

Jude 1
Don't Be So Easily Duped
Pastor JD Farag

KAPONO: Thank You, Lord. Would you join me in a word of prayer? Lord, again, so many things to be thankful for, Lord. But the greatest is Your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank You, Lord, for the leadership here at this church, Lord, for Pastor JD. Would You please continue to watch over his family, Lord? Protect him. Give him Your strength and courage and boldness to do what You called him to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good morning and welcome. You can remain standing if you want. If you want to be seated, you can. But we're going to do two verses today. Yeah, I know, I know. We're doing this! So if you want to stand, you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine.

Jude now is continuing in *verse 12*. This on the heels of turning an abrupt corner with what he originally intended to write about, inspired by the Holy Spirit, when God just sort of stopped him in his tracks. And this letter, which he wanted to write about our common salvation, he ended up writing as a warning to us, to them then, to us now.

So we're going to continue now with this warning from Jude by the Holy Spirit, *verse 12*. **“These men...”**

Who are these guys? These are the guys, the people who were creeping into the church at that time undetected. **“These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm — shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted — twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.”** We better pray.

[Laughter]

Father, thank You, I think. This is again, tough stuff. But, boy, is it something that we need to hear and head. So Lord, would You speak? And when You do, we want to have not only ears to hear, but hearts to receive. That we would not merely be hearers of Your word, but doers of Your word. And certainly, this passage that we have before us, just in these two verses, they're here for us, written to us that we might take heed to the warning that is against us.

So Lord, would You minister to us, as only You can, the truth that is here? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

Now you can be seated. Was that too long? Okay, well, let me start off this way. Quite a text, right, these two verses? Would you agree? In an attempt to sum up the text that's before us today, one would have to conclude that it's in our Bibles to provide us with a litmus test of sorts. And by litmus test, I mean a test to determine and discern if I'm being duped and deceived by false Christians and influencers.

And make no mistake about it, they are alive and well today. They have crept into the church today undetected, under the radar, wreaking havoc, deceiving people, denying Christ. And the two verses that we're going to study today are by any stretch of the imagination, quite the imagination. I mean, Jude is referring to quite picturesquely — that's not a word, but we're going to make it a word because I just made it a word.

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But I mean, he's painting quite a visual picture, isn't he, referring to all of these things: Land, air, sea, waves, trees, stars. I mean, this is that God-given imagination that all of us have. By the way, imagination: Image — where God gives us this God-given ability to paint a portrait on the canvas of our minds using imagery from nature, the nature that He has created, so that way you can make the association, you can make the comparison, and it sticks. How many times in the gospel did Jesus use nature as an example visually?

My favorite all time is *Matthew 6*, where He speaks to worry. I know none of you are worriers. I'm a professional worrier. I have a Ph.D. in worry. I'm really good at it. I'm so good at it that if I run out of things to worry about in my own life, I'll find out about things in your life to worry about for you. But He addresses worry. **“Do not worry about tomorrow.”** And He uses the most magnificent visual comparison and description, as I can imagine Him there on what's now affectionately referred to as the Mount of Beatitudes.

For those of you that have been to Israel with us, they're overlooking the Sea of Galilee, and there He stands. And He's preaching and teaching, and He's saying do not worry. Look at that bird. Look at the birds of the air. I imagine the Savior pointing to those birds and saying, do you see these birds worried and stressed out? No.

And He said, look at the flower — and your Heavenly Father provides for them. Listen, those birds were not made in God's image. You were. So if God's going to take care of that bird, make sure he's fed — he doesn't have to pack a bunch of worms into a barn to hedge against the future — He's going to provide for that bird. How much more is He going to provide for you?

This might be a word for somebody today. I don't want to look at anybody in particular. And He goes from the birds in the air to the flowers in the fields. And at that time, they would have been in full bloom, just beautiful. Look at those flowers. They're here today, gone tomorrow. Look how beautiful and splendid they are, how magnificently they are clothed. Even Solomon wasn't clothed as beautifully as these flowers. How much more? Here is the comparison to nature.

So Jude, like the Savior before him — by the way, that's where he got it because remember now, Jesus was the biological half-brother of Jude — Jude, born to Joseph and Mary. So he grew up in the room next to the savior of the world. So that's probably where he got it.

But he's drawing upon these visual examples and comparisons in warning us so that we will not be so naive. Christians are naive. We're gullible. We let our guard down, especially within the context of a church body. You know, we're so enveloping and welcoming, and certainly, we want to be so, but so too do we need to be discerning. Don't just be so gullible and so easily duped and deceived because you've got people in your midst that are deceiving you, and you need to be able to spot them.

