

2 Peter 2:1-22 ~ Danger of False Teachers ~ Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do people today abuse their freedom?
2. In Verses 2:1-3, Peter speaks of clever false teachers, but what are they actually teaching? (2:3, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18)
3. In 2:1, what exactly does “destructive heresies” and “sudden destruction” mean?
4. What examples does Peter give of the power and love of God?
2:4 _____
2:5 _____
2:6 _____
2:7 _____
5. What effect did living among immoral people have upon Lot? (2:7-8) What effect does living and working among sinful people have upon you? How do you deal with such people? How should you deal with them?
6. How did Peter say that the Lord would deal with godly people? How about with wicked and unrighteous people? On who is he especially hard? (2:9-10)
7. Peter enlarges his colorful descriptions of these evil men in Verses 10-15. Are there people like this around today? How would you describe them?
8. How did the evil people of whom Peter wrote affect others? Who is most susceptible to the appeals of these evil men? (2:18)
9. What did such sinful men promise? To what were they slaves? (2:19)
10. How did Peter say a person could escape the corruption of the world? What about someone who has escaped and then gets tangled up again? (2:20-21)
11. Why and how could someone who has known the love of Christ return to the unrighteousness from which he or she had been rescued?
12. When are you most tempted to return to some sinful activity or attitude? Why? Are lustful desires still the strongest enticement? What ones? Why?
13. To what sorts of desires can we become *unknowingly* enslaved?

2 Peter 2:1-22 ~ Danger of False Teachers ~ Leader's Guide

1. In what ways do people today abuse their freedom?

2. In Verses 2:1-3, Peter speaks of clever false teachers, but what are they actually teaching? (2:3, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18)

Although Peter talks of destructive heresies or opinions, evil teaching, and destructive words, other than that they “deny the Master [Jesus]” (v. 1) and “promise freedom” (v. 19), Peter does not say what was being taught (except for “foolish boasting” or “bombastic nonsense” [REB] in Verse 18). Instead, he describes and attacks their *actions*, which, of course, is consistent with the idea that actions speak louder than words. Specifically, he says they are greedy (v. 3), follow twisted sexual desires (v. 10), indulge in evil pleasures (v. 13), commit adultery, lure others into sin, are greedy (v. 14), get money by doing wrong (v. 15), brag about themselves and use sexual desires to lure others into sin (v. 18).

3. In 2:1, what exactly does “destructive heresies” and “sudden destruction” mean?

“Destructive heresies” are divisive opinions or teachings that result in the moral and spiritual destruction of those who accept them.

“Sudden or swift) destruction” does not mean an immediate physical calamity, but sudden doom, whether at death or the Lord’s second coming. The word destruction essentially means complete ruin or separation from God. This eternal separation is the penalty of not believing in Jesus and the essence of hell.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 – ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting *destruction* and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power ...

Matthew 7:13 – Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to *destruction*, and many enter through it. Again, in this verse, “destruction” means separation from God in hell.

4. What examples does Peter give of the power and love of God?

2:4 Punished angels who possibly intermarried with human women (Gen 6:4) although it is more likely this refers to earlier angels who fell and became the devil, demons, and evil spirits

2:5 Destroyed all evil people but saved Noah, his sons, and their wives

2:6 Destroyed Sodom & Gomorrah. (Jewish commentators claim this was for lack of hospitality, concern and empathy for one’s fellow man, not homosexuality.)

2:7 Rescued Lot from destruction because he was opposed to wickedness

5. What effect did living among immoral people have upon Lot? (2:7-8) What effect does living and working among sinful people have upon you? How do

you deal with such people? How should you deal with them?

Peter says that Lot was sick of the shameful immorality [NLT] or distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men and he was tormented in his soul.

How Lot could be so distressed and how he could be called a “righteous man,” and yet offer to turn over his two daughters to the wicked townsmen to be sexually abused is difficult to understand apart from a knowledge of the code of honor of that day, which obliged a host to protect his guests in every situation and in every possible way. Presumably this was all part of God’s grand plan that we cannot know or understand. As it turned out, the angel visitors later led his wife and daughters to safety (Gen 19:16) so we see a bit of a parallel to the Lord’s testing of Abraham (Gen 22).

In a sense, living and working among sinful people is even more difficult today in light of Jesus’ command to love your enemies. It’s one thing to try and not let the behavior of evil people affect you, but quite another to love them. And this is agape love, i.e, not family love (storge), romantic love (eros), or brotherly love (phila), but love for humanity in which you get absolutely nothing in return.

