The Shorter Letters

First and Second Peter
First, Second and Third John
Jude

By Jeff S. Smith
Printing Instructions

1. Download the booklet and open it in Adobe Reader.
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8. How do we become their fellow workers for the truth?

9. How does this relate to Second John 9-11?

10. (Third John 9-10) What prompted Diotrephes to reject John’s letter?

11. How far had he gone?

12. (Third John 11-13) Had Diotrephes truly “seen God”?

13. Demetrius’s good testimony came not only from men but also from what thing itself?

First and Second Letters of Peter
Authorship: Peter, A.D. 63-67

Simon Peter identifies himself as the author of the two letters that have come to bear his name. In addition, the tiny letter of Jude bears an uncanny, but logical resemblance to the flow of Second Peter, but was evidently written by one of the Lord’s fleshly brothers, Judas, or Jude.

Peter’s letters were likely written around A.D. 64 from the city of Rome, called Babylon in the letter possibly to disguise the source (5:13). Emperor Nero was just then beginning his persecution of the church and uninspired historians contend that Peter would lose his life as a result. Silvanus and Mark were with Peter, and the latter association may have had something to do with the second canonical gospel account.

The purpose of First Peter is to communicate the commands of God to his servants. Peter vividly recalls Jesus’s death and teaches about leadership and perseverance. The apostle wrote to settle them in the midst of bewildering persecution. His guidance is practical and temperate. Peter urges them to stand firm in their faith based on the knowledge of salvation and the example set by Jesus.

The purpose of Second Peter is to deal with some problems, including false teaching and a faltering trust that Jesus was coming back because nearly 35 years had already passed. It is little wonder that the world has grown so lax now that nearly 2000 years have come and gone.

Letter of Jude
Authorship: Jude, A.D. 65

Second Peter 2:1-3:4 appears to quote almost word for word from Jude 4-19, so that both letters show common inspiration and purpose. Jude describes the character of the wicked instructors in trying to train his brethren to recognize them. He tells his readers how to deal with error and how to protect their own from its destructive course.

Jude was written during the last half of the first century when itinerant false prophets were troubling the churches with their errors. Jude exposes their greed, pride and selfishness in an attempt to separate the true saints from their influence.
The First, Second and Third Letters of John
Authorship: John the Apostle, A.D. 85-95

The apostle John is credited with writing these three letters, as well as a gospel account and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Johannine authorship has been settled among men since at least the second century although the writer does not overtly identify himself. John, “the elder” in these letters, appears to be the last surviving apostle and these letters were likely written after the church had come to maturity – probably between A.D. 85 and 95. All three letters share a similar style with each other and with the gospel clearly attributed to John. Also, apostolic authority is in clear evidence.

The first letter, the longest, is not addressed to anyone in particular, but the other two, while must shorter are respectively addressed to “the elect lady” and the beloved Gaius. The latter two are obviously of a much more personal nature than First John, but all three letters are valuable in regulating individual and church action.

First John appears to be a doctrinal treatise sent to a group of Christians like those in Revelation, troubled both by incessant persecution and insidious false doctrine. While false teachers are the focus of First and Second John, a false brother is at the heart of the third letter.

Without naming them, the Gnostics seem to be the target of John’s ire in the first letter. They were guilty of teaching the early church that Christ could not have come in in sinful flesh and that any iniquity committed in the body would have no effect on the spirit. The result of was skepticism about the cross and tolerance of wicked behavior.

The more personal letters – Second and Third John – are words of encouragement to brethren beloved of John. The apostle is concerned with the children of the elect lady – possibly a euphemism for a local church and its members. Third John addresses division in the church where Gaius worshiped.

Lesson 13: Second and Third John
Second John 1-13 and Third John 1-14

1. (Second John 1-3) What is the bond of love that ties John to the lady and her children and to all believers? Should this still be true of us today. Answer: It is knowledge of the truth.

2. In a few words each, define grace, mercy and peace as they relate to the faith.
   - grace is God’s unmerited favor visited upon us by offering his son to atone for our sins
   - mercy is the extension of God’s forgiveness on the penitent, yet still undeserving
   - peace is the resultant relationship between man and God when sin has been obliterated as an obstacle.

