ZEALOUS FOR THE TRUTH

2 PETER, 2 & 3 JOHN, JUDE

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How to Use *Life Design*



LIFE DESIGN: Bible Study Designed for the Life You Live. These Bible study materials are designed to engage adult learners in inductive Bible study and in applying the truths of that study to their daily lives.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- The FOCUS of productive adult Bible learning is the learner. The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner's learning.
- The GOAL of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth. You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Life Design* lesson has three distinct parts. GETTING STARTED is the attention-getter. The questions and activities "set the table," as it were, for the Bible study. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES is the heart of the lesson. A series of inductive Bible study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. MAKING IT PERSONAL applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change the focus of the application. You will find more material in the Bible study than you can cover in one class session. Ask God to help you as you tailor the lesson for your learners.

The Study Book

This leader's guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. As the teacher, you will want a copy of the Bible study. Commit to working through the questions before you plan your lesson. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. When a question in the leader's guide is picked up from the Bible study book, you will notice the question number in parentheses. The answers to the questions are usually in the lesson commentary. They are also grouped together in the back of this book.

Other Resources

If you want to use transparencies as you teach, a packet of sixteen full-color transparencies is available. If you prefer to use PowerPoint, the resource CD includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson.

Some teachers stay very close to the outline as they teach. If this is true of you, and if you want your learners to capture that outline, reproducible in-class worksheets are included on the CD. The same worksheets may be downloaded from the Web and photocopied for class members. Visit www.regularbaptistpress.org/downloads or www.rbpadultministries.org. Thank you for choosing *Life Design* teaching materials. May God richly bless you and your learners as you study and apply His Word.

Preface

What are you zealous for? Does *the truth* make the initial list that comes to your mind? Can you really say you are zealous for anything?

Second Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude have a lot to say about being zealous. *Zealous for the Truth* is a study of these four epistles that were written to instruct believers about life during the last days before the rapture of the church. The study emphasizes being zealous for God's Word, proper Christian behavior and evangelistic concern, and the rejection of false and destructive teachers. Through studying these epistles, learners will understand the need for discernment of truth and of a practice of distinctive Christian living during these troubled-filled last days.

Without or not they realize it, your learners may need to renew their appreciation of the salvation God has provided for them. Second Peter 1:1–11 will help them to do this.

They will likely need to be reminded of the character and conduct of false teachers and the threat they pose to the church. Both 2 Peter and Jude paint pictures of such false religionists.

The brief letters of 2 and 3 John will help your learners think through the issue of rejection or acceptance of those who seek to come into the church for the purpose of teaching.

Learners today often need to think again about the supreme value of God's Word as truth and as trustworthy. Second Peter 1:12–21 clearly presents God's case for such a commitment to Scripture.

An appropriate practice of truth in daily life—even in the difficulty of the last days—is usually a "learner need" in most Bible classes. Peter and John address this need, with Jude 17–25 presenting a clear call to distinctive Christian living in the last days.

As you teach, your learners will also realize the value of teachers, like you, who faithfully present God's Word as truth to be zealous for. Your learners will have opportunity to affirm in their minds and hearts once again that they "have not followed cunningly devised fables" (2 Pet. 1:16).

Resources for This Course

The transparency packet for this course (RBP0052) includes a transparency on which to record the summary statements from each lesson. The transparency will help you track and review these lessons. Starting with lesson 1, use transparency 1 at the end of each lesson or at the beginning of the next lesson to record the summary statement for each lesson. You may use the suggestions in this leader's guide or ask your learners to suggest summary statements.

The Resource CD (RBP0053) for this course includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson. All of the transparencies are part of the PowerPoint presentation. The transparencies are also included on the CD as printable PDFs. If you would like to make your own transparencies or PowerPoint slides, the CD includes backgrounds ready for your own text.

To help in your promotion of this course, the CD includes a PowerPoint slide, posters, and a flyer. You can add your group's information to all of the promotional material.

The CD also provides in-class worksheets. Each in-class worksheet has a fill-in-the-blank outline that follows the corresponding outline in this leader's guide.

The CD also offers supplemental case studies. Each case study can be used as an in-class review, as material for a midweek Bible study, or as an e-mail attachment to your learners. E-mailing the case studies to your learners will emphasize living out the truth in daily life. You may want to enlist a learner to handle collecting e-mail addresses and e-mailing the case studies each week.

