

## STUDY GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

### Summer Shorts

#### 2 Peter

Week of August 16

“Living In Between”

Text: 2 Peter

#### Background

- ❖ Written by Peter, the apostle and friend of Jesus.
- ❖ Written to Christians all around modern day Turkey (see I Peter 1).
- ❖ It was probably written right before his death sometime between 65 and 69AD.
- ❖ Peter is writing to a suffering church which is facing the most difficult of all trials. In addition to the persecution by Nero, the Jewish leaders, and others who oppose the Christian faith, now the young church is being attacked from within. Those who call themselves Christian teachers are attempting to lead the young Christians astray. Peter is writing to expose and to refute them as well as to encourage the Christians to return to the basics of the faith and not to depart from them.
- ❖ Since we face some of those same challenges within our society, 2 Peter is an excellent book for contemporary Christians to study and master so we will not be led astray. The first and third chapters review the basic tenets of the Christian faith upon which we should build our lives.
- ❖ This is a letter of encouragement and affirmation. Peter encourages them and us to keep on keeping on! We must resist the evil one and his false teachers and keep on following Jesus. Faithfulness is a high priority in Christian discipleship. In fact, faithfulness is one of the fruits of the Spirit shared in Galatians 5:22. In His message to the faithful church in Philadelphia, Jesus promises the one who is faithful and overcomes will be a pillar in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12).
- ❖ *Peter is clear that fire will come. But fire does not only destroy. It can also purify, revealing the essence of a metal once everything extraneous is removed. That is the sense Peter has here. The day will come and all will be revealed. All will be judged with fire. That is the promise which Peter reemphasizes here over against those who said that the whole thing must be a mistake since Jesus had not returned. Many in our own day have added their voices to those of the “deceivers” of verse 3. The misunderstanding, both ancient and modern, seems to have come about partly because “at any time” could of course mean “therefore perhaps today or tomorrow,” and partly because there really were some things*

*which Jesus did say (in Mark 13 and elsewhere) would happen within a generation. But those events concerned the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which did indeed happen within a generation of Jesus' day (A.D. 70, to be precise). But Peter warns, as Jewish teachers had done before him and would do again, that God doesn't work on our timescales. Psalm 90:4 put it well: a thousand years in God's sight are like a single day, and vice versa. We can't box God in to our chronology. What appears to us as God's delay is in fact God's moment of fresh vocation. There are tasks to do in the meantime. But that takes us into the next, and final, section of the letter.* Wright, N. T.. 1 and 2 Peter and Jude (N. T. Wright for Everyone Bible Study Guides) (p. 50). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

- ❖ *We should regard anything that looks to us like delay as an indication, not that we have to be patient with God, but that God is having to be patient with us. If God were to foreclose on the world and on ourselves straight away, what would happen? God's patience is our opportunity. It is our chance to work on the holy, godly lives we ought to be living. It is our chance, too, to spread the gospel in the world. Since we know that the day is coming, the day when new heavens and new earth will emerge, filled to the brim with God's wonderful justice, his glorious setting-right of all things, we should be working toward that already, here and now.* Wright, N. T.. 1 and 2 Peter and Jude (N. T. Wright for Everyone Bible Study Guides) (p. 51). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

## Discussion Questions

Opening Questions (your choice).

- When you think of Christ's second coming, what images come to your mind? What are the sources of those images?
  - What do you have trouble waiting for? What don't you have trouble waiting for?
1. In the opening verses, Peter speaks of their faith and the apostle's are "equally precious." How precious is your faith? What makes it precious?
  2. Peter refers to the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord several times (see v2, v3, v8). What do we think it means to "know Jesus Christ"? (For instance, is this like knowing  $2+2=4$ , like knowing how to make grits, like knowing our next door neighbor? Why do we say that?) What's our own experience of "knowing Jesus our Lord"?
  3. In 1 Peter 1:8, we read "*Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.*" Why might that be relevant to the Christians? To us?
  4. In today's world, do we ever have the experience of knowing people we have not met in person? In what ways do those experiences shed any light on what Peter is talking about here?
  5. The two long sentences in verses 3-4 lay out Peter's vision of what really matters, what is to be valued, and what we can consider life-giving. What strikes you about these two verses and why?
  6. What do we think Peter means by being "participants" or "partakers" of the divine nature"? Can we think of any "real life" examples of that, or is this something outside our own experience?
  7. In vv5-8, Peter lists several qualities [goodness (excellence, virtue), knowledge, self-control (self-mastery), godliness (piety), mutual affection, love] that will make living as Christians more secure and "fruitful." What are our responses to this list?
  8. What encouragement do you find by Peter's recollection of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration?
  9. What role are the prophets to play in our faith? Why is it important for us to remember the 'words' spoken by the 'prophets' and 'apostles'?
  10. In chapter 2, there is the warning of false teachers. How does Peter describe false teachers in 2 Peter 2:9-14? How can we recognise them today? Are their ways destructive? Have you ever encountered false teaching?
  11. How do they destroy people and churches?

12. Read 2 Peter 3:1-10. What is Peter's purpose for writing this portion of his letter (vv. 1-2 How will scoffers call God's purposes into question (vv. 3-4)?
13. Do the questions of verse 4 ever rise in your own mind as well? If so, how do you deal with them?
14. How do the scoffers misunderstand the purposes of God (vv. 3-9)?
15. What difference does it make to our daily Christian life if we believe that the world we live in will be utterly destroyed or if we believe that this earth will be renewed by God?
16. When we see God's timing is different from ours, is that more comforting or disturbing? Why?
17. What does 2 Peter 3:9 indicate about the love and patience of God, and the reality of His not having returned as of yet? 1 Timothy 2:3-4 '*This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*'
18. Titus 2:11-14 '*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*' What would characterize us 'people' if we actually lived according to this way of thinking?
19. Read 2 Peter 3:11-18. Knowing that the day of the Lord is coming, what affect should this have on our character (vv. 11-14)?
20. How does Peter comment on the apostle Paul (vv. 15-16)?
21. What opportunities does God's patience allow us (vv. 15-18)?
22. How can we continue to grow in grace and knowledge? How can we pray for one another?