3. (Second John 4-6) We are thrilled when our children begin to walk and here John is thrilled for what reason? Answer: God’s little children have matured and are walking in faith and obedience.

4. What is love, according to verse 6? What does it mean “to walk” in this setting? Answer: That we walk according to his commandments. The walk suggests a habitual way of life, rather than an occasional adventure.

5. (Second John 7-13) What is said of one who goes beyond God’s word? How should we treat such a one? Answer: He no longer has God and we should not share in his evil, by aiding him.

6. (Third John 1-4) How does a soul prosper? Answer: A soul prospers when its owner lays up treasure in heaven.

7. (Third John 5-8) What one word could describe John’s command in verse 5? What two classes are to be its recipients?
Lesson 1: Salvation in Christ Jesus
First Peter 1:1-2:10

1. (1:1-2) Verse 2 shows us the way in which man is saved or chosen by God. Election is according to what? Election is by what means? Does this verse teach “faith only” is required for salvation? Explain.

2. (1:3-12) Compare verse 3 to First Corinthians 15:14. What happens to modern theologians who assert that Jesus’s resurrection is a myth or a delusion?

3. What is this inheritance and when will one fully grasp it?

4. What effect do trials have on the faith of a Christian, according to verse 7?

5. (1:13-21) List and explain three commands in verse 13:
   a. 
   b. 
   c.

9. Consider Hebrews 10:32-39. What will become of a saint that recants his faith for some reason?

10. (5:14-17) One stipulation on prayer is noted here. What is that condition? What things would that eliminate?

11. What should one do for a brother who is falling into some sinful pursuit, such as gambling, drinking or forsaking the assembling of the saints?

12. The “sin leading to death” seems to have an attachment to a complete jettisoning of one’s faith, rather than the types of things mentioned in question 11 (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6). May we, “according to God’s will” pray that someone be saved without his having faith or remaining faithful?

13. (5:18-21) Under whose influence should the saint be? Under whose sway is the world?
Lesson 12: Faith in Jesus
First John 5:1-21

1. (5:1-5) How are we begotten as children of God?
   Answer: By believing that Jesus is the Christ. One is saved by grace through faith and faith causes us to trust and obey Jesus, in confession and conversion.

2. Does John mean to say that we need to do nothing to be pleasing to God and justified in his sight (consider verses 2-3)?
   Answer: Obviously not. Verses 2-3 enjoin full obedience to God’s every command upon us.

3. Is God’s command to not forsake the assembling of the saints burdensome to you? What would it reveal about one’s faith if assembling became a burden?
   Answer: No, but to many it is a burden, and their faith is shaky.

4. Two great and compatible ideas are entwined in this short passage. One is stated at the very end of verse 4 and the other is stated in verse 3. What are they?
   Answer: Faith and obedience.

5. (5:6-13) How did Jesus come “by water”?
   Answer: He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness.

6. What does John say of the relationship between the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit?
   Answer: The three are one – in purpose, nature and character.

7. What three witnesses does John call?
   Answer: The Spirit (inspiration of the word, working of miracles in former days of continuing revelation), water (Jesus’s example in immersion), and his blood (his offering for our sins).

8. According to verse 13, why did John write this letter?
Lesson 2: Relationships in Christ Jesus
First Peter 2:11-3:12

1. (2:11-12) The Greek word translated fleshly “lusts” (ἐπιθυμίας, James 1:14) in verse 11 is the word used for desires and so is broader than the English might indicate. A list of such offenses appears in Galatians 5:19-21. What does Paul indicate is the end of those soldiers and pilgrims who do not abstain?

2. (2:13-17) There were apparently some who, in becoming Christians, believed that they were no longer obligated to obey civil law. Paul wrote about the problem and now Peter meets it. What is his teaching here and how does it apply? Are there any limits?

3. (2:18-25) What is the social gospel? Are verses 18-19 an indication that the social gospel was in use by the apostles in the first century? Does this indicate the approval by the Holy Spirit of the social gospel?

4. What should we do when unbelievers make fun of us – fire back with vitriolic ferocity or something else? What?

5. Jesus once looked with compassion on the masses of people for they were like sheep going astray. How is the world still like this? How shall we find them a shepherd?
6. (3:1-6) What should be a major concern of every sister whose husband is not a Christian? How can this be accomplished?

