



2 Peter & Jude

Principles of Spiritual Growth

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

Read—2 Peter 1:1–11; other Scripture references as given.

God used Peter, apostle and fisherman, to write the letters known as 1 and 2 Peter. Religious liberals and critics have doubted Simon Peter's authorship of 2 Peter, questioning whether a simple fisherman could have written the book with its polished Greek language. Peter's bold declaration in 2 Peter 2:1 and his biographical account of the transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16–18) are two undeniable facts that refute their unwarranted claim.

It has been said that critics don't like 2 Peter for three reasons: chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 3. Chapter 1 presents a strong case for the doctrine of biblical inerrancy; chapter 2 exposes the theological errors of false teachers; and chapter 3 presents the sobering certainty of Christ's return—all distasteful doctrines to religious nonbelievers.

The apostle Peter revealed his purpose for writing this letter when he stated, **For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you** (2 Peter 1:12–13). Second Peter is God's spiritual stimulus plan, and Peter wrote the letter to stir his readers, including you, to greater spiritual devotion.

Before you begin each lesson, ask God to reveal Himself through His Word and to transform you into the image of His Son.

1. It has been said that when the apostle Paul put down his pen, the apostle Peter picked it up. Peter refers to Paul's writings and describes them as numerous and compatible with his own writings, but also difficult to understand by those who aren't knowledgeable in the Word and those who are spiritually weak (2 Peter 3:15).
 - a. How does Peter introduce himself to his readers (2 Peter 1:1)?
 - b. List four things that Peter says about the faith of his original readers (2 Peter 1:1–2).

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| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
2. Peter introduces himself as a **bondservant** (Greek *doulos*—slave, servant; NIV: “servant”) and an **apostle** (Gk. *apostolos*—someone commissioned by another). He also says (all) believers have received a **like precious faith** (Gk. *isotimos*—the same honor, equal privilege, similar standing). If any verse in the Bible substantiates the old Christian cliché, “The ground is level at the foot of the cross,” this is it!
 - a. Many believers are confused about their true relationship to Jesus Christ. They think God provides eternal life, but they retain the right to run their lives and pursue their own dreams. What did Paul teach the Roman and Corinthian believers about their relationship to Christ that contradicts this erroneous perspective (Romans 6:19; 1 Corinthians 6:19)?
 - b. Jesus Christ called Peter to be an apostle—someone commissioned by a higher authority. What similar, yet distinct, commission has Jesus given every believer (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20)?
3. When an individual is saved (born again), he is given God's saving grace and receives the gift of eternal life. At salvation, believers are given access by faith into an entirely new life (Romans 5:2). They also are recipients of God's sanctifying grace (divine power for living righteously) and peace, but they must learn how to live by faith if they expect to receive it.

- a. The Bible says God has given us **all things that pertain to life and godliness** (2 Peter 1:3, emphasis added). What *do you think* this important phrase means?
 - b. The Bible repeats a key phrase that reveals how a believer receives God's grace and peace and everything else that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2–3). What is this important phrase?
4. The first principle of spiritual growth is to understand that salvation is a gift (**have obtained like precious faith**; 2 Peter 1:1). Next, the believer must realize that God has given every believer the same kind of faith, and this faith is a precious gift from God—not something to be treated lightly or regarded of little value. God's spiritual growth plan continues when believers fully embrace their new identity (as Christ's servants) and accept their commission to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Peter 1:1). Then believers must realize that Christ has given them everything that pertains to life and godliness and **exceedingly great and precious promises** (2 Peter 1:4). What are some of these promises God makes available to all believers (Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:7)?
5. Believers are given a *new nature* at the time of salvation (2 Corinthians 5:17), but they can become partakers of a *divine nature* if they respond to God's progressive sanctification process (2 Peter 1:4). Even though God commands believers to be diligent about their spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:5–11), many believers live spiritually anemic Christian lives. The late Dr. Henry Brandt said, "God gives every Christian the right to live a miserable Christian life. It is not His will, but He will give you that much grace."
- a. Every Christian should be diligent about his spiritual growth. What *do you think* are some evidences that a believer is serious about his or her personal spiritual development?
 - b. Many Christians confuse their priorities in life. They worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship. Are you diligent to be all God wants you to be, or are you leading an apathetic Christian life—one characterized by anxiety, fear, worry, doubts, anger, unforgiveness, an inability to overcome sinful habits, confusion about your relationship to Christ and other evidences of spiritual immaturity?
6. Peter presents eight spiritual qualities that all believers should incorporate into their spiritual lives (2 Peter 1:5–7). It is interesting that **virtue** (Gk. *arete*—virtue, moral excellence; NIV: "goodness") is listed before knowledge. While (right) knowing always precedes (right) doing or actions (John 8:32), it can also be true that, as the ancient philosopher Plato said, "a man's morality dictates his theology." Some Christians never really mature spiritually because they aren't willing to give up vices (sin) in their lives.
- a. What promises are given to those who actively allow God to incorporate these eight qualities into their lives (2 Peter 1:8, 10–11)?
 - b. A Christian forfeits grace, peace, and God's exceedingly great and precious promises when he is unwilling to grow spiritually. Name at least four negative results a Christian will experience if he or she is *not* diligent about spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:9; 1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 1 John 2:28).
 - c. If you are a Christian, how did God use this portion of His Word to challenge you to be more diligent in your Christian life?

