

# All you need to know

**2 Peter**



**6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS**

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2 Peter

*by Bryson Smith*

*All you need to know*

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Matthias Media

(St Matthias Press Ltd. ACN 067 558 365)

PO Box 225

Kingsford NSW 2032

Australia

Telephone: (02) 9663 1478; international: +61 2 9663 1478

Facsimile: (02) 9663 3265; international: +61 2 9663 3265

Email: [info@matthiasmedia.com.au](mailto:info@matthiasmedia.com.au)

Internet: [www.matthiasmedia.com.au](http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au)

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# *How to make the most of these studies*

## **1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?**

These ‘interactive’ Bible studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. The studies will take you through Peter’s letter, pointing out things along the way, filling in background details, and suggesting avenues for further exploration. But there is also time for you to do some sight-seeing of your own—to wander off, have a good look for yourself, and form your own conclusions.

In other words, we have designed these studies to fall half-way between a sermon and a set of unadorned Bible study questions. We want to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do a lot 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**

Each study contains sections of text to introduce, summarize, suggest and provoke. We’ve left plenty of room in the margins for you to jot comments and questions as you read. Interspersed throughout the text are two types of ‘interaction’, each with their own symbol:



### **Investigate**

Questions to help you investigate key parts of the Bible.



### **Think it through**

Questions to help you think through the implications of your discoveries and write down your own thoughts and reactions.

When you come to one of these symbols, you'll know that it's time to do some work of your own.

## **3. Suggestions for Individual Study**

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in 2 Peter and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it. You may be spurred to pray again at the end of the study.
- Work through the study, following the directions as you go. Write in the spaces provided.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the *Think it through* sections. It is important to think about the sections of text (rather than just accepting them as true) and to ponder the implications for your life. Writing these things down is a very valuable way to get your thoughts working.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you've learnt.

## 4. Suggestions for Group Study

- 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 threesomes. Get together with a friend/s and work through them at your own pace. You don't need the formal structure of a 'group' to gain maximum benefit.
- It is *vital* that group members work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how side-tracked you get!), but only if all the members have done the work and are familiar with the material.
- Spend most of the group time discussing the 'interactive' sections—*Investigate* and *Think it through*. Reading all the text together will take too long and should be unnecessary if the group members have done their preparation. You may wish to underline and read aloud particular paragraphs or sections of text that you think are important.
- 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 important sections of text to emphasize, 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.
- 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 2 Peter, 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. (If you *would* like some additional input, there is a series of tapes available that expound the relevant passages. For details, contact Matthias Media.)

# 1

## *The finish line*

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. Peter 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.

### **An overview**

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.





### **Investigate**

1. Read through all of 2 Peter. 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 locations 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.

## **A dying man's wish**

The self-confessed reason for Peter's writing is that he wants to stimulate his readers to clear "wholesome" 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. He describes this in terms of soon putting aside the "tent of this body". 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 that people are firmly established in Jesus. So important is it for people to have a correct knowledge of Jesus that Peter wants to spend his last dying days making sure that they are solidly grounded in this knowledge.

This is because Peter has a clear view of the Christian finish line. Peter knows that there is more to this life than this life. This is reflected in the way he refers to his earthly body as a tent (1:13). 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.

Because of this 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.



### **Think it through**

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?

4. 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