

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JUDE 1

One Sunday after our service had ended a man stood up in the back, and told me he wanted to speak to the congregation. I was suspicious. I said I needed to review his comments. He would first have to tell me what he wanted to say. *That didn't make him happy...*

At first, he pointed to the Bible. I told him, "*the Bible is a big book, what specifically do you have in mind?*" He answered, "*Zechariah 14.*" I said, "*what verses?*" Finally, he conceded, "*verse 12.*" And Zechariah 14:12 reads, "*This shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.*" I'm sure he had some grizzly application for the folks of our church.

I then explained to the fellow the passage he read was to *God's enemies - not God's family*. And I wasn't about to let him, or anyone else, walk into our church, hijack this pulpit, and lay a guilt trip on people Jesus died to save and wants to encourage. I told him if he had any guts he'd take his message to the streets, and share it with unbelievers. Of course, he bristled up...

His final words before stomping out the door were to accuse your pastor of **quenching the Holy Spirit**. But later that day, as I mulled over the incident, I sensed the Lord speak to me, "*Sandy, you were quenching a spirit, but it sure wasn't the Holy Spirit.*" Hey, no pastor should quench or hinder the work of God's Spirit, but there are some spirits that do need to be quenched!

Jude would tell us that a big part of being a pastor is quenching spirits that need quenching. A pastor is like a forest ranger. He teaches people to build *campfires*, while at the same time he helps them put out *wildfires*.

Realize, the word "*pastor*" means "*shepherd*." And a shepherd's job is two-fold: First, he **feeds** the flock. He sees to it the sheep eat well, but he also **protects** the flock. He makes sure the sheep aren't eaten.

If all a pastor does is feed, and feed, and feed the sheep - and never warns them of the wolves and predators that threaten - he's only fattening them up for the slaughter. A pastor needs to both **feed** and **warn**. And this is what Pastor Jude does in this short letter.

Verse 1, “**Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...**” Two “*Judes*” play prominent roles in the Gospels - there was the Jude among the original apostles - and Jude, the half-brother of our Lord. And it was likely that Jesus’ sibling authored this letter.

Recall in John 7:5, prior to Jesus’ resurrection, even His brothers and sisters didn’t believe in His deity. Jesus said to His hometown of Nazareth, “**no prophet is accepted in his own country.**” Familiarity can often breed contempt; and that’s what it did in Jesus’ family.

But when they saw their brother conquer death, all their doubts were dispelled. The evidence now added up. They could connect the dots. Jesus was who He said He was... *not only their brother, but God’s Son.*

We learn in Acts 15 that James, another of Jesus’ brothers, was the leader in the Jerusalem church. And here, Jude, identifies himself by his relation to James.

Certainly, if Jude had been a name-dropper he would’ve introduced himself, “*the brother of Jesus the Messiah, Son of God*” - instead it’s “**brother of James, bondservant of Jesus.**” It shows Jude’s humility. He was a “**bondservant**” or “**love-slave**” of Jesus Messiah!

And remember a bondservant was a special category of slave. After being freed, he continued to serve - *no longer out of obligation, but now out of love.*

We too are bound to Jesus. *As Lord*, He holds claim to heaven and earth. *As our Master*, He demands our allegiance. We too are His slaves... But once you know His grace *desire* replaces *duty*. **We serve the Lord not because we have to, but because we want to!**

Jude writes, “**to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.**” Not just *added*, but “**multiplied...**” God multiplies His blessings upon those He **calls**, and He **sanctifies**, and He **preserves**.

God **calls** us to Himself... *He’s calling you now? Do you hear Him?...* Once He calls, He **earmarks** us for His purposes. Mark Twain once said, “**The two greatest days in a person’s life is the day we’re born, and the day we discover why.**” We are born to know God... And once we’re called and assigned, God **preserves** us. **Once on the right track, He keeps us on track.**

God calls us, and sets us apart, and protects us!

Verse 3, “**Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation...**” Initially, this was intended to be the subject of his letter, “**our common**

salvation" - the blessings we have in Christ. But an urgent issue was heavy on Jude's heart...

He tells us, "I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." A treatise on the workings and treasures of salvation would've been a luxury. More pressing was **a defense of the faith.**

And here's why... "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude had encountered "*certain men... ungodly men*" - obviously false teachers - who were denying the truth about God and about His grace.

