
 - b. Look at cross references
 - c. Look in a dictionary or Bible dictionary
 - d. Look at other translations and paraphrases

- 4) Are there any major *indicatives*? (An indicative is a statement about fact/truth—a statement that *indicates something you should know*—as opposed to a command. For example, “His divine power has given us everything we need” is an *indicative*. The most important indicatives in Scripture relate to *what God does*.)

- 5) Are there any major *imperatives* in this passage? What are they and how are they related to any indicatives, either before or after? (An *imperative* is a command/instruction—a statement about something you should do. For example, “Remember your creator in the days of your youth” is an *imperative*.)

- 6) Are there any key words or ideas (words that are repeated, words connected to major themes elsewhere in Scripture, words that refer to *essential, foundational, saving* realities?)

- 7) What verb tenses (past, present, command, perfect, future) are used? How do the tenses affect Peter’s message?

- 8) Are there any surprises in the flow of the argument? Are there any striking images/metaphors or ways of putting words together? What might the intended impact be?
- 9) What is the main point or points? What is Peter's main goal for his readers? In other words, what is the author trying to get his readers to *know? believe? value? turn from or avoid? do?*
 - a. Try to summarize it in one sentence (e.g., "Peter wants...")
 - b. Does he say *why* he wants this? Does he say *how* they can do it?
 - c. Try to give this section a title.

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

{Session 1}

- 1) Where does 2 Peter 1:1–15 fall on the redemptive historical timeline? What are similarities between our situation and the situation in 2 Peter's day, in terms of our relationship to God's unfolding plan of redemption? How might that encourage us?
- 2) Are there any direct references to the gospel—the person and work of **Christ**? The power and work of the **Holy Spirit**? The goodness and plan of the **Father**? Which aspect of the gospel seems most prominent?
- 3) How might Peter's tone, as an apostle (i.e., an authoritative teaching representative of Christ), help us understand how God relates to us?
- 4) How is this passage a *proclamation/explanation* of the gospel (telling the Good News) and/or an *application/implication* of the gospel (what the Good News means we should do or be)? What would be different about reading this passage if salvation were not only through faith in Christ alone?
- 5) If this passage is mainly an *imperative* about what you should do for Christ, how is that grounded in the *indicative* of who Christ is for you?
- 6) Remembering that the Holy Spirit of Christ is speaking through Peter in these pages (1:1, 21!), rewrite your summary of the main point of this section with *God* as the author. (For example, if you said "*Peter* wants xyz," rewrite your main point to show that this is what *God* wants.)

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?
- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?
- 3) How might this passage particularly help a Christian who is...
 - straying?
 - idle?
 - fainthearted?
 - weak?
 - suffering?

(These categories are mostly drawn from 1 Thessalonians 5:14.)

Which is most relevant to you right now?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus?
- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?
- 6) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live, think, or feel? The way I pray?

What are ways I can pursue this?

- 7) How does this passage inform or direct how I relate to
 - my church?
 - other believers?
 - the world?
- 8) What are ways my church community should be challenged and/or encouraged through this? How can I/we contribute to making that happen?
- 9) How does this passage lead me to worship?

Pray.

SESSION 2: 2 PETER 1:16–2:10A

Before you read...

Pray.

Note: The whole context of the New Testament is the most pivotal shift in history: sin has been atoned for, the Spirit has been poured out on the church, and Christ's kingdom is spreading throughout the world! The "least" in the church has greater privileges than the "best" Old Testament prophet! At the same time, Scripture presents God's dealings with saints, suffers and sinners as unchanging. Since that's the case, the situations God's people faced in the Old Testament era provide a paradigm/pattern for understanding how we can expect God to work in the New Testament era, the church age.

Reading the Word in its context

Read 1:16–2:10a

1) *Literary context:*

- a. How does this passage relate to what preceded it?
Is there any logical connector used? If so, what relationship does it indicate?
 - Is this a new and unrelated topic?
 - Is it expanding on what came before (more detail/information)?
 - Is it giving reasons for what came before?
 - Is it building on what came before?
- b. Does this section compare/contrast with any previous section in particular?
- c. Are there other New Testament or any Old Testament passages, themes, or key doctrines alluded to? What part do these allusions play in the section? (background information? supporting evidence? fulfillment of prophecy? illustration? etc.)

2) *Historical Context:*

- a. Are there any more clues given about the author and his circumstances? Any claims about him or his role that we should bear in mind?
- b. Do we learn more from these verses about the person or situation to which the letter is written? Are there others mentioned? If so, what can we learn or infer about them?
- c. Is it possible his audience is a "mixed group" of some kind? How might that impact how he writes?