In addition, the CD includes a printable verse card for each lesson's key verse or verses. Blank verse cards are also included so you can enter different or additional verses for your learners to memorize. For your convenience, the verse cards are set for printing on Avery business cards. Use the Avery product number 8869 to avoid cutting apart the verse cards. You can find Avery business cards at avery.com. You could also simply print the verse cards on heavy paper and cut them apart using a paper cutter. Or you could e-mail the verse cards to your learners and have them print and cut their own.

LESSON 1

Growing Expectations

Scripture Focus

2 Peter 1:1–7

Key Verse

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Overview

The apostle Peter exhorts believers to the diligent development of Christian character traits. God's power is more than adequate for us to live godly lives.

Topic

Christian character development

Theme

God's power is sufficient for believers as they strive to be all God wants them to be.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will takes steps to develop the godly character for which God has made provision in his or her life.

Outline

I. Introduction (2 Pet. 1:1, 2)
   A. Writer and readers (1:1)
   B. Greeting (1:2)
II. Power and the Promises (2 Pet. 1:3, 4)
   A. Divine power (1:3)
   B. Precious promises (1:4)
III. Flower of Faith (2 Pet. 1:5–7)
   A. Faith first (1:5a)
   B. Character qualities (1:5b–7)

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1—3
- Lesson 1 case study from resource CD
- 2 Peter 1:3 verse card from resource CD

Getting Started

Zealous Questions

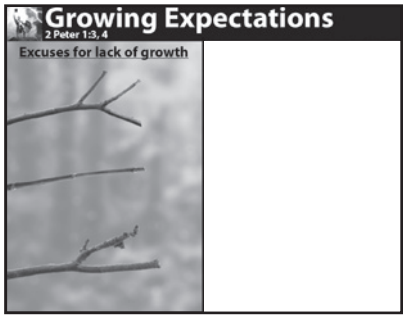
Ask: What are you zealous for? **Ask:** Does *the truth* make your initial list? Why or why not? **Ask:** Can you really say you are zealous for anything? Explain. (Questions 1–3)

Second Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude were written to instruct believers about life during the last days before the rapture of the church. These books have a lot to say about being zealous. As we study these epistles, we learn about being zealous for God's Word, proper Christian behavior and evangelistic concern, and the rejection of false and destructive teachers.

Today's lesson will focus on becoming all God wants us to be. Learning about His provisions for our spiritual growth should cause us to be zealous about growing.

Excuses for Lack of Zeal

Lesson 1 focuses on the power and promises of the salvation made possible through faith in Christ. It also emphasizes the need for Christian character development so that the believer can be what God wants him or her to be. **Transparency:** Display transparency 2 with the right half covered. **Discuss:** What are some excuses believers might give for not growing spiritually? *(Too busy; don't understand how to grow; pastor's messages aren't relevant to me; God doesn't care if I grow.)* (Record learners' answers on the transparency.) **Discuss:** Which of these excuses, if any, are valid? *(Perhaps a mental disability is the only valid reason a person can't grow spiritually.)*



Share with the learners how today's lesson will help them understand the believer's part in becoming all God intends the Christian to become.

Searching the Scriptures

I. Introduction (2 Pet. 1:1, 2)

A. Writer and readers (1:1)

Peter uses his formal name, Simon Peter, as the writer of this letter. Simon is a diminutive form of "Samuel," meaning "God has heard." Christ gave him the name "Peter" after his great confession affirming His deity (Matt. 16:16–18).

READ: 2 Peter 1:1a. **ASK:** Peter calls himself a "servant." Why is that an indicator of spiritual growth in Peter's life? (Question 4)

Peter's credentials are twofold (2 Pet. 1:1). He is both Christ's servant and one of His apostles. A servant of Christ is ready always to receive and to obey the directives of his Master. Personal humility is combined with apostolic authority in Peter.

Peter takes his place next to the other apostles and not above them (2 Pet. 1:1). While he was one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 1:18, 19), Peter refers to himself as "an" apostle and not "the" apostle of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:1). The apostles were messengers sent out with orders from Christ with full authority from Him (Matt. 28:19, 20). Their responsibility was to deliver Christ's message, not their own (Gal. 1:11).

READ: 2 Peter 2:1b. **ASK:** How does this verse dispel the idea that some believers have special privileges from God that accounts for their ability to grow spiritually? (Question 5)

Peter identifies his readers as those who have received the same precious faith as that of the apostles (2 Pet. 1:1). While Peter's letter is written first to believers in a certain geographical location (1 Pet. 1:1), it is written to all of us who embrace the same precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1). There is no distinction between the apostles and all other Christians. We have this faith through God's grace. The word "obtained" implies the lack of any merit as the source of the gift.

