

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER –

CHAPTER THREE

Peter's letter could be described as a simple explanation of what it means to be born again,(1:1-12) followed by a series of 'therefores' which cover every aspect of life. Overshadowing Peter's presentation of the gospel is the threat of persecution. As he considers the gospel's outworking it is always in the face of present trouble and worse to come. The first 'therefore',(1:13-25) is about our relationship with God, the way we think about our Father. The second 'therefore',(2:1-10) has to do with how we think about each other as His people, His house. The way we think determines the way we are and behave. Obedience to the truth will result in a 'sincere love of the brethren'(1:22). This is also the secret of how we behave before outsiders,(2:11,12) and how we handle the difficult demands of heathen governments.(2:13-17)

The next group asked to consider this 'therefore' are servants.(2:18-25) More than half the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, others again were hired servants. For them suffering was happening already. There were no labour or employment laws to protect this great mass of under-privileged people. Among them the gospel of Jesus Christ was enthusiastically received; they knew they had nothing to lose. Peter urges them to respond to the gospel and so demonstrate a Christ-likeness even with masters who are unreasonable.

In chapter three, the logic of this 'therefore' of the gospel is extended to other groups of people who are asked to consider how being born again will work out in their special circumstances. Before dividing chapter three, review your titles for the sections of chapters one and two and see what else God has shown you which may deepen your appreciation of Peter's message. My suggestions for the sections of chapter three are as follows, but as always if you prefer a different breakdown that is fine. There is no right answer. How about - verses 1-6; 7; 8-12; 13-17; 18-22?

Section 1 - verses 1-6

Q.1 What will a 'sincere love',(1:22) look like in the behaviour of a wife? What does being submissive actually mean?(Eph,5:21) Does it mean letting someone else be the boss? Suppose the husband is not himself a believer? What then can a wife do to love sincerely? What does the gospel mean to those who are suffering at home?

Q.2 Try to describe in practical terms how you would see a wife's behaviour winning her husband? Does Peter forbid wearing make-up, jewellery and attractive clothes? If you are a woman explain how you would see his words working in real life? If you are a man what would you want of a wife that would really remind you of the Lord Jesus Christ even if you had strayed somewhat from trusting Him?

Q.3 When did Sarah call Abraham 'Lord'?(Gen.18:12) What were the circumstances at the time? Why is it surprising to see Peter using such an example of submission? How did she illustrate the meaning of I Cor.7:1-4?

Section 2 - verse 7

Q.4 Why does Peter use the word 'likewise'? In what way is he really saying exactly the same to husbands as he has already said to wives? How as men can we understand our wives better? How as a woman would you want to be better understood?

Q.5 In what sense are women 'weaker vessels'? Are they mentally or spiritually weaker? Does Gen.3:16 help to explain this phrase? How are we to love our wives fervently,(1:22) in the light of their weakness?

Q.6 Why are we to 'honour' our wives? How are we to do that? Again what does it mean in practical terms? How will our prayers be hindered if we fail to honour our wives? How for example will this work out for those in Christian ministry?

Section 3 - verses 8-12

Q.7 What does Peter say should be the attitude that sums up all our relationships? Take his list and apply it one by one to the three groups to whom he has just spoken, servants, wives, and husbands. Ask yourself each time, how would such an attitude change the work place and the home? How are we ourselves blessed by such an attitude? How can our 'inheritance' change us from I Pet.2:1 to 3:8,9?

Q.8 To illustrate his promise, Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-16. When you look this Psalm up what do you find to be the context of this quote? What are the conditions for God to bless us? In what way does He bless us? Is Peter promising that we will escape problems such as persecution?

Section 4 - verses 13-17

Q.9 If we can handle problems at home, how are we now ready to face pressures in the world outside? Look up Peter's quote from Isa.8:12. What is the real reason we give in to persecution? How can we be blessed through persecution? Where does our response to persecution begin? What does verse 15 mean in practice? How do we so easily miss the mark in response to an attack on what we believe?

Q.10 How may we as Christians suffer for doing what is wrong? Give examples of how we make this kind of mistake and why it undermines our witness?

Section 5 - verses 18-22

Q.11 How was Jesus' death an example of the principles Peter has just discussed? What did His death accomplish for us? How does His example help us to handle ridicule?

Q.12 What happened to Jesus between His death and resurrection? What other clues can we find as to what verses 19 and 20 actually mean?(Gen.6:1-7) Are there still 'spirits in prison' today? What point would there be in what is described here? What might this story have to do with persecution?

Q.13 What spiritual picture is represented to us in the ark? How does the life of Noah show us how to witness effectively under pressure?