

STUDY GUIDE



CHURCH NAME

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN
STANDING ON GOD'S WORD
2 PETER 1:12-2:3
07/09/2017

MAIN POINT

Standing on the truth of Scripture affirms the gospel and protects against false teachers.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you could learn how to master one field of study, what would it be and why? Who would you look to train and teach you in that field?

How are the teachings of the Bible distinct from all other teachings we receive?

In your own words, what is the purpose of the Bible? Why is studying it important for the Christian? Why is Scripture foundational to what the church does and who the church is?

Studying and mastering subjects can be a source of pride and a way of seeking acclaim. By contrast, studying the Word of God is humbling and leads to praising God. Studying the Bible is paramount to the spiritual health of a believer. By doing so, a believer experiences God's revelation of Himself and is able to stand firm when his faith is questioned or threatened by false teachings.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

C. S. Lewis said, "We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. No belief will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed." Peter was determined to keep reminding Christians of familiar truths to keep them alert. He felt he soon would die and wanted believers even then to be able to recall his teachings, which were based on witnessing Christ's glorious transfiguration. Peter's experience confirmed Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ's coming and majesty. Peter affirmed the Scriptures' divine origin and inspiration. The apostles' interpretation of them also came from God.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 PETER 1:12-18.

Why do you think we need to be reminded of spiritual truths so often?

What are some ways believers today can keep reminding one another of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith?

Believers had received instructions concerning sound Christian doctrine. The truths about which Peter wrote were not new to Christians. Yet he stated he always would remind them of those truths. The phrase these things refers to what he had written in 1:3-11. Peter acknowledged they knew those teachings and were steadfastly holding to the truth, but he was resolved to go on reminding them of basic Christian doctrines at every opportunity.

Why do you think Peter was so motivated to work urgently to help Christians have confidence in the truth of the gospel?

Why is it important that the apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus (verses 16-18)? How does it impact their ministry?

Peter stressed he would make every effort to have believers be able to recall (or recount) Christian truths after his departure. Peter was determined to make possible either their calling to remembrance those teachings or their telling them to others. His letter, retained and reread, would enable them to do so. Peter wanted believers to have what they needed to remain faithful after he was gone.

The gospel Peter and others proclaimed was trustworthy. The churches were founded on solid apostolic teachings. The gospel was not based on or composed of cleverly contrived myths, but is absolute truth. The apostles' teachings concerning Christ's deity came from firsthand experience, not from speculation or fabrication.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 PETER 1:19-21.

These final verses of chapter one deal with the false teachers. Despite such teachers, we can know the truth about God. The word of the prophets refers to the writings of the entire Old Testament, not simply the prophets. In making reference to this, Peter expressed his complete confidence in the Old Testament Scriptures.

We just discussed why it was important that the apostles witnessed Jesus first-hand. Why is it also important that their witness confirmed the Old Testament?

If you were asked how the Bible differs from other religions' sacred texts, how would you respond? What convinces you God inspired the Scriptures?

How does affirming the truth of Scripture help us stand firm in our Christian walk?

Peter emphasized that everything in the Scriptures originated with God. God's spokesmen did not generate prophecies on their own; rather, prophets spoke God's messages as they were moved by His Spirit. God used humans to speak for Him, but their messages came from Him. The Scriptures' prophecies were accurate, and the prophets' (and the apostles') interpretations of them were correct. Thus, the Scriptures were completely trustworthy.

We can affirm the gospel's truth by believing what God inspired biblical writers to pen. We demonstrate our gratitude to God for inspiring and preserving the Scriptures by diligently, consistently studying and applying them.

HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ 2 PETER 2:1-3.

What motives of troublemakers have you identified? How do troublemakers try to disguise their real motives?

What are some common false teachings you've heard about the Bible?

How does the truth of Scripture protect us against false teaching?

The Bible is sufficient, containing everything that we need for our life in Christ and for the church to defend itself against false teachers. Yet we must know it to know Him and live for Him in a world hostile to its truth. We must stand on the truth of Scripture.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why is it important to understand the truth of Scripture? Why is it important to live in that truth each day? What does “living in that truth” look like?

In your personal study, how do you affirm the validity and inspiration of God's Word? How do you resolve the difficult passages you might struggle with?

How can we know when we come into contact with false teaching? How can we protect one another against this?

PRAY

Close in prayer, thanking God for the truth of His Word and its inspiration. Pray that we would stand firm on the truths of Scripture and not be afraid to speak out against false teaching. Ask God to increase our love for His Word and our devotion to it in our day to day lives.

COMMENTARY

2 PETER 1:12–2:3

1:12. Believers had received instructions concerning sound Christian doctrine. The truths about which Peter wrote were not new to Christians. Yet he stated he always would remind them of those truths. The phrase these things refers to what he had written in 1:3-11. Believers could be certain he was resolved to go on reminding them of basic Christian doctrines at every opportunity. Peter acknowledged they knew those teachings and were steadfastly holding to the truth.

1:13. Peter considered his reminding believers of Christian truths to be his duty as an apostle—the correct or proper thing for him to do. The phrase this bodily tent (tabernacle) literally is “this tent,” a temporary dwelling place. The phrase symbolically referred to the physical body with its frailty and brief lifespan. The term tent also underscores Peter's emphasis that the Christian life is a pilgrimage, a journey toward the heavenly home. The phrase was a reminder that physical existence is a prelude to eternity in God's immediate presence. As long as he lived, Peter intended to wake (stir) Christians up with continuing reminders concerning how they were to live as believers.