1 Principles of Spiritual Growth

1. a. As a servant/bondservant and an apostle. Peter's use of the word *bondservant* indicates he understood the full extent of Christ's sacrifice on the cross on his behalf and willingly embraced his new position as His servant or slave. Peter's use of the word *apostle* indicates he willingly accepted Christ's commission to be His emissary or witness to spread the message of Christ's redemption to the world.
 - b. 1. He said his readers had received the gift of faith. It was not something they earned by virtuous behavior.
 2. He said the gift of faith was precious.
 3. He said the gift of faith was the same as the apostles had received.
 4. He said the gift of faith was a result of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

2. a. Romans 6:19: Prior to salvation, man is a slave to sin (uncleanness). After salvation, he is to present himself as a slave to righteousness. Prior to salvation, nonbelievers continually present themselves (their bodies) to uncleanness or sin, making them slaves of unrighteousness. After salvation, they are to present or offer themselves to God as slaves to righteousness for holiness. Paul's command indicates believers have the power (through the indwelling presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit) to choose to live righteously. He also said that they would be a slave either way: either to sin or to righteousness.

1 Corinthians 6:19: Believers should realize (**do you not know?**) that their bodies are not their own because they have been bought with a price: the blood of Jesus Christ. Their bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit who was given at salvation to every believer. All believers belong completely to God.

 - b. Peter and the other apostles received a divine commission from Jesus Christ to be His witnesses, and believers have received a divine commission to be His ambassadors.

3. a. This is one of the most amazing promises in the Bible. The promise is based upon God's divine power (Gk. *theios*—"divine"—is used only three times in Scripture), which guarantees its fulfillment. The Greek word for power (*dunamis*) is the same word from which the English word *dynamite* is derived. God's powerful promise to the believer contains two provisions: God's willingness to provide the believer with everything he needs for spiritual vitality (life) and for godly living. While other verses in God's Word speak to the inerrancy of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21), this verse speaks to the sufficiency of Scripture.
 - b. **In/through the knowledge of God/of Him who called us**, which means it is through acquiring the true knowledge of God that the believer can become a partaker of the divine nature.

4. 1. Believers can be filled with hope in this life through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).
 2. Believers can be assured God will give them grace to overcome all temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 3. Believers can have control of their emotions and thoughts through Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:7).
 4. Believers can live free from fear and have their thoughts, emotions, and actions characterized by **love**, wisdom (**a sound mind**), and victorious living (**power**) (2 Timothy 1:7).

5. a. 1. The believer is engaged in personal and corporate worship, daily Bible reading, prayer and confession of sin.
 2. The believer exhibits a growing manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).
 3. The believer exhibits a growing desire to serve God and others.
 4. The believer exhibits a growing desire to reach the lost.
 5. Other answers could apply.
 - b. Answers will vary.

6. a. 1. The believer will not be barren (v. 8; NIV: "ineffective"). 2. The believer will not be unfruitful (v. 8; Gk. *akarpos*—not fruitful), which means that he will manifest the fruit of the Spirit. 3. He will never stumble in relationship with God (v. 10). He will be richly welcomed into the presence and kingdom of God (v. 11).
 - b. 1. The believer will become spiritually shortsighted or blind, meaning he will not begin to doubt his original, genuine conversion to Christ (v. 9). Notice that Peter doesn't say he will have lost his salvation but that the person will *forget* that he was purified from his former sins. 2. The believer will also suffer loss of eternal reward (1 Corinthians 3:11–15). 3. The believer can lose confidence to stand before God and not be ashamed when Christ returns (1 John 2:28). The shame is the result of the believer's failure to live wholeheartedly for the Lord, knowing that Christ had given His all for his salvation. The believer will also be ashamed that much of his earthly efforts were spent on things that were burned up (1 Corinthians 3:13–15).
 - c. Answers will vary.