- 1) Are there words or phrases you need to look up?
- 2) How is 1:16–2:10a organized? Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text? Are there key connecting words (for, therefore, but, because, so that, etc.) that indicate the logical connections between ideas or sections?
- 3) Are there any key words or phrases (words/phrases that are repeated, or related to major themes of the letter or foundational doctrines taught elsewhere in Scripture)? If there are repetitions of words or ideas, do these repetitions make a particular point or signal the structure of the passage? Or do they seem to be repeated in order to make a particular impact on the reader?
- 4) Is there an overarching theme/topic? Is there a major contrast?
- 5) Does this section relate to any specifics in Peter's greeting?
- 6) Are there any major *indicatives*? (An indicative is a statement about facts/truths—a statement that indicates something you should know—as opposed to a command. For example, “His divine power has given us everything we need...” is an *indicative*. The most important indicatives in Scripture relate to *what God does*.)
- 7) Are there any major *imperatives* in this passage? What are they and how are they related to any indicatives, either before or after? (An *imperative* is a command/instruction—a statement about something you should do. For example, “Remember your creator in the days of your youth” is an *imperative*.)
- 8) What verb tenses (past, present, command, perfect, future) are used? How do the tenses affect Peter's message?
- 9) Are there any surprises in the flow of the argument? (Sudden turns? Changes in tone? Striking contrasts? etc.)
- 10) Are there any striking images/metaphors or ways of putting his words together? What do they seem to refer to? What might the intended impact be?

- 11) What is the main point or points? What is Peter's main goal for his readers? In other words, what is the author trying to get his readers to *know? believe? value? turn from or avoid? do?*
 - a. Try to summarize it in one sentence (e.g., "Peter wants...")
 - b. Does he say *why* he wants this? Does he say *how* they can do it?
 - c. Try to give this section a title.

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

{Session 2}

- 1) Where does 2 Peter 1:16–2:10a fall on the redemptive historical timeline? What are similarities between our situation and the situation in 2 Peter's day, in terms of our relationship to God's unfolding plan of redemption? How might that encourage us?
- 2) Are there any direct references to the gospel—the person and work of **Christ**? The power and work of the **Holy Spirit**? The goodness and plan of the **Father**? Which aspect of the gospel seems most prominent?
- 3) How might Peter's tone, as an apostle (i.e., an authoritative teaching representative of Christ), help us understand how God relates to us?
- 4) How is this passage a *proclamation/explanation* of the gospel (telling the Good News) and/or an *application/implication* of the gospel (what the Good News means we should do or be)? What would be different about reading this passage if salvation were not only through faith in Christ alone?
- 5) If this passage is mainly an *imperative* about what you should do for Christ, how is that grounded in the *indicative* of who Christ is for you?
- 6) Remembering that the Holy Spirit of Christ is speaking through Peter in these pages (1:1, 21!), rewrite your summary of the main point of this section with *God* as the author. (For example, if you said "*Peter* wants xyz," rewrite your main point to show that this is what *God* wants.)

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?
- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?
- 3) How might this passage particularly help a Christian who is...
 - straying?
 - idle?
 - fainthearted?
 - weak?
 - suffering?

(These categories are mostly drawn from 1 Thessalonians 5:14.)

Which is most relevant to you right now?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus?
- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?
- 6) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live, think or feel? The way I pray?

What are ways I can pursue this?

- 7) How does this passage inform or direct how I relate to
 - my church?
 - other believers?
 - the world?
- 8) What are ways my church community should be challenged and/or encouraged through this? How can I/we contribute to making that happen?

Pray.

SESSION 3: 2 PETER 2:10B–22

Before you read...

Pray.

Note: This section is a continuation of what preceded it. It is especially important to interpret this section in light of all that has preceded so that Peter's invective (harsh criticism) against false teachers does not get separated from his goals for his readers. Peter is not writing this letter primarily because he's AGAINST false teachers—but because he is FOR “those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with our by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ,” and so that “grace and peace” may “be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (1:1–2).

Reading the Word in its context

Read 2:10b–22

1) *Literary context:*

- a. How does this passage relate to what preceded it?
Is there any logical connector used? If so, what relationship does it indicate?
 - Is this a new and unrelated topic?
 - Is it expanding on what came before (more detail/information)?
 - Is it giving reasons for what came before?
 - Is it building on what came before?
- b. Does this section compare/contrast with any previous section in particular?
- c. Are there other New Testament or any Old Testament passages, themes, or key doctrines alluded to? What part do these allusions play in the section? (background information? supporting evidence? fulfillment of prophecy? illustration? etc.)

