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Introduction to Second Peter

“Lord come quickly!”

I often hear this phrase used after tragedies. Mass shootings, natural disasters, and heartbreaks occur, and people respond with the phrase, “Lord come quickly.” I understand the sentiment. Life is hard, and we just want to be with Jesus in a place with no pain, suffering, death, or tears. But on a certain level, that phrase has always bothered me. I understand wanting to be with Jesus, but if He came “quickly,” how many of your friends and family would be lost? How many people who are honestly seeking Jesus would never find Him? Of course we should be looking forward to heaven, but what about now?

When Peter wrote his first letter, he was trying to encourage his persecuted readers not to lose hope. He reminded them they had a place reserved for them in heaven that the pain of this world cannot affect. His second letter has a different tone and begs the question, “What about now?” The truth is, sometimes we all can be forgetful of even the most basic things. This appears to have happened Peter’s audience, so he gives them several reminders about how we should be living, learning, and serving NOW.
About the Author

Glenn began his ministry journey in 1992 and has preached throughout the country. He currently lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, where he is working with a group of Christians to plant three new Churches of Christ in St. John’s County. The first of these launched in early 2019. Glenn has a BA in Biblical Studies and a Master of Ministry from Heritage Christian University. He has authored seven other “FLEX” studies, as well as books on leadership and church growth. He also serves as a mentor to young ministers and as a church consultant. He and his wife Regina have been married since 1991 and have been blessed with four sons and two grandkids.
Introduction to Jude

Have you ever sat down to write a letter or an email, and by the time you finished it was something completely different than what you originally intended? Jude says early in his letter that he intended to write to his recipients about “our common salvation.” Yet his priority shifted to encourage faithful people to defend God’s will while remembering that truth will triumph at the Judgment. The shift probably was a result of false teaching—which likely included early forms of Gnosticism and Docetism—and scoffing regarding the Lord’s Second Coming. Although written with focus and passion, this is not the book Jude wanted to write. Instead of focusing on future salvation, he, like Peter, asks the question, “What about now?”

His use of religious literature written between the testaments and his use of the Old Testament examples indicate he was writing to a Jewish audience. Furthermore, they seem to be a group who knew him personally. In a brief writing, Jude enlightens, encourages, warns, confronts, and reminds his friends of the power of the faith in Jesus. He wants his brethren to be equipped to see false doctrines and understand the hearts of those who had strayed from the faith.
About the Author

James Farris works with the University City Church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida. He is a 1998 graduate of Heritage Christian University with a bachelor’s degree in Bible and has obtained a master’s in biblical ministry from Amridge University. He is the author of several books and is involved in mission work for the Island of Bequia off the coast of Saint Vincent in the southern Caribbean. Since 1992 James has preached in full-time ministry roles in Texas, Tennessee, Alabama and Florida. He and his wife Priscilla have been married since 1993 and have five sons.
Lesson 1
BE PARTAKERS
(We have everything we need)
2 Peter 1:1-4

Key Verses
Jesus has the power of God, by which he has given us everything we need to live and to serve God. We have these things because we know him. Jesus called us by his glory and goodness.
(2 Peter 1:1-4)

WARM UP

Have you ever felt in over your head? When I was a teenager, I went to the beach with a friend. He was pretty good at surfing, even though he hadn’t been doing it for long. He was surfing, and I was sitting on the beach (probably listening to the newest Stryper cassette on my boom box) when he walked up to me with his surfboard and said, “Hey man, you wanna give it a try?” Since I was from Florida, it would have been just downright embarrassing if I hadn’t known how to surf, so I said “yes.” He tried to give me some advice, but I played it off as if I had done this before. I quickly realized it was much harder than I had thought. The waves were rough. When I tried to stand up on the board, I went one way, the board went the other, and the bungee cord in between us pulled us back together in a most violent manner. I still have a dent in my forehead that proves I once tried to surf. Notice I said “once.” I was obviously in over my head.
I’ve been in local church ministry for 25 years. I’ve always worked with established churches. When God put it on my heart to start a new church of Christ in the county where I live, I didn’t think it would be a problem. After all, I’ve been a minister for 25 years. It would have been downright embarrassing if I hadn’t known how to start a church. People tried to give me advice, but I played it off as if I had done this before. I quickly realized it was much harder than I had thought. The waves were rough! Fundraising seemed impossible, we couldn’t find an affordable place to meet, and I quickly realized that being a “preacher” and a “church planter” were two very different things. I was obviously in over my head.

