

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 1: *An Overview*
Text: 2 Peter
Date: Sunday, August 26, 2012

Colonial Hills
ABF
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

Welcome to our study through 2 Peter. I'm looking forward to this study together, and I hope you'll pray with me that God will use this portion of His Word to continue His saving work in our lives by bring us into greater conformity to the likeness of His Son. Our study will last 11-12 weeks, and we'll attempt to maintain the following weekly schedule.

- Lesson sent out by Tuesday afternoon
- Audio Lesson Supplement uploaded by Thursday afternoon
- Teaching each Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m

Teachers will be able to access each lesson—including the Word document, PDF, and handout—and Teacher's Aid via our 2 Peter Series webpage: <http://www.colonialindy.org/2-peter-series.html>.

Thank you for your willingness to play such an important roll in the ABF ministry. It's a privilege to partner with you.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 1:1-4 – *Our Precious Faith*

INTRODUCTION

Peter's second epistle was apparently written shortly after his first and just before he was martyred (cf. 1:14) in A.D. 67-68. "Second Peter was written for the purpose of exposing, thwarting, and defeating the invasion of false teachers into the church."¹ In fact, it is the most graphic and comprehensive warning on this issue in the whole of Scripture.

¹ *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr., electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997).

Peter himself had faced his share of ups and downs in relation to truth. As a disciple, he had been one of “those of little faith” (Matthew 8:26; 16:8). It was outspoken Peter who missed the point of Jesus’ predictions of His death and took for a moment the role of the Liar himself (Mark 8:31-9:1). He even missed the point of Jesus’ transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8), an event he rehearses in this book. Peter was the disciple who flatly dismissed truth, when he denied his Master (Matthew 26:69-75). And, even as an apostle, Peter struggled to understand and maintain an unwavering commitment to truth and was thus rebuked by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14.

Yet, here, at the end of his life, Peter digs in his heels and sounds a battle cry for true faith versus false teaching. And he does so wondrously. Peter desires much more than academic commitment; he has learned that truth is effective only when personalized through knowledge. Therefore, he gets to the heart of true faith, discussing in great detail its character and demonstrating that true faith is expressed both in one’s profession and in his practice (chapter 1)—that is, it is a “way of truth” both learned and lived, both known and performed (cf. 2:2, 15). Opposite truth faith is the thorough exposé of false teachers in chapter 2, a chapter that likewise shows the unbroken correlation between denial/ignorance/deception and corruption. Indeed, just before his death, Peter, like a consumer protection advocate, stands between true faith and false teaching, boldly warning the church against error and convincingly calling us to us “grow in...the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18).

Therefore, when we come to this great epistle, we discover ourselves locked in combat for the very souls of people. As we listen to Peter, we recognize that eternal direction lies in the balance here. So, we enter into a study that has far-reaching implications for you, your family, and your church.

In the following weeks, we’ll work our way section by section through this important book. This week, let’s just take some time to overview this letter, understanding the big picture context in which all our following observations will be set.

THE OUTLINE OF 2 PETER

While many helpful outlines of 2 Peter exist, we will study this epistle via the following outline:

- **Part 1 – True Faith**
 - 2 Peter 1:1-4 – *Our Precious Faith*
 - 2 Peter 1:5-11 – *Our Productive Faith*
 - 2 Peter 1:12-15 – *Our Remembered Faith*
 - 2 Peter 1:16-21 – *Our Reliable Faith*
- **Part 2 – False Teaching**
 - 2 Peter 2:1-3 – *General Description of False Teachers*
 - 2 Peter 2:4-10a – *Great Destruction of False Teachers*
 - 2 Peter 2:10b-22 – *Grim Details of False Teachers*
- **Part 3 – A Case Study: Future Events**
 - 2 Peter 3:1-10 – *Future Events and False Teaching*
 - 2 Peter 3:11-18 – *Future Events and True Faith*

Transition: Having already mentioned the purpose behind this letter and having already hinted at its theme in our introduction and outline above, let’s trace the opposing ideas of true faith and false teaching throughout this letter.

THE THEME OF 2 PETER

In Peter’s second epistle, true faith and false teaching are clearly juxtaposed. Let’s consider each in turn.

1. True Faith

True faith is the main emphasis of chapter 1. The heinousness of false teaching and false teachers is much more evident when contrasted with the nature and value of true faith.

a. Faith is foundational.

Notice what Paul says about a believer's faith:

- *True faith is given by God* (1:1).
- *True faith is sufficient for salvation and godliness* (1:2-4).
- *True faith is active* (1:5-7).
- *True faith is assuring* (1:8-11).
- *True faith is alert* (1:12-15).
- *True faith is Word-driven* (1:16-21).



Rather than simply rehearsing this bullet list, consider asking, "From these verses, what key idea about faith is Peter establishing?" That way, you will generate discussion as you consider these bullet points.

If the faith of believers wasn't "precious" (1:1), then this book would probably not have been written. But, truth is true and faith must be established upon it (1:12); furthermore, those who attack this foundation must themselves be averted.

b. Knowledge is key.