Answer: She should take care to be a godly wife to him, though he is not always following Ephesians chapter 5 as she is. She should do so with the abiding hope that he will be won by her chastity and seek to know what makes her so special.

7. Whom does God judge more attractive: a beauty queen with a wicked heart or a faded woman with a precious spirit?

Answer: God judges as every man should; he looks inwardly. Young men who marry for looks and despite a dearth of inner quality are left in sorrow when twenty years later the outer features are tarnished and still nothing is within.

8. (3:7) Husbands are given two commands. Complete these statements and then expound upon each one.

• dwell with them with …

• giving honor to the wife as the weaker vessel as being ...

9. (3:8-12) Peter moves beyond the slave and domestic relationships to that in the church. One phrase sticks out in verse 8: “love as brothers.” What will that do in a church?

Answer: We will always be there for a brother and we will not seek to attack and devour each other.

10. What should be our response when a brother attacks us?

Answer: Return blessing and not reviling.

Lesson 11: Discernment and Love
First John 4:1-21

1. (4:1-6) How do we know that any prophet or preacher is teaching truth? (Compare to Acts 17:11 and First Thessalonians 5:21)

Answer: We test what is said against the scriptures to be certain, holding what is right and rejecting what is not.

2. The tests that John prescribes in this passage seem to have interest in exposing Gnostic false teachers. According to verse 2, how could these disciples test a suspected Gnostic?

Answer: By asking him if Jesus came in the flesh.

3. A few years ago, bold headlines were printed in the supermarket tabloids that suggested the “Antichrist is in the world.” Is such a thing really so shocking? Explain.

Answer: John knew the Antichrist was in the world even 1900 years ago. The Antichrist, then, is not any person or even any singular false movement, but a spirit of deceptive apostasy: something against Jesus.

4. Of the false teachers, working against Christ, though claiming to labor for him, John says, “the world hears them.” Why does the world listen especially to such weak teaching?

Answer: People satisfied with being worldly will welcome a message that tolerates their sin but makes them feel righteous simultaneously. Religions that serve the worldly man will be very popular with worldly people.

5. Distinguishing between the spirits of God and error is dependent upon one basic thing. What do the rest do while God’s children pay attention to his word and authority?

Answer: The rest trample on God’s word.
6. How do Christians sin after Cain’s example (verse 15)?

7. (3:16-24) What act of Jesus is mentioned in verse 16 and what should that example lead us to do?

8. Besides death, what might this cause us to do for a brother?

9. Why isn’t enough to talk about our good intentions and hope that he finds help from someone, somewhere?

10. According to verse 19, what does this do for our own souls and consciences?

11. How do we abide, or live, in Jesus?
Lesson 10: Who Are God’s Children?
First John 3:1-24

1. (3:1-3) John notes two reasons that Christians should be encouraged to live humble and holy lives. The first has to do with the present and our relationship to the Lord. The second deals with the future. What are these two reasons?

2. (3:4-9) How does John define sin? Does a transgression have to be of a certain magnitude before it is termed “sin”? Explain.

3. The concept inherent in verses 6-9 is that this one is practicing sin or making it a habit. John does not teach that Christians will be sinlessly perfect, but that he will not abide in any sin. What does John call one who lives in sin (verse 8)?

4. (3:10-15) According to verse 10, what should our habit be instead?

5. People in the world sometimes despise Christians, just as Cain despised Abel. Sometimes, one Christian loathes a brother or sister for the same reason. According to verse 12, what is that reason?

7. (4:7-11) What degree of love should brethren have for one another? Could rebuke be included in this type of love (Matthew 18)? Why or why not?

8. Why would one conceal his abilities and not use them in God’s service? Compare this passage to Matthew 25:14-30.

9. When we choose to speak on God’s behalf, what message should we utter? Exclusively?

10. (4:12-19) When the day ends and we have served Jesus while being mocked and ridiculed, what should our attitude be?