Our possession of faith is due to the righteous act on God's part to have provided the gospel (2 Pet. 1:1). It is "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" Who has righteously provided for our salvation. The one definite article before "God" links the two names "God" and "Saviour" together as the same person. Jesus Christ is fully and completely God (Col. 2:9). In this statement, Peter boldly affirms Christ's deity.

B. Greeting (1:2)

Peter's greeting is more than a typical first-century greeting, for it has doctrinal significance. The apostle desires that grace and peace be multiplied in the lives of God's people. There are no limits to the experience of grace and peace that God has for us. Grace is God's unmerited kindness extended to us (Eph. 2:8, 9). Peace is the inward tranquility that flows from experiencing God's grace (Phil. 4:7).

DISCUSS: What happens to the believer who seeks peace through a means other than a growing relationship with Christ? (Question 6)

Both grace and peace come to us because we know God (2 Pet. 1:2). This is knowledge that moves beyond the ability to recite Bible verses or doctrinal facts to experiencing God. It is a knowledge that springs from a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (John 17:3; Phil. 3:10).

Our knowledge of God grows with the study of the Scriptures. We need to know about God so that we may know Him more intimately. As we place our trust continually in His Word and commit ourselves to His purposes, then our knowledge of Him becomes more personal. We experience answers to prayer, the evidence of God's working in our lives, and the strengthening of our faith.

II. Power and the Promises (2 Pet. 1:3, 4)

ASK: The United States Army had a recruitment slogan: "Be All That You Can Be." What did this slogan mean in that context? (Question 7)

Christians can be all that God wants them to be. He has supplied us with all the resources necessary to make spiritual growth and maturity possible and practical. Today's and next week's lesson will develop this truth.

A. Divine power (1:3)

READ: 2 Peter 1:3. **ASK:** Why are all excuses for not growing as a Christian unreasonable? (Question 8)

God's power is more than adequate for us to attain to the high ground of godly living. We are the recipients of inexhaustible resources. The words "all things" sum up this truth.

Life and godliness merge together in Christian experience (2 Pet. 1:3). A believer is divinely equipped to live a godly life, which is what the Christian life is all about. "Life" is the eternal life that we possess now, which means that we know God within a personal relationship with Him (John 17:3). Respect out of reverence for God is the meaning of "godliness," which all believers are expected to pursue (1 Tim. 4:7; 6:11). The moment we came to know God through Jesus Christ, He made His power available to us to live godly lives in fellowship with Him.

DISCUSS: What might be some clues that a person is trying to live a godly life based on his or her own power instead of God's power? (Question 9)

Peter explains that God called us to this experience (2 Pet. 1:3). This is God's salvation call to us (Rom. 8:30), and the purpose is for His own glory and virtue (2 Pet. 1:3). God's glory is the sum of all that He is, while His virtue is His moral goodness. God did not save us just for our spiritual well-being and ultimate Home-going to Heaven. He saved us solely for His own purpose and glory (Eph. 1:11, 12).

B. Precious promises (1:4)

God has also given His promises to us for His own glory and virtue. These promises are the greatest, for there are none greater. They are beyond our comprehension. They are precious.

READ: 2 Peter 1:4. **ASK:** Which of God's promises do you particularly appreciate as you seek to grow spiritually? (Question 10)

God's promises to us include all of God's provisions for our salvation and godly living. Paul wrote that we have neither seen nor heard, or even imagined, the things that God has prepared for us (1 Cor. 2:9). What God has promised makes His promises precious to us.

DISCUSS: Do believers generally value these promises? Why? Why not? (Question 11)

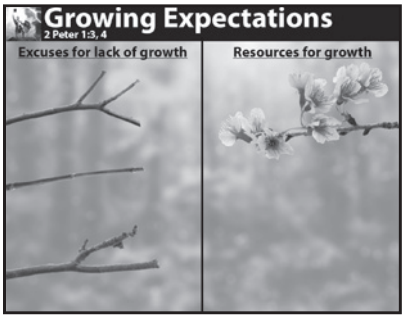
The purpose for these promises is that we might be sharers in His nature (2 Pet. 1:4). To share God's nature does not mean that we are perfect. We have not become, nor will we become, little gods. Neither will we be absorbed into the Godhead as if we evolve into better human beings. It does mean that believers share in certain attributes of God's character. Some of these attributes are, for example, mercy, kindness, long-suffering, and forbearance (Col. 3:12). As a result we are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This is not the end of the story though. At the rapture of the church, we will be conformed completely to Christ's likeness (Rom. 8:23–29). Can there be any doubt that these promises are great and precious promises?