Perhaps the key word in 2 Peter is knowledge. This word appears in one of its forms 16 times, with many other phrases further stressing its need.

Knowledge is truth personalized. Truth is static; knowledge is effective. It should go without saying that truth alone is not enough to confront and defeat error. Otherwise, truth would have already won. Truth must be utilized. While truth is certainly a precious commodity, it is just that—a useful and valuable item that is static and ineffective unless it is employed.

Therefore, Peter's theme in this epistle is not truth vs. error, but knowledge vs. denial. Hence our series title: "Add to Your Faith Knowledge." What a wonderful reality that you and I have been given foundational faith by God! That

faith must be buttressed and bolstered with knowledge for it to be effective against the character and doctrines of false teachers.

For example, it is the knowledge of key truths that helps the believer avoid false teaching and living:

- *The knowledge of salvation* (1:1-4)
- *The knowledge of sanctification* (1:5-11)
- *The knowledge of Scripture* (1:16-21)
- *The knowledge of the schemers* (2:1-22)
- *The knowledge of the Second Coming* (3:1-18)
- In summary, *the revealed knowledge of Jesus Christ* (1:2; 3:18)—in other words, this is not mystical, experiential, esoteric knowledge, but is grounded in the revealed gospel of our Lord



Rather than simply rehearsing this bullet list, consider asking, "From these verses, what key truths does Peter want the believers to know?" That way, you will generate discussion as you consider these bullet points.

Throughout this epistle, Peter demonstrates the practical importance of knowledge:

- *Knowledge must be rehearsed* (1:12-15). Even though they were obviously grounded (1:12), Peter wouldn't cease reminding them.
- *Knowledge begins in the head and affects the hand*. This is why Peter deals less with specific truths to be known and more with the character of those who are growing in knowledge (1:5-11). What you have come to know (or come to deny) will manifest itself in how you live; so, Peter works backwards from what is evident to the eye to what must be going on in the heart and mind. See how knowledge affects living in 3:11 and 17.

- *Knowledge will result in stability* (1:8, 10; 3:17). This is part of God's means to grace His people with strength and fortitude (3:18).

Clearly, a believer must grow in knowledge for his true faith to be effective against false teaching.

2. *False Teaching*

False teaching is the main subject of chapter 1. But paralleling his manner in chapter 1, Peter doesn't delineate the deviant doctrines to be avoided. Rather, he unveils the character of false teaching. And just as God has ordained the knowledge of the truth to lead to godliness (cf. Titus 1:1), which results in stability and commendation, so the denial of truth produces corruption (2:20b-22) and reaps destruction (2:4-10a).

Especially when denial and deception are subtle—that is, containing a mixture of truth and error—the character of false teaching is never subtle. The corruption of life amplifies the repudiation of truth.

3. *The Case Study*

In the first two chapters, Peter only loosely explains what aspects of truth to grow in knowledge, and he avoids altogether any explanation of the content of the false teaching. In chapter 3, however, he selects a case study, as it were—Eschatology (i.e., the doctrine of future events) and specifically Christ's second coming—to demonstrate how the false teachers respond to a key truth, and how truth faith responds to that key truth. Regarding the former, we learn that future events are sure despite false teaching; regarding the latter, we find that future events strengthen true faith.

Illustration: During the two summer internships that I did in New Hampshire, I became very close to the Lichtenwalner family. The three kids were a ton of fun, and the family modeled to me a home whose master was Jesus. The greatest lesson that I learned from that family, however, was from the habit of the father, Phil.

As you walked from their kitchen to their living room, I believe, you passed by Phil's study. Now, Phil was just a laymen in the church; I don't think he was a deacon while I was there. He worked with heating and air conditioning systems. His study, however, was a testimony of growing in knowledge. Bibles, study books, a notepad, and writing utensils were strewn across the desk that was overlooked by bookcases full of other study resources. As he began to tell you about his joy-filled memories in there, it was obvious that Phil was averse to leaving faith-filled knowledge up to only the pastors, seminary students, degreed white collar workers, and college professors. No, he took seriously to biblical mandate to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and his home had the divine aroma of that blessed decision.



Application: The application at this point is evident: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Take ownership of your faith, by adding to it the stabilizing grace of knowledge. Don't weary of reminders, and don't think of yourself more highly than you ought. Instead, "add to your faith...knowledge" (1:5). Don't be complacent (cf. Philippians 3:10)!

Additionally, teach and live within your home the knowledge of the truth. According to this book, it is the height of folly and the pathway to corruption to just hope/pray that the kids turn out right. To some degree, take responsibility for the faith of those in your home and add to it the knowledge of God and His Word. This knowledge will stabilize your home (cf. Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 1:9-10).

CONCLUSION

We must stand for truth, and we must protect our faith, and we must do so by "adding to our faith, knowledge." "Unlearned and ignorant men"—like Peter (Acts 4:13)—can make a powerful impact for true faith when they "have been with Jesus" and the knowledge that He gives.