

PEOPLE GET READY

"Snake Oil Salesmen" 2 Peter 2:1-3

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Authority of the Bible I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17





How is cleverness more dangerous than intimidation? Have you ever been scammed? The office I work for takes in hundreds of phone calls weekly. In this flood of telecommunication, we encounter a number of "scammers" who call trying to get our office to purchase products, give to charities or sign up for services that are fraudulent. We have trained our office staff to transfer all solicitations to upper management.

The "Copy Toner Mafia" frequently attempts to scam our office. First, the "toner scammers" make preliminary calls attempting to learn about our business. They will ask for details about the office and how we are organized. They want to know the full names of our managers. They will ask how long we have been in business, who we use for internet access and what model of copiers we use. They often claim they are not selling anything but are just updating their business records.

After data-gathering on our business, the scammers will call again wanting to speak with a manager by name. They will inform us that they shipped the wrong copier toner, citing the exact copier model, and requesting to send a "correct toner" after our approval. They will often say that we are being offered a discount due to their mistake in shipping.

Next, they will press for an affirmative "Yes" in response their toner offer. They were very careful to state at the beginning of the call that they are "recording the call for training and business purposes." Once they have a verbal "Yes" recorded they will announce that they will ship the "correct toner cartridge" along with an invoice for hundreds of dollars.

The major problem with this entire charade is that our office never pays for toner cartridges. We have an agreement with our copier vendor to pay a few pennies for each copy we make. We pay these charges monthly and the copier company sends us toner without any additional charges. What the scammers are banking on is that the office team is too busy to be aware of the copier contract terms already in place. Simply stating that we never purchase toner cartridges results in a disconnected call from the scammers. They immediately hang up once the scam is exposed. The scam continues only as long as we don't know the details of our own copier contract.

Sanctimonious scammers work with a similar protocol. Religious fraudsters often work overtime to present themselves as similar and familiar with all things orthodox in our Christian faith. They often will speak all the lingo, cite all the doctrines and show a working knowledge of famous authors and leaders. "We are just like you" or "You are just like us" is often the case fraudsters make. This feigned familiarity and similarity is built to overcome fears of damage or harm.

After conquering the familiarity front, con-artists of the cloth will often try to get the faithful to agree to alternative truths. Often these charlatans will claim something is missing or wrong with ordinary Christianity. They suggest that they have answers to the supposed deficiencies. They will often claim there is so much more to be experienced than what basic Christianity has to offer. They appeal to the fear that many Christians have about how "simple-faith" may not feel like enough to live a vibrant Christian life. Because they have worked so hard up front to create good will, their appeals to alternatives are often not understood to be dangerous.

A key solution to overcoming religious scammers is to know what you believe. Just as knowing the details of your copier contract can chase away the "Copy Toner Mafia," so, confidently knowing the details of the Gospel and basic biblical theology can keep false teachers at bay. Understanding that God has provided all we need to live a godly and fulfilling Christian life (2 Pe 1:1-4) means that we do not need some alternative spiritual experience. Adding essential maturing qualities to our faith (2 Pe 1:5-11) based upon the faithful witnesses of God and his word (2 Pe 1:12-21) is the antidote to those who try to "secretly introduce destructive heresies" (2 Pe 2:1).

A great question to bring up with any religious teacher is, "Who is Jesus to you?" The majority of false teachers will trip over a biblical understand of Jesus' divinity and humanity. Jesus is the only begotten, divine Son of God, eternal, uncreated and sinless in his human birth and life. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus offers the only way to forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus is one with God the Father and is the sender of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus is coming again to judge the world and establish God's kingdom for all eternity (see CBC's *Statements of Faith* at *wearecentral.org/beliefs* for more details). Knowing, believing and giving all allegiance to Jesus will often clear the deck of those who are trying to religiously deceive. Many religious leader types are calling with "scammer" intentions. Are you ready?

Read 2 Peter 2:1-3

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. [NIV]

Read other translations

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. [ESV]

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. [NASB] After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Above the words "But there were also false prophets" (v. 1), write 2 Pe 1:20-21.
- Draw an arrow from "false prophets" to the corresponding phrase in v. 1.
- Double underline the word "secretly" in v. 1.
- Circle each occurrence of "destructive" or "destruction" in the passage.
- Draw a box around the word "heresies" in v. 1.
- Bracket the phrase in v. 1 that modifies "the sovereign Lord."
- Double underline the word "swift" in v. 1.
- Underline what many will follow in v. 2.
- Double underline what happens to truth in v. 2.
- Draw an arrow from "exploit" in v. 3 to its cause.
- Double underline what describes stories in v. 3.
- Draw an arrow from "not been sleeping" in v. 3 to the corresponding phrase in v.1.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about ______."