Our participation in the divine nature is parallel to experiencing eternal life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The "all things" that God gives to us for godly living include sharing in some of His attributes.

This transforming experience involves a radical change from what we were to what we have become in Christ (v. 4). It began when we embraced Christ by faith and turned our backs on the moral pollution resident in the world. Man is a sinner by nature, and his inner illicit desires corrupt not only him personally but also the society in which he participates. The apostle John tells us that the lusts and pride of men belong only to the world and are antithetical to God (1 John 2:16). The issue at the heart of the matter is man's urge to satisfy his own desire rather than seeking to know and fulfill God's desires.

The false teachers with whom Peter takes issue in this letter have not fled from the moral corruption of the world (2 Pet. 2:20, 21). While they appear to have fled from the filthiness of the world, they eventually are snarled and overpowered by it. They are not partakers of the divine nature, and they have not really disengaged themselves from the world. Their situation illustrates Peter's decisive point (1:4). We began to share in God's nature only after we separated ourselves from the world's moral corruption. The participation and the separation in our spiritual transformation are inseparable. We are to continually flee the world's degeneracy. The moment we placed our trust in the promises of God and were spiritually renewed, we crossed the point of no return.

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 2. **DISCUSS:** What can you do to apply the resources for growth to your life? (Record learners' answers on the transparency.) (Question 12)



III. Fruit of Faith (2 Pet. 1:5–7)

God has equipped us fully and completely to be all and to do all that He expects us to be and to do. Belief and behavior are inseparable. Faith in God's promises generates a chain of internal and external changes in us. This is what participation in the divine nature is all about.

A. Faith first (1:5a)

READ: 2 Peter 1:5–7. **DISCUSS:** Why is faith first in Christian character qualities? (Question 13)

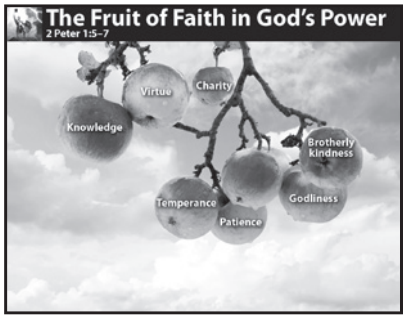
Peter now stresses the Christian's part in the outworking of his salvation. This is the meaning of "and beside this." We are to bring along the side of our faith in God those things consistent with godly living. We are to be in earnest about this. Every possible effort is to be put forth, which is the meaning of "giving all diligence." The massive resources of God's power and promises make this possible.

Peter's exhortation parallels that of the apostle Paul. Paul exhorts Christians to work out their salvation (Phil. 2:12, 13). The charge from both apostles is for Christians to live godly, not to obtain salvation, but because we are saved. Salvation is solely by God's grace and not due one iota to any human effort. We diligently implement our salvation in godly living and thereby realize the purpose for it.

Faith is both foundational and functional. Through the channel of faith, we receive God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9). Character development follows. Faith is a virtue itself, but it is also the root of all the other virtues (2 Pet. 1:5). Christians are to develop the character quality of trust in God.

B. Character qualities (1:5b–7)

Lists of Christian virtues are found elsewhere in Paul's writings (Rom. 5:3–5; 2 Cor. 6:4–10).



TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 3. As your cover each of the seven virtues in verses 5–7, add a brief definition of the character quality to the transparency near the appropriate apple.

Peter presents a list of Christian character qualities to be added to our faith in Christ.

These are virtues in which we grow in our Christian experience. These virtues together provide us with a sketch of a true Christian character (2 Pet. 1:5–7). There is not a logical flow to Peter's list, except that we must begin with faith. These virtues are not added one after another in progression. Peter's description is like that of a flower with its petals. He is rounding out a description of a Christian character. This is not a random selection; instead these are virtues to be embodied by us at all times. While being descriptive, Peter is also prescribing what ought to be true of us.

Peter mentions virtue itself after faith (2 Pet. 1:5b). Virtue is goodness and is an attribute of God (v. 3). When we behave in a virtuous manner, we reflect God's character.

The next character quality on Peter's list is knowledge (v. 5). Our knowledge of God comes from careful study and meditation on His Word. King David testifies that God's Word is like a shining light by providing him with direction in his life (Ps. 119:105). Adding knowledge is more than accumulating information bites. It is arranging our knowledge of God's Word in a meaningful way. This means that we claim His promises and obey His commands while worshiping, trusting, and relying on Him.

