

## Content for the Faith

---

Good morning. If you have your Bible, turn it to the small book of Jude. It's near the end of the Bible. If you hit Revelation, you've gone too far. It's right after 3<sup>rd</sup> John and just before Revelation. If you are using the Bible in the chairs, you can find it on page 964. You can also follow along on our church app which has the sermon notes available.

This is our final week in our mini-series, "Small Letters Big Lessons," where we have looked at these short letters in the New Testament, and we have seen how they have such depth and massive lessons for us to learn. Now we come to Jude.

To give you a little context to the letter: Jude, the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus, is writing this letter somewhere between the mid-40s to mid-60s in the first century. Based on the Old Testament references and Jewish tradition he includes in the letter, his audience probably consists of mainly Jewish believers who would have understood and recognized these teachings. While Jude wanted to spend time writing a letter about deeper truths, to discuss doctrine and their salvation, there is a more pressing issue. He ends up writing a letter to warn the early church against false teachers. A theme that is all throughout the New Testament, from the Gospels to Revelation. A danger that is always present, lurking around every corner.

If that is the case, then what hope do we have? How are we to hold fast to the truth? How do we keep from being swept up by every wind of doctrine? This is why Jude has written this letter. To warn the church against the false teaching but also to encourage them in their faith.

Rather than read all 25 verses at the start, we are going to take it in segments. Would you follow along as I read the first 4 verses of Jude?

### **READ Jude 1-4**

Would you pray with me?...

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **[ILLUSTRATION]**

You may not know it, but there is a huge thing happening this weekend in Indy. In fact, it happens every year around this time since 2003 and draws over 70,000 people from all over the world to Indianapolis. I'm talking about GenCon. If you are not a nerd like me, let me tell you what that is. It is the largest and longest-running board game convention in North America. It spans 4 days from Thursday through today. I've been several times since we moved up here and had a chance to go this past Thursday and pick up some new games to play.

One of the craziest things is the amount of people who arrive early on the opening day and wait outside the exhibit hall. Thousands of people crammed next to each other all waiting for the doors to open. As soon as they do, the mob of people move in. **[VIDEO]** Here is a short video of what it looked this year.

One of those dots moving into the room is me. Why are people rushing the doors? Because there are new games that launch at GenCon, some games only found at GenCon, and supplies sell out fast. People want to get their hands on these games. They do everything they can to get their copy. They stand in long lines. They have looked up games beforehand and made a list. They know the map of the exhibit hall, where each booth is that they need to visit. These people are contending for these games. Striving and competing to get their own copy.

Now, I wasn't really contending for these games. I just happened to be there early. But I can tell you, I was contending for a win last night playing those games that I bought.

This is the idea of contending that Jude is talking about in his letter. False teachers have crept into the church unnoticed. This is a danger not only for the early church but for us today. Many of us know friends or family members who started listening to false teachers and have either left the faith altogether or have deconstructed it to almost nothing. While false teachers "out there" are dangerous, Jude's primary focus is on false teachers "in here." In the church. The main idea for today's message is that we must **contend for the faith**.

How do we do that? How do we contend for the faith when false teaching is so prevalent? Through this letter we see that in order to contend for the faith, we must 1) Recognize What is False, 2) Remain in the Faith, and 3) Rest in God's Faithfulness.

## **RECOGNIZE WHAT IS FALSE**

We'll start by looking at the need to **Recognize What is False**.

Jude is calling these believers to WAKE UP to what is happening around them. He devotes the majority of this letter to exposing these false teachers which he summarizes in verse 4: that they reject authority, have ungodly character, and will receive God's judgement.

### **False Teacher's Doctrine**

In regard to rejecting authority, he says at the end of verse 4 that they "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Does this mean that they were saying "Do not believe in Jesus!"? That could have happened. But I think that is unlikely. Jude says that these people "crept in unnoticed." I know we can all be gullible

sometimes, but I doubt these Christians wouldn't have noticed someone blatantly denying Jesus Christ.

Jude says that they deny our “**Master and Lord**, Jesus Christ.” These terms stress Jesus's authority. That he has authority over all and that he deserves submission from all. And it is Jesus' authority that these teachers are denying. Jude explains how they reject authority in **verses 8-10.**

One way they deny Jesus' authority is they reject the authority of Scripture. Jude says that they are “relying on their dreams.” They are elevating dreams and visions above the Word of God. But the Word of God is to have the ultimate and final authority in our lives. Everything we believe or think must be subjected to what Scripture says, not the other way around.

