Before you read the letters from Peter, take a few minutes to recall who he was: What was his position in the Church? What particular experiences did he have with the Savior? What might he have learned from those experiences? How does that background inform these letters?

Few scholars believe that 1 and 2 Peter were written by Peter himself. The main reason is that the language of the letters is so thoroughly imbued with Hellenistic (Greek) terms and rhetoric, something improbable from someone who had been a Hebrew fisherman. But many scholars think that the author of the two letters could have been a secretary or companion to Peter, someone who knew Peter’s teachings well enough to teach them to others but had a Greek education. In that case, the letters (especially 1 Peter) are more like contemporary collections of prophetic sermons put together by those who knew Peter and had access to the documents. In any case, though the letters might not have actually been written by the Apostle Peter, they appear to represent his teachings.

If Jude (the same name as Judas) is the brother of James, presumably the author of the book of James, and James is, as tradition says, the brother of the Lord, then Jude is also the brother of the Lord. Why doesn’t he say so when he introduces himself?
These study questions will focus on 2 Peter 1:2–11 because those verses are so important to the teachings of the restoration.

2 Peter 1

**Verse 2:** Peter asks a blessing on those to whom he is writing, namely, that through their knowledge of the Savior they might have grace and peace multiplied. What does that mean? What is grace? What does it mean to multiply grace? To multiply peace? What kind of peace might Peter mean?

**Verse 3:** Verse 2 asked that grace and peace be multiplied; this verse continues (in an alternative translation): “just as his divine power has granted us all things for life and godliness, through a knowledge of the one who has called us to glory and to excellence.”

The word translated *godliness* refers to the practical aspects of religion—doing good works—more than it does to specifically devotional acts or acts of worship. How does a knowledge of Christ provide us with all things for life and godliness? How does he provide us with that knowledge through his divine power?

*Excellence* is another accurate translation of the word translated *virtue* by the King James translators. It includes not only chastity, but all other qualities of moral excellence as well. What does it mean to be called to excellence or virtue? What does it mean to say that Christ has called us to glory?

**Verse 4:** The word *whereby* refers back to something that came before. What? In other words, this verse says that price-
less and magnificent promises have come to us by means of something mentioned in the previous verse. What is that?

Through these promises we can become “partakers of the divine nature.” What does that mean? In other words, what does the term *divine nature* refer to, and what does it mean to partake of (to take part or share in) it?

What does this verse say is the cause of corruption in this world? As used here, *lust* does not refer only to corrupt sexual desires; it refers to misdirected desire in general. Is this the same teaching that we saw in James 1 and 4?

Why does Peter speak of escaping the corruption of the world rather than just leaving it behind? What does the metaphor of escape teach? What would the metaphor of leaving something behind suggest?

**Verse 5:** Instead of “and beside,” the beginning of this verse should be translated “for this purpose.” What is going to be brought about by the things which follow?

“Add to” is a reasonable translation, but it doesn’t catch the connotations of the Greek word it translates. That word carries with it the notion of providing for something lavishly. The noun form of the verb “was used of prominent and wealthy citizens who underwrote the expenses for the choirs needed in the performance of Greek plays.” Supplying isn’t enough; abundance is required.

What is the first thing one must have in order to become godly?

The word translated *knowledge* can also be translated “understanding,” “having insight,” “circumspection,” “discre-
tion,” or “discernment.” If you were to choose one of those other words, which do you think would be best? Why? Why would we need to add understanding, insight, or discernment in addition to virtue and faith?

Here’s an alternative translation of the beginning of the verse: “For this purpose, exert all diligence so that by your faith you may make possible virtue [provide for virtue], and by your virtue, knowledge.” According to this reading, we cannot be virtuous without faith. Is that right?

By the same token, we cannot have knowledge without virtue. Is that right? How could it be, given that there are very many smart people who know a great deal but are not necessarily virtuous?

Each of the things mentioned in the list is something that makes possible what follows it in the list. Go through the list asking yourself how the first in each pair makes the second possible. See whether you can understand the list and the connections in a way that makes what it says true.

Verse 6: Notice the explanations of temperance and godliness in the footnotes of the LDS edition. Notice also that the Greek word used for godliness here is the same as that used in verse 3. Do these notes and connections change your understanding of verse 6?