And thank You, God, and thank you, Jude, and thank You, God, for inspiring Jude to write this because you know what we've got here in two verses? We've got seven test questions. Don't you love tests? I hate tests. But the good news is, is that we have the answers to those test questions.

What are the test questions?

Well, the test questions are questions that need to be asked and answered so as to identify who it is, not if it is, but who is — and don't look at the person sitting next to you — who has crept unnoticed into my life or church to dupe and deceive.

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God wants us to be discerning, have spiritual discernment, keen discernment. So we've got seven questions here. We're going to go through them. I'll try to be as brief, and — (Laugh) I better not say that. Brief. Really, you? No.

First one in the first part of *verse 12*: Do they have a hidden agenda? Now, the word that Jude uses for “blemishes,” spots in your love feasts — these were the agape feasts that the early church would come together. And we would probably liken it in our day to potlucks. I know some Christians have a problem with the word “potluck,” and that's okay, I get it. But it's where they would all bring a dish, and they would all feast together, break bread together, and then they would celebrate the Lord's table together, the Communion.

So apparently, these guys were there. They were eating at these potlucks, love feasts. And now Jude is saying they are blemishes, they are spots, they're a pox on your love feasts. And the word for “blemishes” is very interesting because it carries with it the idea of being like dangerous reefs hidden beneath the surface of the sea.

If in the English you could transliterate this literally from the original language of the Greek New Testament, it would read more like this. These guys that have crept in, they're at your potluck, and they're like the reef hidden beneath the sea. They have a hidden agenda. You cannot see it on the surface. Be very careful.

And anyone on a ship or certainly here in Hawaii, surfers, you're keenly aware of the danger lurking beneath the surface, which is hidden and invisible, but it's there. And they were there hidden with their agenda, nefarious and malicious in their intentions, and they're breaking bread with you.

And here we are. Hey, pass the — I want to be careful what dish I use here because — mac and cheese? Is that okay? Okay, spicy ahi poke then. That's fine. And they're eating with us. But unbeknownst to us, they represent a formidable danger and threat. It's just hidden.

And you can spot them because they're — you'll forgive the pun — they're surfacey, beneath the surface. When you can peel back the layers and get past the facade because they're really good — and again, don't look at the person sitting next to you, especially if they're smiling after I say this — but they put on this smile, and you let your guard down.

Oh, they're so nice. They're such nice people. No, they're not. On the surface they are, outwardly they are. But see, God looks at the heart. The heart is deceitfully wicked, and we have to be discerning of the hidden agenda in the heart of people like this because they are among us.

Question Number 1, and it's really going to springboard into the other six. Do they have a hidden agenda? Something — and never go against that check in your heart because that's the Holy Spirit. There's a pause, there's a “something just doesn't quite seem right.” Something's off here. Can't put my finger on it. I can't quite — I just know some — and by the way, oh... (Sighing)

Guys can we talk? Wives, don't elbow your husbands right now, okay? This is — this is guy talk. Your wife has been given — the world calls it women's intuition. God's word calls it discernment. And it's a physiological thing.

And this is why guys don't understand wives. I mean, they — because they'll say something like this. Oh, 35 years of marriage, my wife, bless her heart, she's got treasures in heaven. Early in our

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marriage, she would just say, "You know, honey, I don't have a peace about this." I'm like, "What are you talking about? You don't have peace? This is a no-brainer."

And then guys — wives, just be nice — guys, let's talk. We're looking at them as beautiful as they are, those precious, sweet little things, and we're going, (Frustrated, questioning look) "Can you explain why you don't feel a peace about this?"

Maybe you don't do it like that. I'll speak for myself. And here's the problem: They can't. And here I am. Again, I'll speak for myself. "Honey, I want you to list for me the reasons why you don't have a peace about this: A, B, C, D." And she's looking at you, going, "No, I just don't feel a peace about it."

And it drives you crazy because the way you're looking at this thing, which is logical, they're looking at it spiritual because God's given them as a helpmeet to you, husband, to protect you from you, husband. How many decisions — I'll again speak for myself — that I made that my wife didn't feel a peace about, and I mowed over the top of her.

I've repented since. I have a perfect marriage now. But I just mowed over the top of her under the banner of "Well, you didn't give me any logical explanation or reason for why you don't feel a peace about this. I feel total peace about this." Boy, was I wrong. And boy, did it cost.

And in retrospect, I'm looking back; she saw something I didn't see. What did she see? That dangerous reef beneath the surface that she discerned, that was hidden. And God gave her that discernment and gave her to me. And what did I do being the godly husband that I am? I dismissed it to my own peril.

And I think we do that as Christians. We just, we go against that God-given check, that discernment of the Holy Spirit where something just doesn't seem right. It doesn't, as we say, pass the smell test. (Sniffing) I mean, something doesn't smell right here. Something — while we're talking about this, I guess, the sea — something's fishy about this.