They also deny Jesus' authority by seeking to take authority that is not theirs. Jesus is Master and Lord and has the right to judge all of creation, including spiritual beings. But Jude says these false teachers “blaspheme the glorious ones.” They are putting themselves in the place of Jesus and rebuking spiritual beings. Jude then gives this weird illustration in verse 9 with the archangel Michael to make his point.

What is going on here with the archangel Michael and the devil? Why are they disputing over Moses' body? This is a story that was a part of Jewish tradition that has been lost to history. We are only given a little snapshot of the story in this one verse. But it would have been common knowledge for Jews in this period, which is why Jude uses it to make his point. What he is saying is that in this story, Michael, the chief angel, did not rebuke the devil. That right is reserved for Jesus. And even though he is the head angel, he did not take authority that was not his. He knows that Jesus is the judge. And it is Jesus who will rebuke and judge the devil. This illustration shows how the false teachers are not staying in their position. They are doing something even the chief angel in heaven will not do: try to take authority that only belongs to Jesus.

Not only are they rejecting the authority of Christ, but he says back in verse 4 that they pervert God's grace into sensuality. They "defile the flesh" as he said in verse 8. These people are doing unholy and ungodly things with their bodies. They are living in such a way and wrongly teaching that God's grace is a license to sin. And this is a teaching we can all struggle with, because our flesh wants a reason for us to indulge our sinful desires.

I think we need to examine ourselves and make sure we are not believing like these false teachers. Are you using God's grace as an excuse to sin? Or are you seeking to align your life with the Word of God? Is the Word of God the ultimate authority in your life or is something else? Is your Christian life based on feelings and impressions, by dreams or visions? Or do you take everything to the Bible to judge what is true?

### **False Teacher's Character**

Jude also paints a picture of the character of these false teachers. He said in verse 4 that they are "ungodly people." He gives us a fuller picture of their character in **verses 11-13**.

In verse 11, he gives three Old Testament examples to illustrate who these people are. Jude references these characters from Genesis and Numbers to point out that these false teachers are violent like Cain, greedy like Balaam, and self-focused like Korah.

You can notice these false teachers because they are selfish and self-focused individuals. They are greedy for gain. These people are empty and useless like waterless clouds, trees that don't bear fruit, stars that lead you astray. While they may have crept in unnoticed, Jude points out the glaring reality of their wayward teaching and character. Even though they may have been subtle in their ways, the early church should have been able to look at their character and doctrine and

realize they did not line up with the gospel. Jude gives as helpful summary of their character in verse 16:

**Jude 16**

<sup>16</sup> These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

This is a huge warning to the church today. Are there people who are perverting the truth? Are you keeping a close watch on people's doctrine and character? Do you know your Bible, and sound doctrine, well enough to refute error? False teachers know how to use the Bible to support their argument. We need to know our Bibles better than just a passing glance or a quick read through.

[ILLUSTRATION]

John MacArthur, who recently passed away, had an illustration about this. He said in his book *Reckless Faith*, "Federal agents don't learn to spot counterfeit money by studying the counterfeits. They study genuine bills until they master the look of the real thing. Then when they see the bogus money, they recognize it." This is true. I read an article of someone who researched this. He found that these people spend countless hours studying real money. They are told to touch it, tilt it, look through it, and look at it.

They touch it to feel the waxy paper and are able to tell when it just doesn't feel right. They tilt it to see the holographic stripe in the paper that is difficult to reproduce. They look through it, holding it up to the light, to see the watermark. Finally, they look at it to see fine-line details in the printing and background patterns.

Counterfeits work because most people do not know the real thing well enough to spot differences. But when you know what to look for, you can easily spot it.

We need to understand the theology and doctrine the Bible teaches and how it all works together. We must be students of it, studying the real thing up close and intimately so that we can be aware of any teaching by any person, even in this church, and know if it accords with sound doctrine or not. We must not be like this church who allowed false teaching to creep in unnoticed.

