

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.

I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.

As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they must have longed for us to know Him as they did.

As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.

Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,

Margie Martin

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This second letter by Peter was also written to Jewish believers around A.D. 66 or 67. The subject this time was false teachers and false teaching that was coming from those who said they were followers of Jesus.

While 1 Peter emphasized the sufferings of Christ and used the title *Christ* (Greek for the Jewish word *Messiah*), this letter emphasized the glory to follow and that Jesus is Lord. The word *know* and words based on it are used 13 times in this short letter.

This letter is believed to be written after 1 Peter and before Jude because the doctrinal defection it describes is not as fully developed as it is in Jude.



New Testament World

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:1-2

"Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

As I was driving to Starbucks this morning to get my coffee and start writing, I realized that I was really excited about starting a new letter with you, just like I anticipated starting a class in school that sounded really interesting. Do you have a sense of anticipation when you get ready to meet with the Lord? I bet your answer is *Yes!* As I began reading this greeting, I wondered what God had for us in Peter's second letter, excited about the secrets God would be sharing.

Then I read the editor's notes to this letter in the Students NIV Bible and sobered up quickly. Peter is older at this point and is facing his own death. (1:14) He sees splinter groups developing among the believers, perhaps because they aren't *feeling* the way they think they should or perhaps because life isn't happening the way they thought it should.

Can you identify?

So Peter, as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, is going to tell them what they need to know, remember, and stand firm on. As a servant of Jesus Christ, he has no option as to what he's going to do; the Master has spoken, and the servant is obligated to act. As an apostle, Peter is a representative of Jesus Christ to those who follow. He knew Jesus personally and witnessed the resurrection. He's experienced the power of the resurrection in his own life, and he's been set apart with the other apostles to give us the written Word from God to live by.

Today Peter tells us that grace and peace come through the knowledge of God and His Son, not through feelings or what we think should happen. We need to know who the Father and Son are as They describe themselves in Scripture. This knowledge takes time, effort, and perseverance. It doesn't come from hearing someone else speak once a week; it comes through our own personal time, effort, and perseverance.

Are you experiencing grace and peace today? If so, you're being rewarded for your efforts in knowing and following Jesus Christ our Lord. If not, then perhaps you need to evaluate how you're spending your time, how you're focusing your efforts, and what you're pursuing. May *grace* and *peace* be yours in abundance.

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:3-4

“Through [his own glory and goodness] he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Is it really possible to participate in the divine nature and so escape the corruption of this world? What does the divine nature look like—Mother Teresa? Tomorrow we’ll look at the second question, but today let’s look at what God made available to us through Jesus Christ:

- He has given us *everything* we need for life as He defines life and godliness: a character and nature that reflect Him—from the inside out.
- He has called us to Himself, He knows us and cares for us, and we’re important to Him.
- He has given us—freely but at a horrible cost—His very great and absolutely amazing and totally valuable promises that are so *for sure* that we can base our past, present, and future on them.
- He has allowed us to participate in His divine nature, and we can be like Him in our corrupted world. What love and confidence He has.
- He has made a way for us to escape (like from prison) the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. He knows the desires we were born with and has provided the way to escape from them.

Peter says that all that God has provided for us is because of His divine power: the power that gave new life to Jesus, the power that can take us from who we are to who He has created us to be. Why would He do this? Because He wants us to live with Him—what love!

So what’s our part in this transaction? What does God want from us?

Here’s my stab at an answer. God wants our hearts; He wants us to know Him and trust Him when it looks like doing so is the most dangerous and the dumbest thing to do. He wants us to give control to Him and trust Him to act as He wishes because that’s what’s best for us. He wants us to trust Him for the future and let Him make sense of and bring value from the past. Because He is all-powerful, loves us unconditionally, and isn’t hampered by time and space, we *can* trust Him.

How’s your divine nature doing today?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:5-11

“For if you do these things [what we’re going to look at today], you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The Divine Nature. Peter says that if we *live* the divine nature, we’ll never fall into sin, and we’ll receive a rich welcome into the kingdom. How do we live this divine nature? Here are our building blocks:

Faith: confidence in God that He will do what He says. Add to faith:

Goodness: thinking well of others, regardless; doing what is right, regardless. Add to faith and goodness:

Knowledge: the understanding of how God works that’s usually opposite of how we think we should act. Add to faith, goodness, and knowledge:

Self-control: control of self that wants to do what it wants to do when it wants to do it, so we can be totally available to God for what He wants to do because we understand that God’s ways are different from ours. We choose to view others and ourselves through His perspective, and we have complete confidence in Him. Add to faith, goodness, knowledge, and self-control:

Perseverance: we keep living this way regardless of the time and effort required because Jesus saw through to the end His task of saving us. Add to faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, and perseverance:

Godliness: a character that reflects the very nature of God because we have persevered in controlling self so that faith and goodness can win out. Add to faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, and godliness:

Brotherly kindness: since we’re in God’s family as His sons and daughters, we’re to be as kind to each other as He is with us. Add to faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly kindness:

Love: wanting and doing the best for another, regardless of the cost to ourselves, being redemptive and honest as we speak, allowing others to be involved in our lives.