Don't go against that. That's the Lord stopping you and protecting you and even redirecting you. It's been said God doesn't just direct our steps; He directs our stops. Stop! Stop. Red light. Not even a yellow light, which we would run anyway, right? Yellow lights: Slow down and proceed with caution. No, it does not mean that. It means speed up, so you don't get stuck with another red light.

[Laughter]

Well, this isn't even a yellow light. Sometimes it can be, in all fairness. God will put up a yellow light. Slow down. Proceed with caution. You're moving too fast. Wait. Slow down. Prepare to stop. Don't push on the gas pedal. But this isn't even a yellow light. This is a red light. Stop! Go no further. Danger ahead. Danger ahead. They have a hidden agenda. It'll come out.

Here's a second one in the second part of *verse 12*. Do they only serve themselves? This is very succinct, Jude's description about these shepherds only shepherding themselves. They only feed themselves. They're only in it for themselves. It's not they're in it for what they can give. They're in it for what they can get. They're only in it for what they can get out of it. They're not true shepherds.

Now, shepherds are pastors who shepherd the flock of God. And I'm going to — because they're synonymous in terms — I'm going to insert the word "pastors" in place of "shepherds" because in our culture, in our day and age, we really don't make that connection as we should, actually because

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“The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall never be in want.” He's the shepherd of shepherds. He's the good shepherd.

But to be a shepherd is to be a pastor, to shepherd the people. You know, it's the under-shepherd, it's the under-rower. You know, the world has the pyramid. I'm going to be accused of being a Mason when I do this, but whatever. The world's pyramid, you know, the corporate structure, the CEO? The president's at the top, and then it goes down, all of the underlings, down to the bottom.

But you know that is the other way around in terms of God's structure, ordained authority structure? How do I do this? I should have practiced.

[Laughter]

Anyway, it's upside down. It's straight and then down. Did that work? Can I do that again? Straight and down. So I'm going to take it and go upside down. Turn that frown upside. There it is! I got it! Get it before I lose it. Okay? Yeah!

The guy at the top is the guy at the bottom. That's the pastor. He's there to serve the people, not be served by the people. You're not here for me. I'm here for you as your pastor, which is my privilege to be. I'm not angry. Maybe I am. I don't know.

But these are self-serving. They're only in it for themselves. It's all about them. The focus is them. They have an unholy trinity. You've heard it, the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I. That's what they're all about.

Now, this is easier to detect and discern because it'll usually manifest in how they talk. The focus of the conversation — if it's a conversation — that assumes it's a conversation — sometimes it's not a dialog you're having with them, it's a monologue where all they're doing is all the talking, and all the talking is about themselves.

That's a pretty good indication that they're in it for the wrong reasons. They're not in it for what they can give. They're in it for what they can take. They're takers. They're takers. They're the first. You're the last. It's not “the last shall be first.” You're not the servant, the *doulos*, the bondservant of Christ. No, you're not there to serve. You're there to be served. I

t's only downhill from here. I'm just, you know, full disclosure. If you want to leave, we'll all bow our heads and close our eyes, and you can do that.

The third part of *verse 12*: Do they actually have any substance? You know, this is great. I mean, I think (Frustrated sound) easy for me to say, right? Jude, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is grabbing ahold of all of these comparisons and illustrations, and now he's going to talk about clouds with no rain blown along by the wind, and they just go wherever the wind blows. They give nothing. They promise everything.

So here you are, and you rely on rain because you've got crops that need rain. And you haven't seen a cloud in the sky for a very long time. And it's what is known as a drought. And then one day you see a cloud, you're like, Praise the Lord, look, it's a cloud!

Don't get your hopes up.

Is that cloud going to give me any rain?

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No.

Is there any substance to that cloud?

No. They're clouds without rain. And here's the thing about clouds without rain: They block the sun. Listen, if you're not going to give me any rain, at least get out of the way so I can have the sun. And then they block the sun, and they're there, again, not to give, but to take.

Wait, you're not going to give me any rain?

No.

You're just going to take away my sun. That's all you are. They have the talk but not the walk. They're not — you'll forgive the illustration — they're not walkie talkies, they're talkie talkies. They're all talk, no action. They talk a big talk, but they don't deliver. There's no substance to them. Big show and no go. We're going to see that here in a moment.

Let's move on to the fourth one because this is a biggie, by the way. I mean, they're all biggies, but it's in the fourth part of *verse 12*. Do they ever bear any real fruit?

Now, stay with me on this. We've gone from the dangerous reefs under the sea, to the clouds without rain in the sky, to now trees that never bear fruit in the ground. Let me try an example. Let's say just for purpose of illustration that I have a mango tree in my yard, which I don't, and it doesn't grow any mangos.