I went to a church planting conference in Indiana because I knew I needed some tools and encouragement. When I got on the plane I was discouraged and was honestly thinking about throwing in the towel. However, I walked away from that conference with a renewed sense of purpose and confidence. I realized that we can do this! I also had a greater understanding of why we were doing this.

WORK OUT

Why do you do what you do? Maybe you are an elder, deacon, minister, Bible class teacher, missionary, or church planter. Why do you do it? I’m sure there are several different answers to this question, but I really want you to close this book for a moment and think about it for 60 seconds… seriously, close the book…

I’m sure you came up with some great answers. Your answers may have had to do with your calling and your giftedness. Your answers may have had more to do with a feeling of responsibility or obligation. And some are so touched by the grace of God that they can’t help but do what they do. All those reasons are great reasons. But Peter gives us another reason…
Think about these statements from the first four verses of Peter’s second letter:

• “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness…”
• “has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises…”
• “so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature.”

The same “divine power” that spoke this earth into existence and brought you into existence. The power that created the sound of the crashing waves on the beach and the smell of the cool, clean air at the top of a mountain peak. The same power has given us EVERY-THING WE NEED to fulfill His calling! So why do we do what we do? Simple. BECAUSE WE CAN! When we use “everything He has granted us” we become “partakers of the divine nature.”

**Partakers of the Divine Nature**

We understand that we were created by God. But do you understand that YOU were created by God? That God thought you up? That the strands of your DNA were meticulously created by our Creator? And the only person with your DNA is you? And in that DNA is everything you need to be a partaker of HIS divine nature? And your DNA doesn’t change! Everything we need to be successful in endeavors that lead to God’s greater glory have been with us since the day we were born!¹

Jordan Raynor wrote a wonderful book entitled “Called to Create.” In the first chapter he makes an interesting observation. He reminds us that we are created in the image of God, and that God is a creator. So, if we are created in His image, we are creators, too! People create through art, music, quilting, crafting, woodworking, writing, cooking, inventing, etc. And one of God’s first instructions to Adam was to be “fruitful and multiply.” Raynor points out that this is not just a call to “pro-create” but to “co-create!”²
This is what it means to be a partaker of the divine nature! God is calling us to reveal His character. My agenda in starting a new church of Christ should not be to fill a building, but to love people by revealing to them the very character of God through my actions. And you don't have to hold a special degree from a special school to be a “partaker of the divine nature.” The Great Commission is not a call to change your location or vocation, but to live your purpose to the glory of God. And to fulfill that purpose, we have…

**Everything We Need**

All of us have different gifts and talents that God embedded in our DNA. But here's the good news: the ones you have are the ones you need to fulfill His purpose. In Romans 12:3-8, Paul tells Christians that God gave us all different gifts and functions. He then lists several gifts, including preaching, teaching, leading, and giving. This is by no means an exhaustive list. The point Paul tries to make is we have “everything we need” to bring glory and honor to God.

Here's the point: God does not call you to do something He will not equip you to do. As my late friend Arnelious Crenshaw once told me, “God will never put something on your heart to accomplish, without putting something in your hand to accomplish it with.” He believed, along with Paul and Peter, that “God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19 NIV). So here is the good news: I’m not in over my head! And neither are you!

**COOL DOWN**

A father invited his children and grandchildren to go on a large family vacation. He planned every detail. As soon as they arrived at the destination, the family started saying what they wanted to do on their vacation. The children took over because the grandchildren
were wanting to do different things. As a result, there was arguing, agendas, and aggravation. Finally, as the arguing escalated during breakfast on the second day, one of the children shouted, “Why did you bring us on this vacation anyway? We just want to go home!” The father calmly replied, “We can do that, but before we do, everyone wash up from breakfast and follow me.” When they started following the father, everybody began to enjoy the vacation and recognize that he planned it with every one of them in mind. It was a beautiful journey when they became partakers of the father’s vision.

We have everything we need to be partaker of the divine nature. It does not mean it won’t be difficult at times. But we must invite God to be a part of this journey, because it is the Father’s journey, not ours. He created the journey for us and us for the journey. And furthermore, He gave us “everything we need” to take this journey with Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time you were in over your head in your spiritual journey?
2. How did you initially answer the question, “Why do you do what you do?”
3. Discuss Raynor’s statement that God’s call to be fruitful and multiply is not just a call to “pro-create,” but to “co-create.”
4. Discuss what it means to be a “Partaker of the Divine Nature.”
5. What is your talent that God put in your very DNA to use to His glory? Have you been using it for His purposes?
6. In what way did the story of the father taking his family on vacation remind you of the church?