2) *Historical Context:*

- a. Are there any more clues given about the author and his circumstances? Any claims about him or his role that we should bear in mind?
- b. Do we learn more from these verses about the person or situation to which the letter is written? Are there others mentioned? If so, what can we learn or infer about them?
- c. Is it possible his audience is a “mixed group” of some kind? How might that impact how he writes?

- 1) Are there words or phrases you need to look up?
- 2) How is 2:10b–22 organized? Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text? Are there key connecting words (for, therefore, but, because, so that, etc.) that indicate the logical connections between ideas or sections?
- 3) Are there any key words or phrases (words/phrases that are repeated, or related to major themes of the letter or foundational doctrines taught elsewhere in Scripture)? If there are repetitions of words or ideas, do these repetitions make a particular point or signal the structure of the passage? Or do they seem to be repeated in order to make a particular impact on the reader?
- 4) Is there an overarching theme/topic? Is there a major contrast?
- 5) Does this section relate to any specifics in Peter’s greeting?
- 6) Are there any major *indicatives*? (An indicative is a statement about facts/truths—a statement that indicates something you should know—as opposed to a command. For example, “His divine power has given us everything we need...” is an *indicative*. The most important indicatives in Scripture relate to *what God does*.)
- 7) Are there any major *imperatives* in this passage? What are they and how are they related to any indicatives, either before or after? (An *imperative* is a command/instruction—a statement about something you should do. For example, “Remember your creator in the days of your youth” is an *imperative*.)
- 8) What verb tenses (past, present, command, perfect, future) are used? How do the tenses affect Peter’s message?
- 9) Are there any surprises in the flow of the argument? (Sudden turns? Changes in tone? Striking contrasts? etc.)
- 10) Are there any striking images/metaphors or ways of putting his words together? What do they seem to refer to? What might the intended impact be?

- 11) What is the main point or points? What is Peter's main goal for his readers? In other words, what is the author trying to get his readers to *know*? *believe*? *value*? *turn from or avoid*? *do*?
 - a. Try to summarize it in one sentence (e.g., "Peter wants...")
 - b. Does he say *why* he wants this? Does he say *how* they can do it?
 - c. Try to give this section a title.

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

{Session 3}

- 1) Where does 2 Peter 2:10b–22 fall on the redemptive historical timeline? What are similarities between our situation and the situation in 2 Peter's day, in terms of our relationship to God's unfolding plan of redemption? How might that encourage us?
- 2) Are there any direct references to the gospel—the person and work of **Christ**? The power and work of the **Holy Spirit**? The goodness and plan of the **Father**? Which aspect of the gospel seems most prominent?
- 3) How might Peter's tone, as an apostle (i.e., an authoritative teaching representative of Christ), help us understand how God relates to us?
- 4) How is this passage a *proclamation/explanation* of the gospel (telling the Good News) and/or an *application/implication* of the gospel (what the Good News means we should do or be)? What would be different about reading this passage if salvation were not only through faith in Christ alone?
- 5) If this passage is mainly an *imperative* about what you should do for Christ, how is that grounded in the *indicative* of who Christ is for you?
- 6) How does this passage inform our understanding of Christ's plans for and power over his beloved church?
- 7) Remembering that the Holy Spirit of Christ is speaking through Peter in these pages (1:1, 21!), rewrite your summary of the main point of this section with *God* as the author. (For example, if you said "*Peter* wants xyz," rewrite your main point to show that this is what *God* wants.)

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?
- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?
- 3) How might this passage particularly help a Christian who is...
 - straying?
 - idle?
 - fainthearted?
 - weak?
 - suffering?

(These categories are mostly drawn from 1 Thessalonians 5:14.)

Which is most relevant to you right now?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus?
- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?
- 6) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live, think or feel? The way I pray?

What are ways I can pursue this?

- 7) How does this passage inform or direct how I relate to
 - my church?
 - other believers?
 - the world?
- 8) What are ways my church community should be challenged and/or encouraged through this? How can I/we contribute to making that happen?
- 9) How does this passage lead me to worship?

Pray.

SESSION 4: 2 PETER 3:1–18

Before you read...

Pray.