1:14. Peter conveyed a sense of urgency because he felt his death was near. The Greek term rendered soon also can mean “suddenly,” referring to a quick and violent death. The Greek word translated lay aside was used of removing clothing. His meaning is clear. Either in the near future or suddenly and violently, Peter would exchange a temporary tent (physical body) for a permanent dwelling place, God's eternal kingdom. Peter's statement that Jesus had shown him the manner of his death likely recalls the incident in John 21:18-19 in which Jesus predicted Peter would be martyred.

1:15. Peter stressed he would make every effort (be diligent, strive earnestly) to have believers be able to recall (or recount) Christian truths after his departure. The phrase at any time can be translated “when the need arises.” Peter was determined to make possible either their calling to remembrance those teachings or their telling them to others. His letter, retained and reread, would enable them to do so. Peter wanted believers to have what they needed to remain faithful after he was gone.

1:16. The gospel Peter and others (we) proclaimed was trustworthy. The churches were founded on solid apostolic teachings. The gospel was not based on or composed of cleverly contrived myths. The Greek term rendered myths means “fables,” “fictions,” or “stories.” Peter declared the gospel was not an ingenious fabrication but was absolute

truth. Gospel heralds had proclaimed the power and coming of the Lord (Deity) Jesus (Savior) Christ (Messiah). The word power may refer to Christ's ability to save people or to His sovereign might as the risen Lord. The term coming could apply to the incarnation or to Christ's return. Peter stressed that he and other apostles were eyewitnesses of His majesty (Deity).

1:17-18. Peter recounted the three apostles' witnessing Jesus' transfiguration (see Mark 9:2-8). They saw the brilliance of His Deity and heard the Heavenly Father's declaration of approval. Thus the apostles' teachings concerning Christ's Deity came from firsthand experience, not from speculation or fabrication. Today, we can affirm the gospel's truth by recognizing the demonstrations of God's power He allows us to witness. The greatest demonstration of that power is our experiencing and seeing the transforming power of His saving grace.

1:19. Peter's witnessing the undeniable demonstration of Christ's Deity strongly confirmed the Old Testament's messianic prophecies (the prophetic word). The prophecies were shown to be totally reliable. Believers would do well to pay attention to (give heed to) the Scriptures, which were comparable to a lamp shining in a dismal place. Peter stressed that in the dark, parched wasteland of paganism, the Scriptures provided believers illumination for Christian living. The Scriptures would do so until the day dawned and the morning star arose in believers' hearts. The phrase the day likely referred to Christ's return. The Greek term rendered morning star means "light-bearer." It was applied to Venus, whose light preceded the dawn. Peter used the phrase to refer to Christ. In the background may be the messianic prophecy in Numbers 24:17 concerning a star that would come from Jacob. The morning star's arising in believers' hearts may refer to their joy when Christ returns or to the complete enlightenment He then will provide.

1:20. Two major interpretations of 1:20-21 have been offered. (1) Peter refuted false teachers, who charged that the prophets misinterpreted visions and words from God. Of utmost importance (first of all) was that believers be convinced the Old Testament prophets' interpretations of God's messages to them were accurate. Peter asserted that no prophecy of Scripture came from one's own interpretation. The Greek word translated interpretation literally means "loosening" or "untying," as in the case of a hard knot. It can convey the idea of disclosure. Thus both the messages the prophets received and their interpretations of those messages were from God and were accurate and trustworthy. (2) Peter condemned the false teachers for misinterpreting the Scriptures to support their views, thus denying the apostles' correct interpretation.

1:21. Peter emphasized that everything in the Scriptures originated with God. God's spokesmen did not generate prophecies on their own; rather, prophets spoke God's messages as they were moved (literally, "carried along," inspired) by His Spirit. God used humans to speak for Him, but their messages came from Him. The Scriptures' prophecies were accurate, and the prophets' (and the apostles') interpretations of them were correct. Thus the Scriptures were completely trustworthy.

2:1. Peter pointed out that throughout Israel's history, false (pseudo) prophets had arisen among the people. He warned that false teachers would arise among believers. These bogus teachers would secretly bring in destructive heresies.

The heretical teachers were denying the Master who bought them. They may have denied Jesus' Deity or His return, or they may have denied Him by their conduct (see 2:2). Evidently, they professed to be believers. The word Master referred to Jesus as their absolute authority or owner. By His death on the cross, He purchased them to serve Him. They belonged to Him and owed Him their allegiance. Their unchristian lifestyles and erroneous teachings, however, gave evidence they denied His lordship over their lives even though they professed to be His followers. Their practice contradicted their profession. If they persisted in denying Jesus, they would bring swift (or sudden) destruction on themselves. Peter likely had in mind the final judgment, when the false teachers' empty profession, heretical teachings, and impure lifestyles would be revealed as such and judged.

2:2. Peter was aware that the false teachers' unrestrained ways would attract many followers. The phrase unrestrained ways translates a Greek term that conveys the idea of indecent conduct with no regard for God's judgment, people's opinions, or one's own reputation. It can describe blatant immorality. Such godless, undisciplined behavior would cause unbelievers to blaspheme (discredit) the way of truth. The phrase the way of truth referred to sound Christian teaching as opposed to false doctrines. Unbelievers would speak disparagingly or contemptuously of the Christian enterprise because of professing believers' immoral behavior. The phrase because of them probably refers to all professing Christians—false teachers and their followers—who openly, brazenly practiced immorality.

2:3. Peter warned that false teachers would take advantage of believers out of greed—either a selfish desire for money or for a large company of followers. The Greek term rendered exploit means "make gain of," "deceive for (their own) advantage." With deceptive (carefully crafted, false) words, the misleading merchants of error would use believers for their own gain. Awaiting the false teachers, however, was a day of reckoning. The verdict or sentence (condemnation) had been announced long ago in Old Testament references to false prophets. The verdict still was operative, and the false teachers' ruin (destruction) awaited them.