## **False Teacher's Fate**

Jude also tells the church that the fate of these false teachers is judgement. In verse 4 he says that these people are designated for destruction. They will experience the full weight of God's judgement. Look at **verses 5-7**:

I don't know if you've noticed, but Jude loves to write in threes (he must be a Baptist preacher). Here, he refers to the Exodus when the Israelites were led out of Egypt, to the angels not staying within their position of authority, and to the wicked Sodom and Gomorrah.

He uses this story from Exodus to emphasize that not all the people who were in Israel were true Israel. That a whole generation was judged and died before entering the promise land. And many more were judged along the way, like Korah's rebellion, for not trusting in God. Just as these people were among Israel and yet perished for their unbelief, so too will these false teachers who are among the church be judged and perish for their unbelief.

The second example he gives is of the angels who left their position of authority, most likely referring to the fallen angels of Genesis 6. These are the fallen angels who had relations with mankind that spurred humanity into all kinds of wickedness, leading God to flood the Earth. These, he says, God has kept in chains awaiting their final judgement at the end of time. At the great Day of the Lord. The third example is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah that was completely destroyed by fire from heaven for their sexual immorality. All these examples point to the fact that God has reserved (or a literal translation: Kept) this eternal, fiery punishment for these false teachers.

He gives another illustration of this judgement by quoting a prophecy from Enoch, in **verses 14-15**.

Here, he is quoting from 1 Enoch, a Jewish apocryphal book. While not a book we have in the Bible, what is expressed in this quote is not unfamiliar to Old Testament texts of the Lord coming with thousands of angels to execute justice, such as Deuteronomy 33 and Daniel 7. Again, Jude uses this reference to make his point because his Jewish audience would have been familiar with it. The point being that the fate of these false teachers is judgement. You do not want to associate yourself with them or their teachings, because their path leads to destruction.

Are you following Christ or false teachers? Are you believing in the gospel? That we are separated from a holy God because of our sin and rebellion. That we deserve death and the eternal fiery judgement of God. But God, through his great love for us, sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfectly obedient life, die on the cross to pay our penalty, and rose again to give us life. To those who repent, who turn away, from their sins and trust in Christ alone for their salvation, he gives eternal life. The danger and threat of eternal judgement is real. If you are not trusting in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins, you are headed for the judgement that these false teachers will receive. Will you trust Jesus as your Master and Lord or reject him?

For believers, how well do you understand the gospel? How well do you know what you believe? How are you growing in your understanding of the Bible and sound doctrine? I've heard some people say, "Doctrine and theology don't matter; I just love Jesus and try to do what he says." And yet, most of the New Testament teaches doctrine and gives clear warnings against false teaching. This false teaching creeps in because believers do not take doctrine seriously enough.



I've been encouraged to hear that so many of our Grow Groups have walked through or are currently walking through *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith* to dive into theology and understand the doctrines of the faith. Because many believers don't know when they hear a perversion of the truth. It would be easy if false teachers just came out and said, "I am a false teacher, and this is why Christianity is wrong." But it's often way more subtle than that, mixing truth with error.

Who are the influences in your life? Who are you listening to? Do you know what you are being taught? False teaching can come as subtly as a swipe. From Insta Stories, Tick Tocks, Facebook posts and everything in between. It can come from movies and tv shows. It can come from a celebrity preacher or even a friend in the church. It can come from anywhere. As we seek to contend for the faith, we must recognize what is false.

## **REMAIN IN THE FAITH**

After giving this long-detailed description of these false teachers, Jude appeals to the believers in the church. In order to contend for the faith, we must **Remain in the Faith.**

Look at **verses 17-23.**

## **Remember Apostle's Teaching**

The first thing he calls them to do is to remember the apostle's teachings. Jude is not just referring to the predictions the apostles made about false teachers, he is telling the church to remember all that the apostles taught them. He told them at the beginning of the letter to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. It was delivered through the apostles. Paul says in Ephesians 2:19-20:

**Ephesians 2:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,  
<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Paul says that the church, the people of God, are built on the foundation of the apostles. But the Cornerstone, the most important part of the foundation, is Jesus Christ. In our text, Jude is reminding these believers that the gospel message has been established through the creditable witness of the apostles. He's saying, "Hold fast to the original message you believed. Don't believe the teachings of these false teachers who reject authority, both Jesus' and the apostles."