11. What four occupations are prohibited in verse 15? Which one might seem ill-placed to some?

12. Verse 17 presents a rhetorical question. “What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God”?

Answer:

- revelries riotous parties, invading worship
drinking parties social drinking
abominable idolatries materialism, Catholicism

Answer:

- abominable idolatries
- drinking parties social drinking
- revelries riotous parties, invading worship

Answer:

- abominable idolatries
- drinking parties social drinking
- revelries riotous parties, invading worship
8. What does obeying the commands of God perfect in a Christian, according to verse 5?

Answer: Love.

9. (2:7-11) What could cause a person who claims to walk in the light to be in darkness?

Answer: Hating a brother and walking in blindness and sin.

10. (2:12-17) Compare verse 15 with James 4:4. What does love of worldly things do to man’s relationship with God?

Answer: It puts him at enmity with God if he loves it more than Him.

11. Give an example of the three categories of worldliness:

- lust of the flesh:
  - illicit sexual desire (David)
- lust of the eyes:
  - greed and covetousness (Achan)
- pride of life:
  - boasting and desire to have preeminence (Diotrephes)

12. (2:18-25) John writes here to protect them from the Gnostic doctrines about Jesus and sin. According to verse 20, what should be used to guard their faith from antichrists? According to verse 24, what is one avenue that this anointing takes in getting to man?

Answer: The anointing of the Holy Spirit is obviously knowledge, obtained from hearing (verse 24) and keeping the word of God that the Spirit revealed.

13. (2:26-29) If verse 28 is true instruction, what would become of a Christian that did not abide in Jesus when He returns?

Answer: He could have no confidence and would be ashamed.

Lesson 4: Community of Christ Jesus
First Peter 5:1-14

1. (5:1-4) Peter presents himself as an elder in verse 1. What was one family requirement to be an elder, according to First Timothy 3:2? How do we know that Peter qualified (Matthew 8:14-15)?

2. What is the elder to do for the flock of God?

3. What is a limitation on an elder’s authority in verse 2?

4. Who is Chief Shepherd? What is his relation to a Cardinal or Pope?

5. (5:5-11) Two commands in verse 5 go hand-in-hand and are the cure for most of our petty non-doctrinal problems. What are they?
6. What does it mean to be vigilant?

   Answer: A saint should always be watchful for things that will destroy his soul.

7. Which of these are enemies of vigilance?

   a. intoxication  
   b. apathy  
   c. lack of assembly  
   d. indifference  
   e. lack of study  
   f. lack of prayer

8. (5:12-14) By whom did Peter send this letter?

   Answer: Silas.

Lesson 9: Walking in the Light
First John 1:1-2:29

1. (1:1-4) Who is “the Word of life”? Cite scripture from another of John’s writings to support this.

2. (1:5-10) Referring to verse 5, is there any cause to blame God for tragedies or sorrows that befall us? Explain.

3. What is the case if we claim to be Christians but make a practice of doing sinful things? Why won’t God maintain fellowship with us anyway?

4. Describe the difference between sinning and walking in sin.

5. Verse 7 said that Jesus’s blood cleanses us from all sin. What condition of forgiveness does verse 9 describe?

6. (2:1-2) This passage shows Jesus in two similar roles. What are they and what do they mean?

7. (2:3-6) How can we be certain that we truly know the Lord? Compare to Matthew 7:21-23 to complete your answer.
8. In pronouncing their woe, Jude accuses them of three symbolic sins:

- In whose way have they gone?  Cain's
- In whose error have they run greedily?  Balaam's
- In whose rebellion have they perished?  Korah's

9. (12-15) What is the relative worth of the presence and instruction of such people?

10. (16-19) What device do they use to gain advantage over some people?

11. (20-23) Jude’s prescription is fourfold. What is it?

   a. edification
   b. prayer
   c. love of God
   d. wait for Jesus

12. How do we go about trying to rescue those that can be saved?

   Answer: We must try to help all, but be careful not to be defiled ourselves by the error.


   Answer: God, our Savior, will keep us if we remain in his love.

Lesson 5: Increase in Faith
Second Peter 1:1-21

1. (1:1-4) What percentage of “things that pertain to life and godliness” has God given to us through Jesus and his word? What would be the purpose of continuing revelation today?