He says they "*crept in unnoticed.*" They were creeps! 2 Peter 2:1 had warned us, "*there will be false teachers among you.*" Jude saw that they were already there. He writes to encourage his readers to fight for the truth!

In 2022 LifeWay Research conducted a survey that shined a light on the dismal theology of today's America. For starters, today just 53% believe there is only one, true God... 42% (almost half) believe God accepts the worship of all religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam... Only 36%, just a little over a third, now believe faith in Jesus alone as their Savior is the only way to receive God's free gift of eternal life. That means 64% of Americans believe Jesus is NOT the only way to God...

Only 48% believe the Bible is 100% accurate in all it teaches... 65% believe that though we all sin a little, most folks are naturally good... 51% believe Jesus was a great teacher, but wasn't God... and 64% said religion is a matter of personal opinion, not objective truth...

Here's how bad it really is... Among Americans the most often quoted "*Bible verse*" is, "**God helps those who help themselves.**" The only problem is, that's not a Bible verse at all! It's a quote from Thomas Jefferson. Yet 82% of all Americans say it comes from the Bible.

I'm afraid we're not doing a very good job *contending for the faith.* And realize, **this is everybody's job!** Not just the pastor's job, but your job around the water cooler at work, or in conversations with friends. It's surely every Christian's job to teach truth to our kids. We're all called to "*contend earnestly for the faith...*"

For notice, it's "*the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints.*" God isn't adding any new truth!

The Bible is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The OT Scriptures that were confirmed by Jesus, and the NT letters issued from the pen of His apostles, is the truth given by God - **“once and for all!”**

We’re not waiting on God to release Christianity 2.0. He’s not updating the App. The Bible you possess is God’s authoritative word *for all time and for all people*. With all our might, we need to contend for His Book!

Jude challenges us, **“contend earnestly.”** The Greek word **“contend”** is **“to struggle or wrestle”** for the truth. I’ll never forget the tiny bit of wrestling I did in Middle School phys-ed. That mat time was the longest three minutes of my life. Wrestling is intense, and grueling, and draining. When the whistle blew I was totally spent. Yet this is the exhaustive effort we should give the understanding and communication of God’s Word.

A few years ago I spoke at a pastors conference in New Zealand. While there, Kathy and I rented a car and we discovered a uniqueness of New Zealand. It’s a country with hundreds of single lane bridges.

Apparently, the New Zealand DOT is too cheap to spend the extra money and build two-lane bridges.

And for Americans who are use to multi-lane bridges, the first few times you pull out onto a one-lane bridge it’s a little disconcerting... On a two-lane bridge there’s room for two vehicles traveling in opposite directions. **But not so on a one-lane bridge!** Both cars can’t have the right-of-way. Pluralism doesn’t work on a one-lane bridge! Either there’ll be a crash, or a stand-off. But on a one-lane bridge there’s not room for both cars to operate simultaneously. *And life is like a one-lane bridge!*

At times, two opinions can’t pass, as if both are equally true. The two ideas will either crash, or force a stand-off - but both cannot be right simultaneously. One-lane means somebody is right and somebody is wrong.

And every Christian needs the courage to pull out onto a one-lane bridge. We need to take a stand for what’s biblical and true - with our family, co-workers, neighbors.

God has revealed His will in His Word. And on many issues there’s no room for multiple-conclusions. We can’t be afraid to pull into a single lane just because we may crash with someone coming the opposite direction, or force a stand-off. **Every way is not the right way.**

And here, rather than stay in his lane, Jude is willing to pull out onto a one-lane bridge - *even if it means losing a friend, or alienating family, or inciting opposition.* Jude trusts God, and he realizes his job is to be faithful to God’s Word, regardless of the circumstances.

And not only did Jude contend for God's truth, *but he also contends for God's grace*. In verse 4 the word "*lewdness*" implies an excuse to do evil - *the opposite of grace*. God sets us free from the OT Law, not to act *lawlessly* - but *lovingly*. True liberty produces love for God and love for others - not a license to serve myself.

A few years ago the Atlanta newspaper ran a story entitled, "*Praying for a Successful Heist*." When I read it I couldn't believe it, "*According to a federal indictment in Des Moines, Iowa, Kenneth Bruner led his seven accomplices in prayer for God's protection just before they set out to knock off Herman's Fine Jewelry...*" (*I'm not making this up!*) "*Bruner acknowledged, according to the indictment, 'they were going to do bad things but that they were not bad people.'* It was pointed out, "*No one was hurt in the robbery, and everyone was behind bars the next day.*" But this is how people today think.