### **Remain in God's Love**

Jude doesn't just want them to remember the apostles' teachings, but he also tells them to keep themselves in God's love. This goes completely against using God's grace as an excuse to sin. Of living however you want because you're covered. Jude says you must be diligent to keep yourself in the love of God. Now, I'm sure that phrase may sound odd. Probably a little shocking.

Is he saying you can earn or lose your salvation? No. But there is a close connection between being loved by God and remaining in his love. All throughout the New Testament we are told that true believers will bear fruit, abide in Jesus, keep his commandments, work out their salvation, do good works. What Jude is saying is that we are not called to be passive believers. There is an active responsibility for believers in their faith.

Jude gives us some context surrounding this statement to understand what he means. To keep yourself in the love of God means you are "building yourselves up in your most holy faith." The idea here is to build upon something that is already built. Believers will grow in their faith, in their knowledge of God and his Word. But this is not just individual task, but a corporate task. Going back to the Ephesians 2 passage we read earlier, Paul says:

### **Ephesians 2:19-22**

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Often in the New Testament when we get this building image, it refers to the people of God, the church, being built as a temple to the Lord. In our passage, Jude is saying the church, as a whole, is to build itself up in the gospel. Believers building upon the faith they already received in community with one another.

If you claim to be a follower of Christ, are you plugged into a local church? Have you joined and covenanted together with a local body of believers? Are you growing in your most holy faith in community with other believers? The idea Jude is getting at is that remaining in the faith, keeping yourself in the love of God, starts with fellowship and discipleship within the local church. This is contrasted with the false teachers who he says, “cause division.”

To keep yourself in the love of God also means that believers will pray in the Holy Spirit. This, again, is a direct contrast to his statement about false teachers in verse 19, that they are “devoid of the Spirit.” True believers have the Holy Spirit leading and guiding their prayers. Paul says in Romans 8:26-27:

### **Romans 8:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

True believers pray. We depend upon God. We seek him in pray. We are led and guided by the Spirit. How is your prayer life?

Keeping yourself in the love of God not only means growing in your faith in community, praying in the Spirit, but also waiting for the mercy of Jesus. Eagerly anticipating the return of Christ, where we will be shown mercy (not getting what we deserve: eternal death) but instead being given eternal life. This is hoping and longing for what is to come, for the kingdom of God. This is an understanding that this world is not our home. We are not to be a people who indulge the flesh and live it up for today and the things of this world like the false teachers. We are to long for the hope of heaven, the glories of his kingdom, and for Jesus himself.

All of this is how Jude says we remain in the faith. Are you keeping yourself in the love of God? Are you building up the faith with other believers? Many Grow Groups have taken a break during the Summer but will be picking back up soon. Some new groups will be starting. Let me encourage you to plug into a Grow Group. Are you praying in the Spirit? What does your prayer life look like? Are you waiting for Christ's return, hoping in the mercy we will be shown and the eternal life to come?

### **Show Others Mercy**

Because of the mercy we will be shown at Christ's return, Jude gives the church one final exhortation. He tells them to help others remain in the faith. Look again at verses 22-23:

#### **Jude 22-23**

<sup>22</sup> And have mercy on those who doubt; <sup>23</sup> save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Jude doesn't give a command to the church to deal with the false teachers. He explained how God will bring judgement on them. Instead, Jude focuses on those in the church who have been persuaded by this false teaching and the church's response to these individuals.

There are some in the church who have begun to doubt what they believe. Jude tells the church to have mercy on them. Don't cut them off. Don't give up on them. Bear with them. Lead them to the truth. Give them a space to ask hard and difficult questions.

This is an area I can struggle with. When I hear someone doubt the truth or question what is true, rather than showing mercy, I want to pour water on it immediately. I want to stomp it out. What happens is I just throw answers and reasons at them. But it is okay for people to have doubts and to express those doubts. I have heard from several people that the reason they left the church is because they had tough questions and no one wanted to hear them out or have an honest conversation about it. Are we quick to shut people down and not give them room to ask good questions? Let us show mercy to those who doubt.

There seems to be others in the church who have gone further than just doubt but have begun to believe or practice the beliefs of these false teachers. Their beliefs and lifestyle are leading them down the same path of the false teachers which leads to the eternal fiery judgement of God. To these, Jude says to save them, snatching them out of the fire.

