

2 Peter 2

Week 3 - True or False?

Learning Objective

- Understand how to identify teachings that are contrary to the Gospel.

Pray for your time together as a group.

? What are some stories you grew up believing that you later found out were untrue? How did they impact you?

Leader's Note: Try to keep this light-hearted!

Possible Answers: My older brother told me I was adopted, and I believed him! Santa Claus, tooth fairy, digging a hole to China, Paul Bunyan. I didn't peek at my presents, I was scared about digging in my backyard.

Read Out Loud: In 2 Peter 1 we heard Peter remind his audience of the truth of the Gospel and how he was a witness to Christ's ministry. He emphasized the importance of prophecy not being interpreted by humans, but rather by the Holy Spirit. Today's passage will address when "prophets" misuse their authority and distort the Gospel message.

Read Out Loud: 2 Peter 2:1-9 (NIV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶ if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless

Teach It!

Being a teacher of God's Word is a gift that comes with a significant amount of responsibility! We find lists of requirements for teachers in a few different places in the New Testament:

1 Peter 5

Titus 1 and 2

1 Timothy 4

Colossians 3

deeds he saw and heard)—⁹ if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

? What is Peter warning his audience against in verses 1-3? Why is he so upset by this?

Possible Answers: False teachers. People are being led to believe things that are not true of the Gospel message because of these false teachings. This is compromising their devotion to the truth.

? How does this warning compare to Peter's message at the end of 2 Peter 1?

Possible Answers: In 2 Peter 1, he was assuring his audience that the truth of Scripture is "a light shining in a dark place" but in 2 Peter 2 he describes the false teachings as "destructive" and "fabricated."

? Why do you think Peter references God's judgment during the Old Testament period in his letter?

Possible Answers: He wants to convey the seriousness of what these false teachers are doing by comparing them to stories of judgment that his readers would have been familiar with.

? Based on this passage, what will be the consequences of God's judgment against the ungodly? How does the Gospel shape our response to this?

Possible Answers: Punishment, destruction, death, hell, chains of darkness; Christ died for us and the moment we put our hope in Him, His righteousness is credited to us - we are justified once and for all and reconciled to God through Jesus.

Read Out Loud: 2 Peter 2:10-22 (NIV)

¹⁰ This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority.

Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; ¹¹ yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. ¹² But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they

Peter references several Old Testament stories in this passage:
The Flood: Genesis 6-8
Sodom and Gomorrah: Genesis 18-19
Balaam: Numbers 22

too will perish.

¹³ They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done.

Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.

¹⁴ With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! ¹⁵ They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. ¹⁶ But he

was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

¹⁷ These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸ For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.” ²⁰ If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. ²² Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”

? How are false teachers described in these verses?

Leader’s Note: Vs. 10 specifically mentions following the sinful nature and despising authority.

Possible Answers: Despise authority, follow their sinful flesh and chase after pleasure; slaves of depravity, without understanding, unreasoning, like animals.

In vs. 22, Peter compares the habits of false teachers to those of dogs and pigs (“sow” is another term for “pig”).

John Piper says of this, “dogs characteristically return to their vomit; and no matter how clean you make a pig on the outside, if it is still a pig, it will return to the mire.” (cr. Proverbs 26:11)

Source: Piper, John. “Better Never to Have Known the Way.” *Desiring God*. N.p., 30 May 1982. Web. 07 July 2017.

? How do you think someone becomes a false teacher?

Possible Answers: They followed other false teachers and wandered away from the truth. It may not have happened all at once, but rather a series of poor choices.

? Where do we encounter false teachers/teachings today? What are some examples of these teachings?

Possible Answers: Social media, grocery store, TV, family/friends

Karma, American dream, be a Christian and you will have material success/prosperity, do whatever feels right to you

? What is the ultimate truth for believers?

Possible Answers: Jesus + nothing = Everything! The Gospel message.

Leader’s Note: This question is not meant to instigate a discussion on the philosophical meaning of “truth,” but is meant to encourage believers to look to Jesus, who is the ultimate definition and standard of Truth. (John 14:6, Jesus = Truth)

For further reference, feel free to look at the end of 2 Peter 1 for encouragement that what we have is truth. Also, can reference John 16:5-15, Eph 6:10-20, 2 Tim 3:16-17, Psalm 119:9-11

? Why is it important to be aware of false teachings?

Possible Answers: False teachings can be deceptive and they lead us away from the truth of the Gospel (Matt 24:24); there are false teachers in the Church today (2 Peter 2:1) They can oftentimes bolster up nonbelievers impressions/stigmas about what Christianity is all about. They can seem like a “replacement” for the Gospel.

? What can we do as followers of Jesus to proactively safeguard against false teachings?

Possible Answers: Community/accountability, studying God’s Word, etc.

Leader’s Note: Verses 20-21 can lead to controversy and may bring up questions/fears about the possibility of losing our salvation as Christians. If this comes up in your group, it may be a good time to emphasize the importance of Gospel community and accountability to help guard one another from wandering away from the truth.

For Discussion And Accountability

? What does it look like for you to uphold truth, especially in a world that opposes any “ultimate truth”?

? What lies (or false teachings) are you battling in your own life? How can we support you as a small group in replacing those lies with truth?