They see no contradiction with being born again and robbing banks... *or sleeping with their boyfriend, or pilfering from the company, or fudging on their income tax, or cheating on a spouse, or looking at porn.*

God's grace frees us from condemnation so we can know God, and walk in His Spirit. And when *His Holy Spirit* enters *our hollow spirit* changes occur. So much so that if you say you're a Christian, yet aren't becoming more like Jesus there's a problem. If you're truly *born again* you'll be different than you once were. *You'll love instead of hate... You'll give instead of take... You'll care instead of stare right past the need... You'll obey God instead of go your own way.*

Jude continues, "*But I want to remind you, though you once knew this...*" Notice, this letter is a reminder of what had already been written to these believers.

Compare the next few verses in Jude with 2 Peter 2, and you'll be surprised by the similarities. It was as if Jude re-recorded Peter's song - or covered an old hit. The truths Peter had spoken of were still very relevant.

Jude warns that false teachers will come, and the folks they're able to dupe will share in their judgment. And he illustrates this principle of **shared judgment** with three examples... **the Hebrews who left Egypt, the angels at the flood, and the citizens of Sodom.**

The first example of a shared judgment are the Hebrews God delivered from Egypt. Verse 5, "*that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.*"

Throughout their history, the Hebrews habitually listened to the wrong people. First, it was Edward G. Robinson - the little twerp in the movie who doubted Moses. **(clip)** He wanted to return to Egypt... Later they followed a rebel, Korah... Still later, they

listened to ten doubting spies, rather than to Joshua and Caleb. They perished because they heeded bad counsel.

Another example of those who shared the judgment of the people who deceived them, (verse 6) were “the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day...”

According to **Peter** this story harkens back to the flood of Noah. Jude’s phrase, “who did not keep their proper domain” has some really bizarre connotations.

Some Bible teachers think this refers to fallen angels who appeared as males and crossed a God-imposed barrier to engage in sex with women. Genesis 6 is offered as proof, “Now it came to pass... the sons of God (a biblical idiom for angels) saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever...”

Fallen angels, or demons, appeared in male form, and romanced the daughters of men. But it gets even more bizarre... I need some Twilight Zone music...

For Genesis 6 continues, “There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” These unlawful unions between demons and daughters created a race of what the Bible calls “giants” - a freakish breed of hybrids.

And ancient mythology is full of such creatures: *gremlins, titans, nymphs, hobbits* - were all offspring of natural and supra-natural beings. Perhaps these legends were echoes of the actual “giants” in Genesis.

And this explains God’s extraordinary punishment. *Why did He destroy mankind with a flood and start over with eight people?* Apparently, the human gene pool was perverted. Only Noah’s family remained pure.

And realize this idea of sexual experiences with demons is not as bizarre as it may seem. Fallen angels romancing women is a favorite Hollywood storyline. In fact, it appears in the occult, as well as UFO literature.

And if you believe, as I do, that UFOs are demonic appearances, *then sexual abductions could be another instance of fallen angels leaving their proper domain.*

Satan’s agents are always trying to cross boundaries imposed by God. Jude warns us not to do the same...

Don’t desire a person who’s not your spouse - or take a drink you know will get you drunk - or embrace a belief that’s unbiblical - or ignore an authority God has place over

you... Jude is warning us, cross a boundary ordained by God and you'll be judged like the angels.

Then verse 7, “As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Sodom was a wicked city. Ezekiel 16 mentions her pride, idleness, greed, apathy. Here Jude *calls out* her sexual perversion. Sodom went “*after strange flesh.*” She refused to embrace God’s plan for sexuality. Like the fallen angels, she tried to set her own boundaries.

And this is what makes homosexuality sinful. It’s a deviation of the way God designed for men and women to function sexually. From creation, and throughout the Bible, same-sex relationships are condemned by God.

Certainly, people with same sex attraction need to be shown God’s love, and invited to find their fulfillment in Christ... But the behavior itself is evidence of a hardening of the heart to God’s truth... Jude’s point is that Sodom got took up the vices of the cities around them, and suffered the same fiery judgment as those who’d influenced them. It was **a shared judgment.**

Verse 8, “Likewise also these dreamers...” (Jude refocuses on the false teachers that had crept into the church - *the creeps.*) “(they) defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” They have no respect for spiritual authority. They’re arrogant and self-obsessed. They have no fear or reverence for God.

“Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.” The heretics of Jude’s day had no sense of spiritual decorum. Their disrespect, and ego, and haughtiness extended even into the spiritual realm.

It reminds me of today’s bombastic preachers. They shout at the devil and try to boss around demons. Hey, I’m no admirer of the devil, but neither am I arrogant enough to call him out and deliberately pick a fight.

The devil, though sinful and sinister, is still an angelic being, and is very powerful. **In Christ he’s no match for me, but on my own I know I’m no match for him.**

And this is why Michael, though an archangel - an angel with some rank and muscle - didn’t shout vicious threats. Rather he resisted Satan in a humble manner.

Michael made sure he put Jesus between him and the devil! He had respect for spiritual realities and the power of his enemy. He said, "**The Lord rebuke you!**"

Never live in fear of the devil. 1 John 4:4 tells us that the Jesus in us is greater than the devil. James 4:7 boldly says, "**Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**"

But that doesn't give us the right to act arrogantly, as if we can take on the devil ourselves. Always keep the Lord between you and the devil. As Michael said, "**The Lord rebuke you!**" - that's the appropriate approach.

Verse 11, "**Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.**" Jude gives us three more examples that warn us not to fall away from God's truth. And realize all three people mentioned started out in a good place, yet strayed...

Cain got caught up in **anger**. He was mad that his brother's sacrifice was accepted and his was not...

The error of Balaam was **greed**. He followed God, but he could be bought for a price. He was a sell-out...

And Korah was a **jealous** man. He couldn't stand to see Moses promoted over him... Jude's point to us is to guard ourselves against **anger, greed, and jealousy**.

Verse 12, "**These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves.**" The love feast was the church's weekly pot-luck. It was a meal where the poor were fed, and believers were refreshed. It culminated in communion.

Yet the *anger, greed, and jealousy* of the false teachers were sabotaging the love feast. It wasn't about love at all. The false teachers cared only about themselves. They clamored for attention rather than serve others. They scarfed up food, rather than share. These men had no restraint - they had no fear of God.

Jude continues describing the spiritual charlatans that had invaded the church, "**They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds...**" See a cloud and you expect rain. Clouds carry promise. Yet these men were *clouds without water*. They promised blessing, but the only people they blessed were themselves.

They're "**late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots...**" They had multiple chances to bear fruit, yet ended up barren and a disappointment.

They were "**raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame...**" They produced waves of ministry motion - whitecaps of activity - but nothing of eternal value. **Their ministry was all foam and no fruit!**

And Jude saves the best and most vivid description for last. They were like **“wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”** These false teachers were like shooting stars darting across the night-sky. They flashed against the heavens for a moment - a second - but ended up sailing into oblivion.

Once a woman went on a new diet - **all garlic**. Every morning she ate a garlic sandwich... At noon it was garlic for lunch... *Garlic-y* food for dinner as well... In the end the woman didn't actually lose any weight, *but people said she looked a lot smaller from a distance!*

And that was Jude's take on the false teachers. They looked good. They had style. But they lacked spiritual character. They were *all show*, but *no substance*. They might've looked good at a distance, but not up-close.

And Jude says in verse 14, **“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”** This blows my mind. Enoch was **“the seventh from Adam.”** That dates a guy. You lived a long time ago if your generation was in shouting distance of Adam. *But what did this ancient Enoch preach?*

This is amazing, he preached **the Second Coming of Jesus**. He warned the world that one day King Jesus will appear and hurl God's wrath on the ungodly.

Jude continues his attack on the bogus church leaders, **“These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage...”**

Rather than tell you what God says - *they tell you what you want to hear!* They flatter their listeners, with falsehood, rather than challenge them with God's truth. Their goal is to gain support for themselves and their ministry - instead of bringing salvation to their hearers.

One year I received a card that read, **“Thank you for teaching God's Word and not a lot of other stuff.”** I pray that will always be true. *God's Word is our great need!*

Verse 17, **“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”** Again, Jude reminds his readers what Jesus and His apostles had predicted. Insincere people would infiltrate the

church to pad their own pockets. Men who are more *sensual* than *spiritual* - more *lustful* than *loving*. These false teachers are more *out for themselves* than *out for God*.