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

- 1. To whom was Peter referring when he spoke of "false prophets among the people" in 2 Pe 2:1?
- 2. What differences or similarities would there be between ancient false prophets and current false teachers?
- 3. How could someone "secretly" introduce false teaching? Once something is taught, how can it be a secret?
- 4. How could a heresy "deny" the Lord?

DIG DEEPER

- 5. Does God always end heresies swiftly with destruction? What does Peter mean by 'swift destruction"?
- 6. What often accompanies "destructive heresies" (2 Pe 2:2)?
- 7. How do false teachers often exploit their followers (2 Pe 2:3)?
- 8. According to 2 Pe 2:3, what do false teachers often include in their teaching? What would be some examples of these?
- 9. What would be some key indicators of false teaching or false teachers?
- 10. How can you protect your family, home group or community group from dangerous false teaching?

EXPLORE RESOURCES

Commentary On The Text

After a well-rounded introduction emphasizing the Christian identity of his readers (2 Pe 1:1-15) and the reliable witness of Jesus Christ (2 Pe 1:16-21), Peter begins to unpack the main purpose of his second epistle. Peter issues strong warnings against false teachers (2 Pe 2:1-22) and against scoffers who deny the return of Jesus (2 Pe 3:1-18). These warnings are sharp and detailed. If these dangers were present in the early church, we should not be surprised if false teachers are present in our current context as well.

Having just commented on the witness of Scripture (2 Pe 1:20-21), Peter begins his address concerning false teachers. He reminds his readers that "the people" of Israel often had to deal with the delusions of "false prophets." "From the OT we get a very unsavory picture of the false prophets. Jeremiah reports that they are callous toward the real needs of the people and are primarily interested in personal popularity (Jer. 6:14). Greedy for gain, they 'tell fortunes for money,' says Micah (3:11). They are 'befuddled with wine,' adds Isaiah, and 'stagger when seeing visions' (Isa. 28:7)" (Robert H. Mounce, *A Living Hope: A Commentary on 1 and 2 Peter*, 122).

Just as the people of Israel had to deal with false prophets, the people of God in his church had to deal with "false teachers." These false teachers were not necessarily making futuristic predictions, but were "secretly introducing destructive heresies" into the minds of the people for whom Peter cared so much. "The verb [introduce v.1/pareisago] does not necessarily have a negative connotation, and we could retranslate the NIV to say 'will introduce destructive heresies.' Nonetheless, the context suggests a nefarious purpose, so that the NIV reading is preferable. A parallel term in Gal 2:4 has a similar sense: 'But because of false believers secretly brought in [pareisaktous], who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus' (NRSV)" (Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37, The New American Commentary, 328).

The actions of these false teachers stood in high contrast (2 Pe 2:1-3) to the good witness that Peter had shared about Christ (2 Pe 1:16-21). These false teachers were "denying the Sovereign Lord (v. 1)," they were inviting others to follow their "depraved conduct (v. 2)," and were greedily exploiting their followers with falsehoods (v. 3). These "bad actors" posed a dangerous situation for the early church. The "flock" of God which required good shepherding (1 Pe 5:1-4), now needed to be protected from those who come "in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (Mt 7:15-20)."

Peter makes a sharp accusation against these teachers when he accuses them of "exploiting" believers with "fabricated stories" (v. 3). This "exploitation" means literally to "make profit." The foundation for this false gain was "fabricated stories." "Though the term *plastos* [fabricated] can mean something molded, like a statue (Philo, Leg. All. 2.54-55), it connotes the sense of something fictitious and deceitful. Either as 'feigning' something (Euripides, Bacch. 218), or 'appearing' to be someone (Sophocles, Oed. Tyr. 780) or 'making pretense' of something (Herodotus 1.68), this term can be used to describe forgeries (Josephus, Vita 177, 337) and deception (Philo, Somn. 2.140). In this context it contains a note of shame, for it functions as the riposte to the challenge of the opponents in 1:16. They challenged the author with concocting the story of Jesus' parousia (sesophismenois mythois), thus attempting to shame him; but in his response, he accuses them of the same thing (plastois logois) and thus defends his honor while shaming them" (Jerome H. Neyrey, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37C, Anchor Yale Bible, 193).

Peter makes much of the destruction that comes with false teachers. They introduce destructive teachings, not knowing of the destruction that will come upon themselves. "Peter reiterates that the condemnation, pronounced against false teachers long ago in the Old Testament, is impending (lit. 'from of old has not been idle'). … He concludes by saying that their destruction (the third time in three verses that *apōleia* has been used) has not been sleeping. NEB renders well, 'perdition waits for them with unsleeping eyes'. … No doubt he is rebutting the false claim that God's judgment is nodding off to sleep (cf. 1 Kgs 18:27)" (Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, vol. 18, Tyndale NT Commentaries, 120).