2. Does partaking of the divine nature entail becoming gods or becoming like God? Refer to First Peter 1:13-16 to complete your answer.

3. (1:5-11) Define the following terms found in this passage:
   a. faith
   b. virtue
   c. knowledge
   d. self-control
   e. perseverance
   f. godliness
   g. brotherly kindness
4. Without these attributes, the saint will find himself in what state concerning his knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Answer: He will be barren and unfruitful.

5. Is it possible to be called a Christian and not truly know Christ? Support your answer with scripture.

Answer: Yes, Matthew 7 shows people who did wonders in his sight but did not obey Jesus and First Corinthians 13 shows great things absent of love that do not save.

6. Does man have any responsibility at all in effecting his salvation?

Answer: Yes, he must be diligent in making his election certain and entering heaven in the end.

7. (1:12-15) What does Peter mean by being “in this tabernacle” or tent in verse 13?

Answer: He is now alive but foresees his death coming soon.

8. Why is Peter writing these things? Does this imply that they were to continue to stand after his demise?

Answer: He was setting these matters in writing that they could consult them even after he was gone. They would always be scripture and in effect.

9. (1:16-21) What past event does Peter reference in verses 16-18? Where is it found in the Bible?

Answer: Peter refers to seeing Jesus transfigured on the mount in Matthew 17:1-5.

10. What is the origin of Scripture? Refer to Second Timothy 3:16 to complete your answer.

Answer: Scripture is God-breathed into men who speak on His authority as the Holy Spirit moves them.

11. According to Deuteronomy 18:20-22, what is the test of a prophet?

Answer: If the thing he predicts does not come to pass, he is false.
7. What does Peter say will become of the earth when Jesus returns?

Answer: The heavens will pass away, the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth and its works will be burned up, all these things will be dissolved.

8. Even judging by all this destruction, is this a day that we should want to hasten? Why? Why don’t some people want to hasten it?

Answer: Most definitely, for it is the first day of eternity. Some, however, are not ready and are not ready to get ready.

9. (3:14-16) How does Peter describe our effort in being found acceptable by Jesus?

Answer: It must be diligent.

10. How did Peter characterize Paul’s writings?

Answer: Peter called them Scripture.

11. What do the ignorant and the unstable do with God’s word?

Answer: They are apt to twist the scriptures to their own destruction, even causing their hearers to suffer loss.

12. (3:17-18) Peter has warned his readers about apostasy and the error of the wicked. What two things must they now do?

Answer: We must beware lest we fall from our own steadfastness and we must grow in grace and knowledge.

Lesson 6: Beware False Teachers
Second Peter 2:1-22

1. (2:1-3) How are many destructive heresies first introduced, according to Peter in verse 1?

2. Since Peter says that some false teachers will go so far as to deny Jesus, does it follow that only a small and insignificant number will fall away?

3. What is a root cause of false teaching, according to verse 3?

4. (2:4-11) What three populations does Peter reference as proof that God will condemn the false teacher?
   a. 
   b. 
   c.

5. What is the point of these three references, according to verse 9?

6. This chapter lists dozens of attributes of false teachers. Must a teacher possess every one of them to be a false teacher?
Lesson 7: Jesus is Coming
Second Peter 3:1-18

1. (3:1-9) Of what apostolic teaching do the scoffers make light? What is their reasoning?

2. How could such reasoning infect the heart of a Christian?

3. To what event does Peter direct their minds to disprove their reasoning as faulty?

4. Will the earth be destroyed by water again? What Genesis passage proves this also?

5. What is part of the reason God has not destroyed the world yet, according to verse 9 (see also Romans 2:1-11)?

6. (3:10-13) How much notice from warning signs or other means will be given to us so that we can begin preparing for Jesus’s return (cf. Matthew 24:36, First Thessalonians 5:1-11)?

7. (2:12-17) According to verse 14, what type of souls are susceptible to the allure of error? What conditions might lead to this type of soul?

8. What is the way of Balaam (Numbers 22-24; Jude 11, Revelation 2:14)?

9. (2:18-22) What is the promise that false teachers make, according to verse 19? What could this entail?

10. What is said of a Christian who returns to the world?

11. What two animals are used as examples of this suicidal attitude among some saints?