ASK: How should the virtue of knowledge affect the way we read and study the Bible? (Question 14)

Temperance follows knowledge on the list (2 Pet. 1:6). Temperance is self-control. The word was an athletic term denoting strict discipline. Athletes were expected to abstain from unwholesome food, drink, and sexual indulgence in preparation for their contests. Self-control for the believer is moderation with regard to good things (Phil. 4:5), as well as abstention in all circumstances from unwholesomeness (1 Cor. 6:18–20; 9:27). Temperance ranks alongside sobriety, righteousness, and holiness (Titus 1:8). We exercise self-control with God's provision of divine power for godly living.

ASK: What happens when we try to exercise self-control by our own power? (Question 15)

Peter adds patience next (2 Pet. 1:6). The word "patience" means "to remain under." Patience is perseverance. It is the character trait of persisting in faith while experiencing the severest of trials and suffering (Rom. 5:3, 4; James1:3, 4). Patience has its source in faith, because the Christian knows that God is in complete control of every situation (Rom. 8:28). He is assured also that God knows how to rescue His own from trials (2 Pet. 2:9). Patience produces in us a deep awareness of a Father God Whose wise and loving hand controls all that takes place in our lives. The experience of growing in patience is also growth in the knowledge of God.

ASK: How aware of you been of the connection between patience and trust in God? **ASK:** How does understanding the connection help you be patient in trials and sufferings? (Questions 16, 17)

Godliness follows next in the apostle's roster of virtues (2 Pet. 1:6). Godliness is respect and reverence toward God, which springs from a proper relationship with God (1 Tim. 4:8). It is devotion toward God, which results from faith in God (2 Pet. 1:5). It is more than simply being religious.

DISCUSS: What might be some evidences of reverence for God in a believer's life? (Question 18)

The last two character qualities in Peter's catalog express love (2 Pet. 1:7). "Philadelphia" is derived from the word for "brotherly kindness." This is the love that Christians express to each other as brothers in Christ. We are partakers of the divine nature together. The quality of our relationship is demonstrably different from any other human relationship experienced by men and women.

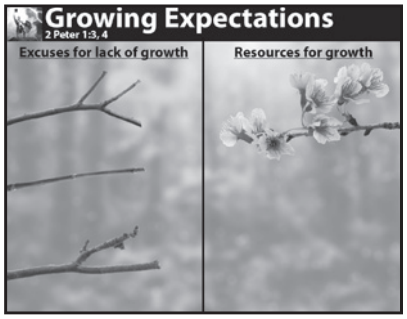
Love for our brothers in Christ is loyal love (2 Pet. 1:7). It entails bearing each other's burdens, sorrows, and difficulties (Gal. 6:1, 2). It means that we guard each other from the destructive power of gossip, prejudice, and narrowness, and the refusal to accept a believer for who he is in Christ.

DISCUSS: What do believers say about their relationship with God if they are fighting with one

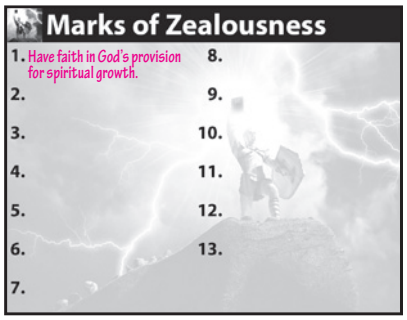
another and sinning against one another with their words? (Question 19)

Christian love is not restricted to other Christians (2 Pet. 1:7). Love is a debt that we owe to all men, even our enemies (Matt. 5:44). God models this for us because His love is not evoked by who we are, but by Who He is (John 3:16). So it is not that we are lovable, but instead that God is love. We, therefore, are to be marked by an indiscriminate and deliberate habit of loving those outside the Christian family circle.

Making It Personal



Use the case study for lesson 1 as desired.



Excuse Examination

Transparency: Display transparency 2 as a review. **Ask:** What excuses, if any, have you been using for a lack of spiritual growth? **Ask:** What specific truths in our passage for today will help you stop making excuses for not growing? **Ask:** What steps will you take to deepen your faith in God's provision for your spiritual growth? (Questions 20–22)

Praise to God

Ask: When was the last time you have praised God for the spiritual growth in your life? (Question 23) Take time in class to praise God for the provisions He has given to us to help us grow spiritually.

Review Transparency

Use transparency 1 to review the response for this lesson: Have faith in God's provision for spiritual growth.

Memory Verse

Distribute copies of the 2 Peter 1:3 verse card from the resource CD. Encourage the learners to memorize the verse.