Some have wondered if these false teachers were saved because of the phrase "who bought them" in 2 Pe 2:1. With the comparison of false teachers to false prophets, one has to wonder if false prophets were considered part of God's chosen people or if their falsehoods showed their true allegiance to other gods. These false teachers claimed to be followers of Jesus (2 Pe 2:20-22). The final determination of their faith is up to God. "Peter was not claiming that all the false teachers were Christians. In view of how he described them they appear to have been unbelievers (cf. vv. 4-6, 17). However some believers can become false teachers (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18), and Peter warned that false teachers would arise 'among you.' Therefore this warning applies to any false teacher, unbeliever or believer" (Thomas Constable, "Notes on 2 Peter," planobiblechapel.org/tcon/ notes/pdf/2peter.pdf, 43).

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Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *people* "The sphere of these ancient 'false prophets' activity is 'among the people' ($\grave{e}v \tau \tilde{\varphi} \lambda \alpha \tilde{\varphi}$, *en tō laō*). The 'people' are the chosen people of God, Israel (Jude 5 and comments; Matt. 2:6; 15:8; 26:47; Mark 7:6; Luke 1:17; John 11:50; Acts 3:23; 4:10; 7:17; 28:17; Rom. 11:1-2; Heb. 8:10), in contrast to Gentiles (Acts 26:17; Rom. 15:10). While this word came to be used of Christians as God's people (Acts 15:14; 18:10; Rom. 9:25; Heb. 4:9; 1 Pet. 2:9-10), our author's attention is turned on ancient Israel. But his interest is more than historical since this group is paralleled with $\grave{e}v \circ \mu \tilde{\nu}$ (*en hymin, among you*). He includes a typological connection between what occurred in Israel of old and what his readers now experience" (Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 237).

v. 1 *heresies* "The word *heresies* might conjure up something easily recognized, but the Greek word *hairēsis* meant an 'opinion' or 'variant.' Originally, the Sadducees, Pharisees, and even the Christians could be referred to by the word, without any underlying criticism. Within Christianity, however, it began to have the sense of faction or divisiveness, and Peter tightens the meaning even more by adding the word *destructive*. What these men teach is not a permissible variant of the gospel. It is a range of 'damnable heresies' (AV)" (R. C. Lucas and Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, The Bible Speaks Today, 87).

"The verb arneomai, here as in Jude 4, v. 1 denying means not 'to deny' but to 'disown or reject' the master's lordship. In addition, while the characterization of Jesus as despotes [Master] points to a high christology, use of 'buying' and 'master' terminology further underscores the author's interest in the issue of lordship. Jesus is God's agent of manumission, and believers, like the author of the letter, are 'servants or slaves of Jesus Christ' (1:1). They owe him the honor of lordship. Finally 2 Peter's combination of themes in this segment of v. 1 further confirms our understanding of the letter's strategy and purpose. The basic issue is a christological one, namely, the teachers' rejection of the notion of *parousia*, here described in terms of lordship and related to Jesus' role as lord of believers. By questioning Jesus' coming they thereby deny his power (1:16), the same power given to him by God as salvific agent (ransom and savior terminology). Ultimately then this denial is a challenge of divine providence" (Earl Richard, Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter: A Literary and Theological Commentary, Reading the New Testament Series, 352).

v. 1 *swift* "Peter may mean that the eschatological judgment will soon take place. And certainly such an idea of imminence, in the sense of a conviction that the last day could come at any time, is widespread in the New Testament. But rather than predicting the time of the judgment, 'swift' probably indicates its certainty" (Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, The NIV Application Commentary, 93).

v. 2 *follow* "Many will follow (2:2a) the false teachers in denying the coming of Jesus and in the licentious behavior that follows from this denial. In saying this, the author takes a charge that the adherents of the false teachers have apparently made against him, that he follows cleverly devised myths (1:16), and turns that charge against them. Because of the false teacher's influence, the way of truth will be slandered (2:2b). Their influence will bring Christians in general into disrepute" (Terrance Callan, *2nd Peter*, Paideia Commentaries, 179).

v. 2 *disrepute* "Peter's main point was that the gospel, which he designated as the way of truth, would be maligned because of the impact of the false teachers. When unbelievers see the moral effect produced by the opponents in the lives of their followers, they will conclude that the way of truth is a way of error. They will think that any message that leads to dissolute behavior cannot be from God" (Schreiner, 332).