And under this kind of self-centered, self-absorbed leadership the church only fractures and splinters. It's only when leaders submit to God, and to each other, that the believers with them follow suit and stay united.

Verse 20 exhorts us, **“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”**

I love this verse. You maintain a love for God, not by focusing on loving Him, but by focusing on His love for you. **“Keep yourself in the love of God.”** Think of the Father's love as a summer shower! At any moment He can pour out a blessing, *just don't put up an umbrella*. Keep yourself in a place where He can bless you. Here's another way to say it - be sure to jot this down: **“Stay under the spout where the blessings come out!”**

And here're Jude's three steps to keeping yourself in God's love: **First**, **“building yourselves up on your most holy faith.”** **Second**, **“praying in the Holy Spirit.”** **Third**, **“looking for the mercy of our Lord unto eternal life.”**

First, add some muscle to your faith. You build faith by studying and applying God's Word. Romans 10:17, **“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word...”**

Second, **“pray in the Holy Spirit.”** Lean into the Spirit when you pray. He lives in you, works in you, and will make your prayers more effective. Rely on His activity.

And **third**, live today in light of eternity! Look for **“the mercy of our Lord”** - which is our escape - the rapture of Christians. The Bible says before God's judgment falls, the church will rise. We'll be caught up to heaven!

You keep yourself in God's love by **building up your faith, praying in the Spirit, and looking for His mercy.**

Verse 22, **“And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”** Here, Jude speaks of **two types of evangelism.**

Some folks hear about the love of Jesus and want to follow Him. They're drawn in by His love. It's Romans 2:4, **“the goodness of God leads you to repentance...”**

Some people are led to Christ by the sweet-smelling fragrance of love - *but for others it takes the sulphur-smell of fire and brimstone rising from the pit of hell.*

G. Campbell Morgan once said, "I admit that I have seen a far larger number surrender to Christ when I've been preaching on the terrible results of neglecting salvation than when dwelling on any other theme."

It reminds me of the New York cab driver, and pastor. They both died and went to heaven at the same time.

In the lobby, they were waiting when an angel walks in and takes the cabbie on a grand tour of heaven. The pastor has to wait for a long time. He's ticked off. Why did he wait, while the cabbie gets special attention?

Finally, the angel comes to usher in the pastor, but the pastor can't help it, he asked, "I've loved people all these years and I've faithfully taught God's Word. Why was that cab driver given special treatment over me?"

The angel replied, "Yes, you comforted folks, but that New York cab driver scared the hell out of them." And that's the idea here. There're people so lodged in sin it takes some good old-fashioned fear to shake them up!

Jude closes in verse 24 with a song of praise - a doxology. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

"Now to Him who is able..." A fascinating study is to note all the Bible says God is able to do... In **Daniel 3:17** Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego tell the King of Babylon God is able to deliver them from the fiery furnace... In **Matthew 3:9** John the Baptist informs the Jews God is able to make children of Abraham out of Galilean stones... **Romans 4:21** tells us God is able to perform all He's promised... **Ephesians 3:20** states God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think... **2 Corinthians 9:8** says if we give to God, He is able to make His blessings abound toward us... **Hebrews 2:18** assures us God is able to help us when we're tempted... And **Hebrews 7:25** promises God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to His Son... **The story of the Bible is that God is able!**

And here Jude adds to the list of marvelous things God is able to do. In verse 24 he says "(God) is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

I see fragile folks come to Christ. They repent in a time of desperation. They're hanging on by a thread.

And yes, they immediately become happier - more hopeful. There's relief from guilt and joy in their heart. Yet you know these people are going home to the same

problems they left behind - the same burdens that got them searching still exist. Tomorrow they'll face the same temptations that they struggled with today.

Is there any hope these new believers - just babes in Christ - will still be walking with Jesus next week? Why won't they get sucked right back up into the web of sin? Why do we have any confidence that you or me or anyone will still be living for Jesus next week - or the week after - or in the years and decades to come? It's because **God is able to keep us from stumbling!**

If we hold onto to Jesus we'll make it through the tough spots and down the rocky roads - we'll survive the slip ups and stumbles, and arrive at God's throne!

As Jude says, *"God is able to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!"* I'm not able, and you're not able, **but God is certainly able!** And my faith is in God's abilities, not my own!

Let's close by reading this doxology together. It was probably read out-loud, in unison, in the early church.

Would you read vs. 24-25 with me? Let's do it boldly, on my count, 3,2,1... **"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."**