What am I going to do? Well, it's dead twice. First, no fruit; second, no root. All it's doing is taking up space. It's not producing any real fruit. So what am I going to do? I'm going to uproot it and I'm going to replace it with a tree that is going to give me the fruit that I planted the tree there in the first place for. This is the fruit, and it will always be based upon, predicated upon the root. What's at the root will show up in the fruit. I hope that worked because that's as good as it gets.

Maybe I better just let Jesus take it from here in *Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7*. I want to begin reading in *verse 15*. Listen to the strength of this. **"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. [Oh, my goodness, Lord, how am I going to know?] [I'm glad you asked. Verse 16] You will know them by their fruits.**

[And then He goes on to expound] Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

So is there any fruit? I did not ask are they a fruit? I said...

[Laughter]

That was no extra charge.

How about not just is there any fruit, how about if it's fake fruit? You know how it is when you're duped, right? You see from afar a basket of fruit. You're like, whoa, look at that. That looks really good.

And the closer you get, the more you realize it's plastic! It's not even real! Man, I was so duped. I feel so stupid. And here I thought that was real fruit. Wow, and it's plastic fruit?

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Yeah. Hey, some of these guys are plastic. They're fake. They put on the fake smile. There's no fruit.

Why is there no fruit?

Because there's nothing at the root. So you're going to uproot them. "By their fruit you will know them."

Wait a minute. What's the fruit?

Come on. We know what the fruit of the Spirit is. Love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, meekness, goodness, (Struggling) patience, and self-control. So when you encounter one of these people who have crept in unnoticed, unaware, undetected, beneath the surface with their hidden agenda, you can ask yourself: Are any of these characteristics true of them? Is there the fruit of love?

And by the way, I know this is — again, if you've got a better illustration, please don't be bashful, let me know. But have you ever noticed that the fruit tree is only for the benefit of someone else? Have you ever seen a fruit tree enjoying its own fruit? That would be so weird, right? You walk by a mango tree and it's munching on its own mango. That was the other one that they only feed themselves. Well, no, what's the fruit for?

It's for the benefit of those who are enjoying the fruit. It's loving on others. It's being kind to others. It's being good to others. It's being meek before others. It's being patient with others. As you can tell, I'm still working on that one. That fruit is still growing in my life. I try watering it. I try to put Miracle-Gro on it, and nothing seems to work on this particular fruit. But I'm more patient.

I mean, you find instead the opposite to be true: They're not just not loving; they're unloving. They're impatient. They're so full of themselves. Where the humility? There is none. "By their fruit, you're going to know them." That's how you can identify them.

Number 5, first part of *verse 13*. Now I'll have to explain this one. Just hear me out. Do they only splash and flash? They're all puff and fluff but no stuff. You can quote me on that.

So now we go from reefs beneath the sea, and clouds above in the sky, and fruitless trees below on the ground, to waves on the shore. Now, what do we know to be true about waves? They splash, make a lot of flash. But look at what they washed up, especially after a storm. And this is the description now that Jude is going to compare them to? They're rubbish. They're the debris and rubbish that they really are: All splash, all flash. But in the end, when you see them all washed up, what do you got? Rubbish.

I want to take this one step further, and then we'll spend the remainder of our time on the last two, and you'll see why for good reason.

Isn't it true? Would you agree that the storms of adversity in life will expose these splashy and flashy false Christians and influencers for who they really are? I mean when adversity strikes — and adversity strikes — they're outed.

You don't have to be super-discerning to figure out that, man, there's nothing there. I mean, you're trying to carry on a deep conversation with someone like this, and you realize it ain't going to happen. I mean, you can only talk with them about, and you'll forgive the expression, cotton candy Christianity. You can't get into the meat with them because it's all outward. It's all a show.

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And they perfectly are described with these waves because even the sound of the waves — they make a big splash. I mean, when they walk into the room, again, I hope nobody walked in this way, but they want you to know that they walked into the room. They want to make a big splash because after all, you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Wait, that's what you're about?

Yeah.

Wait. So you just want to have the splash and the flash like the waves on the seashore? You're going to get outed when you're all washed up after the storm.

Because I know when I — of course, it's been many years now — I should say it this way: When I used to walk Kailua Beach a long time ago after a storm, the stuff you would find there on the beach? That's what Jude's likened them to. But boy, when the storm was raging, you took notice.

Now, let's talk about after, after the storm. That's who they are. That's what they are. Better said, what they're not. This is going to tie into Number 6. And I again, want to spend the remainder of our time on these last two. It's in the second part of *verse 13*. The question; I'm framing it this way for a reason. Do they steal the show then go?