Now, let me be clear. We do not have the ability to determine anyone's salvation. We cannot cause their soul to be regenerated and love God. That is a work of the Holy Spirit. I don't believe Jude is saying someone's salvation rests upon our ability to save them. But God uses means to accomplish his purposes, and he uses us to spread the gospel. He's calling the church to stop being passive. There is eternal judgement on the line. It's time to get in the game. Take action. Do what you can to expose the error of their beliefs, lovingly win them back to the truth of

the gospel, hoping they repent and believe and thereby escape the fiery judgement to come.

But in your effort to show mercy to those who are doubting and those who are dabbling in this false teaching, Jude warns them that they are to show this mercy “with fear.” The warning here is to not show mercy and compassion in such a way that you leave yourself vulnerable to fall into their error. It’s like trying to help someone get out of a pool. You have to be careful that your feet are planted, that you are secure, otherwise when they pull on your hand, you will go headfirst into the water.

False teaching is persuasive and crafty and appeals to our flesh, and that is why so many people fall into it. In an effort to show mercy to these people, don’t fall prey to their beliefs. Be cautious. Hate their beliefs and their sin but love the person.

Are there people in your life that have begun to doubt the truth of the gospel? Have they started walking toward false teaching? What has been your response to them? How can you show mercy to those in your life? By all means contend for the faith, but be sure to remain in the faith.

## **REST IN GOD’S FAITHFULNESS**

Now I know this is a lot. But if we stopped there, it would seem like an insurmountable task. We could think to ourselves, “Who can do this? Who can be kept from stumbling into false teaching? But the final way we contend for the faith is to **Rest in God’s Faithfulness.**

Notice how Jude bookends his letter. In verse 1, he says:

### **Jude 1**

...To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and **kept** for Jesus Christ:

He finishes the letter by saying in verse 24:

**Jude 24**

<sup>24</sup> Now to him who is able to **keep** you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

Everything we have looked at this morning, all that Jude tells these believers about the false teachers and remaining, is bracketed by this truth: that believers are loved and kept by God for Jesus Christ. That he is faithful to keep us.

[ILLUSTRATION]

A few months ago, we were teaching our daughter, Evelyn, how to ride a bike. She had training wheels last summer because she was too short for her bike to be used as a balance bike. But this Summer she was tall enough. We took to training wheels off. As she was learning to balance and use the pedals, I would use a few fingers to hold on to the back of her seat just to keep her from tipping over while she got the hang of it all. She had the responsibility of holding the handlebars, putting her feet on the pedals, and pedaling. To ride the bike. But I was keeping her balanced.

Yes, you are called to keep yourself in the love of God, but the reality is that God is the one keeping you. God is the one who is keeping you from tipping over, from stumbling. This is a beautiful truth. That God keeps his people from wandering off the path. From denying Jesus. Not only that, but he presents us “blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.”

It is a sure thing. That those who God calls, those he has set his love on (the beloved), **will** be kept in the love of God. They will persevere to the end. This is the real hope of eternal security. Not “once you say a prayer and live the rest of your life however you want, you will be saved.” But once you are truly saved, you

will persevere to the end. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. He is faithful to keep you from stumbling.

This truth has been proven throughout the centuries of the church as every generation has battled one false teaching after the next. God has preserved his church and his people. He has kept them from stumbling. And he will continue to do so until he presents us blameless before him when Jesus returns, we are glorified, and we live forever in his presence.

This reality, the truth of resting in God's faithfulness, leads Jude to worship. He declares in verse 25:

**Jude 25**

<sup>25</sup> to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Would you pray with me?...

As the band comes, we will sing one final song before we leave. We will sing Abide, a song we learned a few weeks ago. Let this song be your prayer as you consider how God wants you to respond to his Word.

Maybe you need to pray, confess your sins to the Lord, repent and believe the gospel. If you have questions about this, please come talk to me or one of the pastors after service.

Maybe you need to analyze your life to see if your life aligns with God's Word or with these false teachers. Use this song as a prayer that God would teach you to abide in him.



Maybe you have been doubting your salvation and God is calling you to rest in his faithfulness. To be assured that he will keep you to the end.

However you need to respond, let's take these new few minutes to be doers of the word and not hearers only.