Note: This section includes two vivid images of God using elements of the weather to bring judgment on the world. But he does this in a way that leads to deliverance and new life for the world and his people! This is one of the most dominant themes in Scripture—of cosmic judgment being at the same time a means of God's deliverance and restoration. As you study this section and answer the questions below, it would be fruitful to think about how this theme shows up in Peter's letter, where else in Scripture we see it, and how it is evident in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Reading the Word in its context

Read 3:1–18

1) *Literary context:*

- a. How does this passage relate to what preceded it?
Is there any logical connector used? If so, what relationship does it indicate?
 - Is this a new and unrelated topic?
 - Is it expanding on what came before (more detail/information)?
 - Is it giving reasons for what came before?
 - Is it building on what came before?
- b. Does this section compare/contrast with any previous section in particular? Are there any emerging themes made even clearer here? Any key words from earlier sections that reappear here? If so, might they be part of Peter's main theme/point in the letter as a whole?
- c. Are there other New Testament or any Old Testament passages, themes, or key doctrines alluded to? What part do these allusions play in the section? (background information? supporting evidence? fulfillment of prophecy? illustration? etc.)

2) *Historical Context:*

- a. Are there any more clues given about the author and his circumstances? Any claims about him or his role that we should bear in mind? About other NT letters?
- b. Do we learn more from these verses about the person or situation to which the letter is written? Are there others mentioned? If so, what can we learn or infer about them? Are these "new" people or people we've already encountered in 2 Peter?
- c. Is it possible his audience is a "mixed group" of some kind? How might that impact how he writes?

- 1) Are there words or phrases you need to look up?
- 2) How is 3:1–18 organized? Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text? Are there key connecting words (for, therefore, but, because, so that, etc.) that indicate the logical connections between ideas or sections?
- 3) Are there any key words or phrases? If there are repetitions of words or ideas, do these repetitions make a particular point or signal the structure of the passage? Or do they seem to be repeated in order to make a particular impact on the reader?
- 4) Is there an overarching theme/topic? Is there a major contrast?
- 5) Does this section relate to any specifics in Peter's greeting?
- 6) Are there any major *indicatives*? (An indicative is a statement about facts/truths—a statement that *indicates something you should know*—as opposed to a command. For example, “His divine power has given us everything we need...” is an *indicative*. The most important indicatives in Scripture relate to *what God does*.)
- 7) Are there any major *imperatives* in this passage? What are they and how are they related to any indicatives, either before or after? (An *imperative* is a command/instruction—a statement about *something you should do*. For example, “Remember your creator in the days of your youth” is an *imperative*.)
- 8) What verb tenses (past, present, command, perfect, future) are used? How do the tenses affect Peter's message?
- 9) Are there any surprises in the flow of the argument? (Sudden turns? Changes in tone? Striking contrasts? etc.)
- 10) Are there any striking images/metaphors or ways of putting his words together? What do they seem to refer to? What might the intended impact be?

- 11) Does Peter provide any summary sentences to his point in chapter 3? Does the end of the chapter also summarize the whole book? What themes from the letter does he re-assert in his farewell?
- 12) What is the main point or points? What is Peter's main goal for his readers? In other words, what is the author trying to get his readers to *know? believe? value? turn from or avoid? do?*
 - a. Try to summarize it in one sentence (e.g., "Peter wants...")
 - b. Does he say *why* he wants this? Does he say *how* they can do it?
 - c. Try to give this section a title.

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

{Session 4}

- 1) Where does 2 Peter 3:1–18 fall on the redemptive historical timeline? What are similarities between our situation and the situation in 2 Peter's day, in terms of our relationship to God's unfolding plan of redemption? How might that encourage us?
- 2) Are there any direct references to the gospel—the person and work of **Christ**? The power and work of the **Holy Spirit**? The goodness and plan of the **Father**? Which aspect of the gospel seems most prominent?
- 3) How might Peter's tone, as an apostle (i.e., an authoritative teaching representative of Christ), help us understand how God relates to us?
- 4) How is this passage a *proclamation/explanation* of the gospel (telling the Good News) and/or an *application/implication* of the gospel (what the Good News means we should do or be)? What would be different about reading this passage if salvation were not only through faith in Christ alone?
- 5) If this passage is mainly an *imperative* about what you should do for Christ, how is that grounded in the *indicative* of who Christ is for you?
- 6) Remembering that the Holy Spirit of Christ is speaking through Peter in these pages (1:1, 21!), rewrite your summary of the main point of this section with *God* as the author. (For example, if you said "Peter wants xyz," rewrite your main point to show that this is what *God* wants.)

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?
- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?
- 3) How might this passage particularly help a Christian who is...
 - straying?
 - idle?
 - fainthearted?
 - weak?
 - suffering?

(These categories are mostly drawn from 1 Thessalonians 5:14.)

Which is most relevant to you right now?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus?
- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?
- 6) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live, think or feel? The way I pray?

What are ways I can pursue this?

- 7) How does this passage inform or direct how I relate to
 - my church?
 - other believers?
 - the world?
- 8) What are ways my church community should be challenged and/or encouraged through this? How can I/we contribute to making that happen?
- 9) How does this passage lead me to worship?