Now watch this. From clouds without rain in the sky, trees without fruit in the ground, waves with foam from the sea, to wandering or shooting stars in the sky. Now Judas is likening them to all of that, and now he's likening them to a shooting star. Whoa, did you see that? I know it was just a flash, just in an instant. Wow! Well, that's what they are. They just are all show. They steal the show, and then they're gone.

Maybe you've heard it said, doubtless you've heard it said, "that was their 15 minutes of fame." What's the other one? "A flash in the pan." Am I saying that right? Somebody just humor me. Flash in the pan, right? So that's what they are. They're like a shooting star; here today, gone tomorrow but not before stealing the show before they go.

Best illustration I ever heard, and you know it's good because it's not mine. It's Pastor Chuck Smith. We're at a conference. I'll never forget this. It's many years ago. And he drew this comparison that has stayed with me ever since. And of course, being the godly man that I am, I've totally stolen it from him and plagiarized it. It's the best illustration I ever heard.

Let's — we're coming up to the 4th of July, right? So the fireworks — forget New Year's Eve. That doesn't work on the mainland. I had no idea. My wife told me that — you know, Kailua girl — before we moved. By the way — because we moved in December — New Year's Eve: I'm just warning you because you have asthma, you might want to stay inside with the AC on and the window shut.

And I'm like, you guys do this on New Year's Eve? Who does that? Hawaii does that. So anyway, that was no extra charge too.

But I'm talking about the 4th of July when they have the fireworks. It's like, wow! I mean, the fireworks show! And you're sitting there in your uncomfortable folding chair on the beach, Kailua Beach, and you had to go through a thousand people to get that seat. And they all smoke cigarettes.

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Anyway. And then you get there, you know, (Labored breathing) you know, and then the fireworks smoke doesn't help. But I digress. So you're sitting there, and you're just wowed by this fireworks show, and then it's over. And all the smoke clears, and what's left? The stars that were always there but eclipsed by the fireworks that stole the show, stole the spotlight, if you will.

One of the ways that you can identify someone like this is that they're all about stealing the show. They love the spotlight. That should be what we call a red flag if there was ever a red flag.

It's really the opposite that's true. And I just speak from my years of experience in ministry that when somebody really wants the spotlight, they're probably not who God has. When they seek to posture and position themselves to be in the spotlight. Hey! And they steal the show because they are the show, that's usually a red flag.

I mean — because the litmus test on the other side of the table for me — I'm speaking specifically as it relates to ministry — the other side of that table in terms of a litmus test is it's usually the guy that is fighting, kicking, biting, scratching, and wants nothing to do with the spotlight. Hey, do you want to come up and share? No! No!

Think about it. Everyone, I mean, without exception, that God called, did they not try to get out of it? Some of them were brilliantly creative. I think about Moses. I mean, he's coming up with all kinds of excuses, which is why he ends up with his older brother that's speaking for him on his behalf. We talked about that last week. I won't do that to you again this week.

But what about Gideon? I mean, this is, I mean, it's classic, if I can say like that. God comes to Gideon. Where is Gideon? Well, he's threshing the grain that the Midianites were stealing from the Israelites at the wine press, hiding out from them because he knew they would come and steal it. That was their year income. The crops that they would live on, the Midianites would steal them.

And here's Gideon, so fearful of them that he goes and hides in the wine press to thresh the grain. And that's where God comes to him and calls him. And what he calls him? Gideon: Mighty warrior.

I'm Gideon. I'm like, where?

[Laughter]

Who, me? You talking to me? Now, just let me have this, okay? Because I love Gideon. You're going to get to meet him pretty soon by the way, maybe a little bit more than seven years from now. But I love him so much because he represents the kind of people that God calls.

So he's like, God, — this is a very loose paraphrase — you pulled the wrong file. You got the wrong guy. I don't know where you're getting this whole mighty warrior thing, but I'm not him. So God's like, no, you are.

Well, no. No, I'm not. Strike one: I'm the black sheep of my family. Strike two: My family is the black sheep of our tribe. And strike three: Our tribe is the black sheep of all the tribes of Israel. Strike three, I'm out. Find somebody else.

Come on, don't look at me. You would do the same thing.

I'm going to use you, call you, oh, mighty warrior, Gideon, to deliver the Israelites out of the hand of the Midianites. How laughable is this?

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Here I am hiding from them, and you're going to use me to deliver the Israelites from them?

Yeah.

No.

Yeah!

Okay. So then after the strike three, I'm out doesn't work, you know what happens next, right? He goes for the fleece.

How many of us have said, you know, I'm putting a fleece out before the Lord? Don't say that because that is not faith, that's unfaith. That's the antithesis of faith because what he was saying was, okay, God, I just need confirmation here because this is questionable, it's laughable, but it's questionable that I'm the one that You're going to use.