6. How did Peter say that the Lord would deal with godly people? How about with wicked and unrighteous people? On who is he especially hard? (2:9-10)

The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and Peter said that was an example of what would happen to ungodly people, but he rescued Lot out of Sodom. “So you see,” Peter says in Verse 9, “the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment. ¹⁰ He is especially hard on those who follow their own twisted sexual desire, and who despise authority.” This suggests that there is a spectrum of punishment in hell just as there is a spectrum of reward in heaven. Those who will be punished the hardest are those who have given in to inordinate sexual indulgence, who are proud, boastful, arrogant, and who reject and hate the authority of God. An example of this is blaspheming of or scoffing at angels.

7. Peter enlarges his colorful descriptions of these evil men in Verses 10-15. Are there people like this around today? How would you describe them?

Peter says they are proud, arrogant, and they make fun of angels (v. 10). He says they are like dumb, brute, unthinking animals and they make fun of things they don’t understand (v. 12). They indulge in sexual and other evil pleasures in broad daylight, and they try to deceive you and be your friends (v. 13). They view every woman they see as a potential sexual partner; they lure other (unstable) people into sin with them; and they indulge their greed (v. 14). They follow idols and steal money using scams and cheating.

Are there people like this around today? Of course there are. Think of some that you have read about. How about some that you might actually know. When you think about it, you realize it’s not just big name crooks but everyday people—the guy who you call for a \$29 chimney cleaning who tells you that you need a \$350

repair or your chimney will collapse. And then there's Provincetown, Fire Island, and North Beach. Do they outnumber Christians? How many e-mails do you get every day of ransomware, malware, saying you've won something, or warning that an account of yours is about to expire?

8. How did the evil people of whom Peter wrote affect others? Who is most susceptible to the appeals of these evil men? (2:18)

Peter said these evil men bragged about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. Okay, most people don't like a braggart, but some kinds of bragging can certainly make one feel envious, which is the first step on the slippery slope of being lured back into a "lifestyle of deception."

Personal example: Years ago, I was doing travel writing part time. My reviews were well-written and honest. But as time went on I wasn't being offered any new assignments. An acquaintance who was doing very well in the business told me that no matter how bad the accommodations or food or activities were, he always wrote about it as though it was the greatest place on earth. Then the PR agencies love you and give you new assignments every week. So all you have to do is lie a little (or a lot). Tempting, very tempting. (I've never written another travel piece since 1996.)

Who is most susceptible? Peter says that with an appeal to the lustful (sexual) desires of human nature, evil people lure back those who have barely escaped from "a lifestyle of deception" [NLT] or "living the wrong kind of life" [CEV]. In describing the evil people, Peter has mentioned six of the ten commandments: taking the name of the Lord in vain, worshiping an idols (of money), adultery, theft, lying, and coveting (greed), but he zeroes in on sexual desire as being the one that will drag a new Christian back into his old sinful ways.

9. What did such sinful men promise? To what were they slaves? (2:19)

They promised freedom, probably from moral restraint. But the people who promise this freedom from bondage to rules and regulations are themselves slaves of depravity [NIV] or slaves of sin and corruption [NLT]. So freedom from law results in bondage to sin.

10. How did Peter say a person could escape the corruption of the world? What about someone who has escaped and then gets tangled up again? (2:20)

You can escape the corruption of the world simply by knowing and having faith in the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But if you then turn back to the ways of the world, Peter says you are worse off then before. This brings up the question of whether a saved person can lose his salvation, which seems to go against scripture (John 10:27-30, Romans 8:29-39).

John 10:27-30 – ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Thus, according to this view, the people described by Peter could not have been genuinely saved; their knowledge of the Lord and way of righteousness was not genuine.

Why are people who return to their evil ways worse off than others? Because they are now slaves of evil. If you do bad things because that's the way of the world, that's what your friends are doing, and you don't know any better, that's one thing. As Paul wrote in Romans 5:13, "sin is not counted where there is no law." If you then learn about the law and the love of God and turn from your sinful ways, that's a very good thing. But if after a while, you then turn your back on that and return to your sinful ways, that's really, really bad. As Peter says in Verse 21, "It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life."

11. Why and how could someone who has known the love of Christ return to the unrighteousness from which he or she had been rescued?

12. When are you most tempted to return to some sinful activity or attitude? Why? Are lustful desires still the strongest enticement? What ones? Why?

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