Another translation of patience would be perseverance. So what? How does understanding or discernment make self-control possible? How does self-control make perseverance or enduring to the end possible? How does perseverance make good works (godliness) possible?
Verse 7: How are these three, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, related to one another?

Verse 8: Here’s an alternative translation of the verse: “If these things are present and abound among you, they will make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If we wish to have a knowledge of Christ, we must have the things listed in verses 3–7 and they must abound in us. What does it mean for these things to abound, in other words increase, in us?

Why does Peter use barrenness and unfruitfulness to portray not having a knowledge of Christ? What does it mean not to be barren and to be fruitful in knowing Christ?

The word translated knowledge connotes an intimate knowledge, as opposed to objective knowledge. What does it mean to have an intimate knowledge of Christ?

Verse 9: If we have these things, we know Christ intimately, but if we lack these things, we are so nearsighted that we are blind. Why does Peter use nearsightedness to portray those who have forgotten their baptismal covenants and blessings? How is the metaphor of nearsightedness an apt metaphor for forgetting something important?

Verse 10: Another translation of the beginning of verse 10 would be “So, brethren, be all the more zealous to making your calling and election secure.” Does that suggest anything about those to whom this is addressed? What kinds of Saints are they?

What is the rhetorical force of the word wherefore at the beginning of this verse? What work does it do to connect Peter’s ideas?
How might this verse be related to Revelation 17:14?

What is a calling? Who has been called? How?

Do the scriptures use the word *calling* in different senses? If so, what are they and which is being used here? How is the word *calling* related to its ordinary meaning, “to call out”? Does that help us understand better what it means to have a calling? What does *election* mean? Who are the elect?

The verb translated “to make sure” can also be translated “to confirm.” We could translate the verse this way: “Instead, therefore, brethren, be diligent to confirm your calling and election.” The implication of that translation is that we have already been called and elected but must confirm that calling and election, making it sure for it to be valid. Assume for the purpose of thinking about verse 10 that this interpretation is correct. If so, when were we called and elected? How do we confirm that calling and election?

Does the last part of the verse (“if ye do these things, ye shall never fail [stumble]”) make more clear what it means to have one’s calling and election made sure?

**Verse 11:** The word order here is quite close to the Greek word order (as it often is in the King James Version), but that makes it more difficult for us to read. Put in a more natural English word order, this says, “For so [in other words, “in this way”] an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be ministered unto you [in other words, “provided for you”] abundantly.” What point is Peter making with that sentence?
Another fairly literal translation of the phrase translated “ministered unto you abundantly” is “will be richly supplied.” What does it mean for an entrance into Christ’s kingdom to be richly supplied? How is an entrance the kind of thing that can be given? In particular, how can it be given abundantly?

To see some of the implications of these verses about making our callings and elections sure, compare the following passages:

2 Peter 1:5–7
And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

D&C 4
Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence.

What has Doctrine and Covenants 4 to do with having one’s calling and election made sure?

Is there any significance to the differences between these two lists of virtues?

Jude

We don’t know the particular audience to which this letter was addressed, but we can tell from what it says that it was written in response to a real problem. This isn’t a general
warning against heresy. Jude deals with a specific group of people in some specific church.

Jude uses examples from the Old Testament to make his case against those who have “crept in unawares” (verse 4), and he urges those to whom he is writing to “earnestly contend for the faith.” In other words, he is encouraging them to continue to teach the things that were given to them and to fight against the heresies of these intruders. Verse 4 suggests that those who have crept into the congregation not only preach false doctrine but also commit sexual sin, perhaps by twisting the teaching that Christians have been freed from the Mosaic law.

**Verses 17–18:** These verses are Jude’s response to the wickedness of those he has condemned.

What ought the Saints to remember when they encounter these kinds of people?

**Verse 19:** “Separate themselves” means “create divisions.” What kinds of divisions does Jude have in mind? What is wrong with those kinds of divisions in the Church? Does Jude’s worry about divisions means that he thinks all Church members ought to be alike?

The Greek word translated *sensual* by the King James translators means “pertaining to the life of the natural world and whatever belongs to it,” so “worldly.” Are “worldly” and “having not the Spirit” synonyms? What kind of world do we live in if we have the Spirit? How is the world I live in, and not just me, different if I have the Spirit?