No, Gideon, you are the one that I'm going to use because when it's all said and done, everybody's going to look at you and go, it wasn't him.

Well, who was it then?

It was God. So even if you wanted to, Gideon, because you're the black sheep of the black sheep of the black sheep, because you're hiding out in fear, everybody's going to know it was Me, not you. You won't be able to take the credit for it because that would be laughable. Everybody would look and go, Gideon? Yeah. No.

So now here's Gideon, right? I'm going to put the fleece out, God. If this is really, really, really, really You, let the dew be on the fleece, but not the ground.

If I'm God, I'm like, whatever. Just, you guys get down there, dew the fleece. So he wakes up the next morning. Sure enough, dew on the fleece, not on the ground. I might have it backwards. Be gracious.

So now, here's Gideon. And please don't be too hard on him because we do this.

God, okay, just to be really, really, really, really, really, really, really sure, have a myna bird hit my windshield at 2:30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon, with windward mauka showers, with a red Ford Explorer in front of me. No, that would be about the equivalent of it because that's what... Was that too much?

So what does he say? Okay, God, just I want to be really, really, really sure. So now I'm going to put the fleece out but have the dew be on the ground, but not the fleece. (Slaps forehead) Okay, just get down there and do it. So they go down, and He does it.

Could you imagine waking up? Gideon, the first thing he's going to look for is that dew. He's like, uh-oh. I think this is really, really, really, really God.

Now, it hasn't —

(Singing) ♪ It's only just begun ♪

Because now he's got — sorry about that flashback — he's got to get the army of the Israelites together, 32,000 of them. Problem: The Midianites, at minimum, 135,000. There's a detail in the

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narrative that says that you could not number them. Either way they're outnumbered. The odds don't look good.

So what's God going to do? Now, our way of thinking is: We need more men. God: You need less men. So here's what you're going to do, Gideon. You're going to go to these men, 32,000, and you're going to say, if anyone's afraid, just go home.

If I'm Gideon, I'm like, no, I'm not going to do that, God because I think they're all afraid. And then, of course, he does it. And if I'm Gideon, it's going to be something like this. If any of you are (Mumbling his words) you can go ahead and go home.

[Laughter]

What did you say, Gideon?

He sees the proverbial handwriting on the wall. You said you were going to let me have this, right? I'm having a lot of fun with this. This is a true story. This is not a Bible story. This is a true story. It's not based on a true story. It's a true story. It really happened, literally, this way.

So he says, if you're afraid, go home. 22,000: Bye! And now he's down to 10,000. God's like, Gideon, you still got too many guys.

What?

Okay, here's what you're going to do. You're going to go to the springs. I know they're thirsty. You're going to have them drink. And I want you to separate the ones that stick their face in the water and just, blurb-blurb-blup-blup, you know, and drink, and the other ones who don't, and they just take, and they cup the water and bring it to their mouth to drink.

Now, if I'm Gideon, I'm thinking, I already know what's going to happen here. I see a trend here, God. The majority — I don't think he knew yet it was going to be 9700 that stuck their face in the water to drink and only 300 who cupped it and brought it to their mouth to drink.

And by the way, I know you've heard it taught this way: That these were the 300 'Top Gun,' Green Berets, cream of the crop, best of the best.

No, they weren't. That doesn't fit. Because then it could be conceivable that when God delivered the Israelites out of the hand of the Midianites, that these 300 Top Guns would fly in — I should use a different comparison — but they're going to fly them in. Well of course, they're the Top Guns. No. They were the least, the last, the lame, the blind, the cripple, the elderly. You know why they didn't stick their face in the water? They couldn't.

Now, listen, can we just talk about this? Because I need to talk about this. As you get older, come on, let's be honest, you think twice about bending down because first of all, it hurts now, and then second of all, there's no guarantees you're going to be able to get back up. And if you do, it's not going to be any time soon.

Are we okay so far? So could you imagine these 300 guys? First of all, they probably got pushed to the back of the line by the young buckaroos who pushed their way. Hey, let me in! And they stick their face in the water.

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Here's Gideon. Okay, you guys, go over there, all 9700 of you. And here's these 300 guys last, you know, with their walkers. I'm sorry. I mean, no disrespect. You know, and they finally get their turn, and...

(Spoken with an elderly voice) "Okay, you know. Are you going to go, or should I go?"

And then...

[Laughter]

Now watch how this works. God delivers them, confuses the Midianites, 300 of them — you know how this went down, right? This had to be God. The Midianites thought that the 300 were the heads of thousands behind them. So they thought they were outnumbered. And it threw them into such chaos and confusion that they fled, or they started killing each other in all of the chaos and confusion. I love it when God does that. Is that bad? (Chuckling)

Anyway, so here he's got— now, watch them come back. Can we just use our God-given imagination we just talked about? Can you see these 300 guys coming back to the camp of the Israelites after defeating the Midianites, going, (Spoken with an elderly voice) "You should have seen us!"