v. 3 *greed* "Teachers of the Hellenistic marketplace who sell their facile ideas to the rowdy crowds and highest bidders. Consequently they are placed in the category of cunning sophists who manipulate their audiences for financial gain. While the theme of 'greed' (*pleonexia*) is traditionally used in polemical texts (see 1 Thess 2:3f), the author's return to this issue in vv. 14 and 15 indicates more than formulaic use. Instead this theme along with others in the statement characterize the teachers as operating with false motives" (Richard, 354).

v. 3 *exploit* "With their fabricated speech they will seek to 'make merchandise of you' (*humas emporeusontai*, 'will exploit you,' NASB). In James 4:13, its only other New Testament occurrence, the verb means 'to do business, to trade.' But in keeping with the cheating that often attended such trading, the term readily came to denote deceptive exploitation. These teachers will skillfully use their contrived arguments as counterfeit coinage to make a profitable bargain" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary*, 93).

v. 3 *fabricated* "Peter turns the table on them and says that the false teachers themselves use 'stories they have made up' (the expression *plastois logois* indicates words that have something to do with deceit, forgery, fiction, or pretending, judging from its use outside biblical literature, for it never appears elsewhere in biblical literature). They make these stories up out of greedy motives" (Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 224).

v. 3 *condemnation* "Second Peter 2:3b begins a single long sentence that is held together by a succession of conditional clauses, 'if ... then' (the 'if' appears in v. 4 and is repeated in vv. 5, 6, and 7; the 'then' only is executed in v. 9). Like a lawyer prosecuting an appeal case before a jury, Peter prepares to call key witnesses from the biblical record who can support his claim that 'Their ['false teachers'] condemnation, pronounced against them long ago, has not been idle'" (Richard Vinson, Richard Wilson, and Watson Mills, 1 & 2 Peter, Jude, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, 333).

v. 3 *sleeping* "The idea of becoming drowsy and dozing off (Matt. 25:5). In this metaphor, final destruction is personified and is said not to be dozing or slumbering: it is on its way (BDAG 683). Whatever delay there may be in the advent of judgment (3:4) should not be interpreted as a sign that it has become idle. Peter again affirms the certainty of God's intervention in the final destruction of the impious" (Gene L. Green, 247).



CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Beware of false teachers who may deceive you with falsehoods, exploit your resources, ruin the reputation of the Gospel, and leave you in a wake of destruction.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)

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3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

"What is your foundation for truth? Is it based on your feelings, circumstances or the headlines? Today's culture tells us truth is subjective. There's my truth and your truth and the teacher's truth and for sure the kid on the playground has his own set of truths that may or may not involve what's best for him. There's a myriad of "truths" coming at your child every moment of every day through friends, socials, ads, etc. We're also battling the fact that worldly truths are celebrated in worldly circumstances. As parents it's our job to help our kids understand that truth isn't subjective but objective and found in God's Word not in our circumstances or feelings. There are many people who will argue against the relevance of an ancient text that hasn't suffered our cultural issues. Though the Bible is an ancient text, the truth of God's Word remains unchanged throughout the generations. Help your kids grasp the truth of the Bible by studying it together. Read the Bible together and stand in awe of the truth of the miraculous stories in God's Word. Get tangible. If you're reading about a city in Greece, show them where Greece is on the map. If you're reading a proverb that mentions gold or pearls, let them hold your gold ring or pearl necklace. If you're watching a show or reading from the latest and greatest chapter book series, remind your kids the difference between the truth of the Bible and the fiction you're engaging in. God's Word is true and we have the privilege and right to plant this seed and cultivate its growth in our child.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Peter 2:1-3

- 1. What will false teachers introduce?
- 2. Who will false teachers deny?
- 3. How will truth be affected by those who follow these false teachers?

What Do You Think?

What does it mean that the destruction of the false teachers "has not been sleeping?"

What Do You Do?

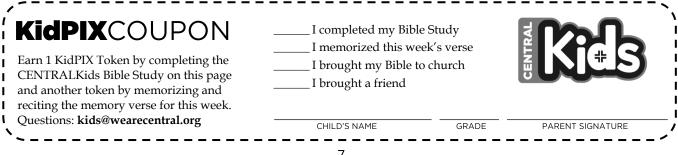
At mealtime, talk about some of the craziest story in the Bible (men living over 900 years, talking donkeys, giants, a man spending three days in the belly of the fish). Do you believe these stories are true?

CORE COMPETENCY: Authority of the Bible

I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 5:7

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."



OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17) *I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.* **Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today. **Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16) *I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

Identity in Christ (John 1:12) *I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4) *I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9) *I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12) *I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life. **Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13) *I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

Grace (Colossians 3:13) *I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5) *I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.* **Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12) *I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47) *I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4) *I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2) I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8) *I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11) I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20) *I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33) *I focus on God and His priorities for my life.* **Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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OUR MISSION Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.