Peter tells us that if we are eagerly pursuing these character qualities, we won’t fall, and we’ll receive a rich welcome into God’s kingdom. But what happens if we don’t pursue them? Peter says that we’ll be ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and in how we walk with Him. It will be as though we’re nearsighted (can’t see beyond ourselves) and blind, having forgotten that we’ve been cleansed from our past sins. Which result do you want: a stable walk and a rich welcome OR being ineffective and unproductive?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:12-21

“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have . . . and we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

How honest are you with God? Do you own up to the pain and confusion that at times well up in your heart? What do you do with these emotions?

Two years ago I realized that I often revisit issues and emotions but don't resolve them. With the goal of being absolutely honest with God and myself—and hearing from Him, I bought a notebook. After each entry, I asked God to give me His point of view. In faith and by using a different color ink, I would begin writing what I heard. These times have been significant for me because I've had to choose between my thoughts (and emotions) and God's words to me.

Today was such a day. I wrote about my fears of facing a milestone birthday. Then I asked God to answer me and began to read today's section. I heard:

“So I will always remind you of these things”

I started crying because I was experiencing the God of the universe being with me personally and intimately. He was waiting for me to be honest and ask for His input. He spoke words my heart needed to hear, words that challenged me to grow up in my walk with Him. Here's what I heard:

What I Was Saying

No one treats me as being important.

I'm too needy.

I'm demanding love from others.

I want to know my significance.

Fill my heart, Lord.

God's Response

You are so important to me that my Son died for you so we could walk together.

Of course you are; that's what sin does. But I can fill the needs.

Let me love you the way you need to be loved so the excess flows out to others.

Sorry—it would go to your head because I'm the one who's working through you.

Gladly! But it doesn't happen without your daily involvement with Me. It'll take time, effort, and perseverance.

What do you need to be reminded of today? Do you need a light to shine in a dark place, the day to dawn, and the morning star (Jesus) to rise in your heart? Are you willing to listen, believe, and step out on that belief?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 2:1-22

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.”

Have you ever heard a false teacher speak? My immediate answer is *no*, but as I read through this section a couple of times, I began to wonder. Let’s look at how Peter describes false teachers so we can steer clear of them—and not become one ourselves.

False: I’ve heard that the Secret Service trains its agents to detect counterfeit bills by having them so know the real thing that they can easily spot a fake. Do we know Scripture—not just verses here and there but God’s thinking and values behind them? (2:1)

Secretly introduce: not being up front and obvious, not easily detected (2:1)

Destructive heresies: what they teach will ultimately destroy their listeners; while it may sound good, we have to look at the long-term results (2:1)

Many will follow: they are popular, attractive, and easy to follow (2:2)

Greed: this is their motivation (2:3)

Exploit you with stories they have made up: they tell unverifiable stories (2:3)

Follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature: how they live reveals the nature that controls them (2:10)

Blaspheme in matters they do not understand: they think they understand everything and nothing can touch them, so they speak against anything belonging to God (2:12)

Like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed: animals have no conscience, wisdom, or ability to think and evaluate; they act on instinct (2:12)

Harm they have done: their words and actions harm others (2:13)

Carouse in broad daylight: instead of working, they pursue their own pleasures, regardless of the effect on others (2:13)

Eyes full of adultery: others are only to fill their sexual desires (2:14)

They seduce the unstable: they look for the needy and then lure them into their grasp; they use the unstable for their own purposes (2:14)

Experts in greed: they only care about what they want and then pursue what they want (2:14)

Are you beginning to get a picture of a false teacher? Tomorrow we’ll finish this section, but here are my questions today: to whom are you listening, and do your words and actions prove that what *you* say is true?

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2 Peter 2:1-22

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.”

Let's finish our description of false teachers:

Left the straight way, wandered off, love the wages of wickedness: they follow their own desires and ignore others' desires or needs (2:15)

Springs without water and mists driven by a storm: they promise refreshment that never comes, like springs without water (2:17)

Mouth empty, boastful words: by appealing to the lustful desires of our human nature, they entice people trying to escape from hurtful lifestyles: they take advantage of others who are already in a precarious place instead of helping them escape (2:18)

They promise freedom while they themselves are slaves of depravity: they promise what they don't have and can't deliver; their own lives disagree with their words (2:19)

Now what picture do you have of false teachers? My picture is that their words may sound good, but they promise what they can't deliver and what can't be proven. Their motives are greed and personal advancement. Their own lives don't match what they say. They look good and seem prosperous, but they are self-oriented, and their prosperity comes at others' expense. They don't want anyone telling them what to do, and they're above the law and despise authority. They pursue pleasure in what they eat and drink, where they live, what they drive, and how they dress. They say the right words but don't live them. They take advantage of others.