It doesn't work.

[Laughter]

"Come on, Grandpa. You what?"

(Spoken with an elderly voice) "Yeah."

No, it's not, you should have seen us, it's you should have seen God! Because God did it.

This is Paul who basically said, I have this thorn in my side, in my flesh. We don't know what it is by God's design because if we knew what it was, and it's not an area in our lives that we struggle with, we're going to dismiss it. So it's kept generic, so we fill in the blank. There is a thorn in our flesh tormenting us, a messenger of Satan, day in, day out, every day. So what do you do? You pray, God, take this out.

God: You don't want Me to take this out.

Why?

Because it causes you to rely completely upon Me, and it keeps you in that place of humility. If I take that out, then the humility goes out and the pride comes in. And you know what follows pride? I'm protecting you from that which I know would destroy you.

Why?

Because 14 years prior — he would never even utter a word of this — but 14 years prior, God caught him up to heaven. He didn't even, 14 years later, know if it was in the spirit or not. But he's so careful about saying, God gave me a tour of heaven. Na-na-na-na-nah.

He was so careful about it. When he does talk about it 14 years later, he talks about it in the third person, **"I knew, a man."** He was that man. Many believe it was when he was left for dead outside of Lystra, when he was stoned to death. I mean the timeline fits.

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And you know what he does when after he's, you know — you can take a hint when you're kicked out of town and they try to kill you, like don't come back. Okay, I get it. I'm not coming back. You don't want me here. I don't feel welcomed here. So I think I've overstayed my welcome. You want to kill me. They stoned you outside the city. So what are you going to do? I'm leaving. I'm never going back.

What does Paul do? Goes back, right back into Lystra, where Timothy is, by the way. But anyway, let's get back to Gideon.

So here he is. He now has 300, for all intents and purposes, elderly, disabled. Don't use “handicap.” You know why? It comes from the beggar who has his cap in his hand. Disabled, even disabled, just be careful with that. It's not semantics, not a play on words. It's really a derogatory term to say someone is handicapped for that reason.

But they're disabled, they're unable. But that's okay because God calls those who are unable.

Why?

Because He is able. God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies for called. He's not looking for ability, He's looking for availability. And these guys are retired. They're available. So I'm going to use you so that there's no question that it was me who did it.

This again is the Apostle Paul. When he's writing to the Corinthians, he is — it's actually, well, it's my go-to because he basically says, **“That God calls the foolish of this world to confound the wise, the weak of this world to shame the strong.”**

Why does God choose the Gideons of this world and use them so mightily?

Because then only He gets the glory. Because if God called the guy with the impressive resume, you know, all the letters after his name. I don't mean to be disrespectful. If you've got letters after your name, I'd like to know what some of those letters stand for. You know, I know what some of them stand for. But that's a lot of letters. You need a, you know, the font on your business card is very small so you can get...

So I wanted those letters. So I just got a legal a.k.a., and I just stuck two letters in the middle. Still fits on the card: JD. What does that stand for? Jack Daniels? Yeah, that's an open door. So no, it stands for Jesus' disciple.

Oh, excuse my French. That was not French. My dad taught French. I can assure you that was not French. But you're excused.

So anyway, I was going somewhere deeply profound with that. So God doesn't call those people. Why? Because they would be the ones that would get the credit. If God called the strong, well, of course. If God called the best, well, of course. If God called the wise, well, of course.

No, He calls the Gideons, the fools, the weak, so that when God does what God does, there's no way the Gideons, the JDs, the et al, could ever take any credit for it. I love it when people — don't do this, especially not today, now that I'm saying this — but I love it when people come to me and go, where did you go to cemetery, I mean, seminary?

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What, are you kidding me? I barely graduated high school. I got suspended, almost expelled, my senior year. I — I — 4.0? More like 1.-something was me. You know “the most likely to succeed,” how — do they still do that? They shouldn't.

No, now they don't, everybody succeeds and gets a trophy, I guess, in this world. But, you know, “the most likely to succeed.” I mean, you know the, all of the accomplishments, you know, letterman club, you know, captain of the football team, head cheerleader, you know, all of these accomplishments during the high school years, you know, down below their senior picture.

I still have that in my yearbook. Here's my picture: There's nothing under there. No. It's white. And they put me right next to somebody who has a lot. So there's a lot of white. That's okay. I'm going to take this guy, and I'm going to call him into the ministry, and I'm going to use him so that you'll look at him, the least likely to succeed, the last person on earth you would ever think would be a pastor.

