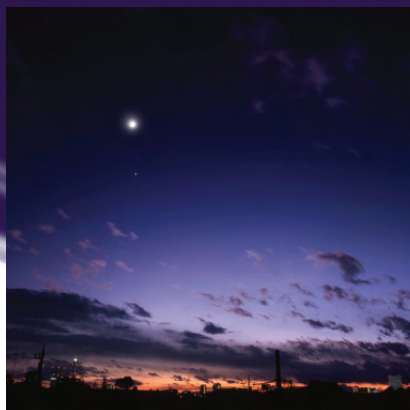


2 PETER

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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW



6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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matthiasmedia

All You Need to Know

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» HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

The studies contain five main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- numbered questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- ‘Implications’ sections that help you think about what the passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

Previous editions of this Interactive Bible Study have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. So with this new edition of *All You Need to Know*, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

» STUDY 1

THE FINISH LINE

[OVERVIEW]

THE FIRST WOMAN TO SWIM THE English Channel both ways was Florence Chadwick. Her next challenge was to swim from Catalina Island to mainland California, a distance of over 30km. After 15 hours of swimming, Florence Chadwick was pulled out of the water, exhausted, just 800 metres from her goal.

Why couldn't she make that final effort and fulfil her ambition? The answer lies in the weather: it was a foggy day, and Florence couldn't see the shore. She didn't know how close she was.

Two months later, on a clear day, she swam all the way.

Seeing the finish line makes all the difference to an athlete; it provides new energy and fresh motivation. But when the end is nowhere in sight, it's very hard to keep going.

This fact has not been lost on the

apostle Peter. In 2 Peter, the apostle writes to show his readers the finish line.

In this short epistle, Peter writes to Christians like us: Christians who are being buffeted by false teachers; Christians who are struggling to live holy lives; Christians who are being ridiculed about their beliefs. Peter writes to urge them to press on and to think clearly about their faith. He does that by reminding them, and us, of the glorious goal that we have to look forward to in the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we keep this goal in mind it will provide the motivation for us to keep going. If we keep this goal in mind it will help us to be clear-thinking Christians.

One of the nicest things about 2 Peter is that it is short. You can easily read the whole letter in one sitting. In fact, that is exactly the best way to start studying it.

Read the whole of 2 Peter.

1. What is your overall impression of the letter? Is it a happy letter? A sad letter? An angry letter?

2. Now skim back through the letter and answer the following questions.

The author

- What information can you discover about the author of 2 Peter?

- How does he describe himself?

- What is his situation at the time of writing?

- Why is he writing?

The audience

- What can you discover about the original recipients of the letter?

- What particular problems do they seem to have been facing?

The contents

- What are the main topics that Peter deals with in the letter? Are any topics repeated at different places in the letter?

- Think about the way the letter is arranged. Why do you think Peter deals with the material in the order he does?

3. Try to summarize the main message of 2 Peter in one or two sentences.

More to this life

In verse 13, where the ESV uses the word “body”, some translations use the word “tent” (NIV) or “tabernacle” (KJV). This reflects more clearly Peter’s eternal perspective. The very image of a tent conveys the feeling of something temporary. You might pitch a tent for a short time on holidays, but it’s not really a long-term dwelling. Peter’s point is that our earthly bodies are not long-term dwellings. He knows that as followers of Jesus, we look forward to our heavenly bodies, beyond that glorious finishing line.

A dying man’s wish

THE SELF-CONFESSED REASON for Peter’s writing is that he wants to stimulate his readers to clear and “sincere” thinking (3:1). In particular, Peter wants his readers to have accurate knowledge about Jesus.

This is no better seen than in 1:12-15. In those verses, Peter explains that he hasn’t much longer to live, saying, “the putting off of my body will be soon” (v. 13). This has caused many people to speculate that Peter was writing this letter from death row in a Roman prison. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome, although solid historical evidence is scant.

Whatever the exact circumstances, what is significant is that Peter’s dying wish is for people to be firmly established in Jesus. So important is it for people to have a correct knowledge of Jesus that Peter wants to spend his last days making sure that they are solidly grounded in this knowledge.

This is because Peter has a clear view of the Christian finish line. He knows that there is **more to this life** than this life. Because of his eternal perspective on life, Peter appreciates how critical it is to have a clear understanding of Jesus. As we will discover, it is this theme of being clear-minded about Christ that lies at the heart of the letter.

» Implications

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- Imagine you had a short time to live. What are the things you would like to fill your last days with? How does your thinking compare with Peter’s?

-
- Peter wants his readers to be firmly established in the truth of Jesus. What specific things can we do to establish ourselves in the truth?

 - It is sometimes said that you can be so heavenly-minded that you're of no earthly use. Do you think that this is true? How might Peter respond to such a saying?

 - It can sometimes be a little depressing when we compare ourselves to people like Peter. He is so motivated and clear-minded about the gospel. How do the following passages encourage us?
 - James 1:2-5

-
- Romans 8:26-30

- Philippians 3:10-16

» Give thanks and pray

- Thank God for giving us his word. Thank God that through the Bible we can come to know him and his purposes for us and for the world. Ask God to work in your heart through his Spirit as you read through 2 Peter, granting you wisdom as you seek to understand his word.
- Ask God to help you remain strong and steadfast through life's trials, keeping your eye on the ultimate finish line: heaven.
- Ask God to help you be obedient to his word, and put into practice the things you learn as you study 2 Peter.