So what will happen to these false teachers? Here's what Peter tells us:

- They bring swift destruction on themselves (examples are the times of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah).
- Their condemnation and destruction will happen quickly.
- They are born to be caught and destroyed; perishing like beasts.
- They will be paid in kind for the harm they have done.
- Blackest darkness is reserved for them.
- If they had followed Jesus Christ and then become entangled in and overcome by the world's corruption, it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness.

Are you listening to any false teachers? If so, how can you turn them off in your mind? Do you see yourself teaching anything false by what you're saying or how you're living? If so, it's time to walk in the other direction!

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 3:1-2

"I have written both of [my letters to you] as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."

By my count, this is the sixth time in this letter that Peter has spoken to us about how we *think*. In this case, he's telling us that his goal in writing is to give us reminders to stimulate us to *wholesome thinking*. Is that what his writing does for you?

I think our human nature wants us to read the Bible as though it's fiction to be enjoyed and skimmed through. We pick and choose as we wish but all too easily miss the opportunities to *think* about what we're reading. So we stay on the surface with God's truth. We may know a verse here or there but don't know what comes before or after—or why.

That was me yesterday while writing about false teachers. In verse 2:17, Peter writes, "These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm." I was struck by Peter's literary description, so different from his other words. How could a fisherman be so descriptive, and how do his words fit in with what else he's saying? Normally these questions would flit through my mind, and I'd dismiss them and go on with what was in front of me. But the image he painted kept coming back.

Then it hit me. These descriptions weren't literary for Peter; they were life and death. For Peter, a spring that didn't produce water meant death; it was a promise that couldn't be fulfilled, a tease with serious consequences. Likewise, storms for fishermen were serious business. Swirling mists before a storm could make a fisherman lose track of where he was; without navigation aids, he could die.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "*Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*" (John 4:14)

Paul tells us that when we grow up in Christ by knowing about Him and knowing Him, "*We will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*" (Ephesians 4:14)

The contract is clear: do we want to be tricked by lies and promises that can't come true, or do we want what Jesus made available by dying on the cross? Do we want to live confused and lacking direction, or do we want a life of clarity with the goal in sight? Which direction is your thinking taking you today?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 3:3-18

“The day of the Lord”

Do you believe that Jesus is going to come back to earth and set all things right? Because of today’s words from Peter, I am more convinced of that truth than ever. But six questions came to mind as I read this section.

What’s going to happen? Scoffers will come along following their own desires, laughing at those who think Jesus is returning. The heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

When is it going to happen? We don’t know. It will come like a thief—when we least expect it and are totally unprepared for it.

Why do we know it will happen? By God’s word the earth was formed out of water. These waters also destroyed the world Noah knew. Likewise, by the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire.

What’s keeping it from happening? The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But do not forget this one thing: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. Bear in mind that our Lord’s *patience* means salvation.

What happens next? The ungodly will find judgment and destruction. Believers look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

So *what?* For believers, since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should we be? We are to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. So then, since we are looking forward to this *home of righteousness*, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him. Since ignorant and unstable people distrust the Scriptures, especially Paul’s letters that contain some things that are hard to understand, be on guard so you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever! Amen.

How are you going to greet Jesus when He returns? Need to make any changes now for then, such as _____?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Peter

2 Peter 3:17-18

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

We’ve come to the end of our time with Peter, and I’m sorry to say goodbye. I have a whole new view of him for which I’m grateful. No longer is he the man who craves the spotlight when life is easy but hides when the pressure starts. Instead of telling Jesus what to do, he now reminds us to submit to the authorities God has placed in our lives just as Jesus did. Peter is a changed man. He cares about those he’s shepherding just as Jesus described him at the end of John’s Gospel. He’s a man who knows he’s been forgiven, restored, and redeemed, and he’s been growing in that knowledge for years.

Now he tells us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Lord (the One who is in charge of our lives) and Savior (the One who’s made possible this new life we live).

Through my grandchildren I’m getting to see again what growth looks like. They do get out of diapers and learn how to read. Kicking a soccer ball can really happen. Bodies change and minds develop. Choices are made and lived with.

On the other side of life is a dear couple in their 80’s who are like second parents for me. Jesus is still Lord in their lives, and He keeps working with them in their attitudes and their willingness to let Him be in charge. Their walks with Him are real and fresh everyday, but not easy.

As Peter was facing the end of his life, his concern wasn’t about himself and what was in front of him. His concern was for those God had given him, those he had come to love: *“And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.”* (2 Peter 2:12-15)

How are you doing with growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? If you were able to sit down with Peter for a while, what do you think he would want to say to you?