By the way, my 10-year class reunion was in my first church that I planted on the mainland and the reunion celebration was in my church. All my classmates; it was so cool. I wish you could have been there. By the way, very small class, 16 people. No, a small town. But they're all looking at me going, (Shocked and baffled look) You?

No, God. Only God could do that. Only God gets the glory. Even if I wanted to, there's no way.

Wow, Pastor, how did you guys get that property on Kam Highway?

We didn't. God did.

How did you guys — I mean, this is beautiful. How did — the state of disrepair it was in, how did you guys do that? (Cartoon laugh)

We didn't! God did. You think we could do that? No. Who gets the credit for that? Did you have like a — hey — this is the one I love the most. I know I'm going too far. We've got one more. We're almost done. But I love this one: What's your secret? What's your vision?

What's vision statement? My vision statement? Uh, give me a second. (Flipping through the Bible) I didn't know I was supposed to have one. Isn't — this is the vision statement.

Yeah, but what was your plan? Didn't you guys, like, have a plan or a strategy?

Strategy? I didn't know I was supposed to have one. I just was supposed to preach the word and show up and keep my hands to the plow and be faithful.

Yeah, but what about church growth? You know, they have books on, seminars, conferences on church growth.

I'm like, where's that in here. Is that in my job description? Because I thought God added to the church the growth those who should be saved. If that was on me, you got the wrong guy. I'll go where — no, I won't go where Gideon — I'll try to do what Jonah did, and I'll end up...

Anyway, that's another study. Last one, last part of *verse 13*, and we'll end with this. And I think you're going to — this is going to resonate with you because the question is: Do they have darkness about them? Darkness.

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And there's just something is — there's just a — it's not light. It's dark. There's just a darkness. Jude, I mean, this is — how's this one? He describes them as having reservations for which they have RSVP'd.

When are the reservations for?

Forever.

What are the reservations for?

Oh, you don't want to have reservations for this. **“The blackest darkness.”** Not just the darkness, outer darkness for all of eternity, but the black — the inference is, and we see this throughout Scripture, even from the Savior himself in Luke's Gospel, I want to say it's *Chapter 13 (12)*, but there's different degrees of eternal punishment and damnation.

And apparently, these people have done something that has warranted and risen to the level of having this blackest darkness reserved for them. Now, if the question is “why,” the answer is because we're dealing with eternal lives.

I want to be careful here. But during the whole Black Lives Matter — in fact, Mac and I did a Thursday night about this. It's not a skin issue. It's a sin issue. It's not race. We're all part of the human race. But I remember when I was just before the Lord in my time with the Lord, and He ministered to me: Eternal lives matter. Eternal lives matter.

So I began to inquire of the Lord concerning this, and it hit me pretty hard, I might add, that this is the “why” behind the “what” God takes this very seriously because of what's at stake here. It's not just life and death. It's eternal life and eternal death and darkness and separation for all of eternity.

And by the way, hell is for all eternity. And that should send shivers up and down every single one of our spines, for good reason. This darkness about them and darkness in them is due to the darkness that is reserved for them. They're not walking in the light. In them there is no light, only darkness. And in the dark, there is no light at all.

And you can tell when you're talking with somebody, and there's just a darkness about them. Let me see if I can just close it up this way. God is faithful to give you discernment because after all, you're His child, and He wants to protect you.

How do you, as an earthly parent, you'll everything and stop at nothing to protect your children from a formidable threat that's posed against them. If they're going to be deceived, especially when you're talking about stakes like this, in as much as you're able as their earthly, fallen parent, you're going to do everything it takes to protect them from this.

So I say that to say this in closing. God is going to, at the time that you need it, give you that discernment of spirits. And you'll be in a conversation with them, and God will quicken your spirit. That's the Holy Spirit in you that's putting that check in you. There's darkness here. Something's not right here, and I need to disenfranchise myself and distance myself and disconnect myself from this individual because they're a false Christian.

We're going to read later — I forget what verse it is in Jude — they don't have the Spirit in them. In other words, these are not Christians. They're false Christians. They're false influencers that have undue evil, dark influence on Christians.

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See Satan cannot — this will be the last, my last closing. Satan cannot do anything from without because the gates of Hades cannot prevail against the church. So he has to do it from within. That's why he has his agents within the church trying to do that which he cannot do outwardly against the church.

Does that make sense? So please don't be so easily duped. Be discerning, be welcoming, be loving. Err on the side of grace, certainly. But don't throw your discernment out the window in doing so. I hope that helps.

Kapono, come on up. Why don't you stand up? We'll close in prayer and song.

Lord, thank You for the strong word. It's needed, especially in the day in which we find ourselves living. We live in a world that is most unforgiving of not being discerning when it comes to things like this. The damage that can be caused, the destruction from people like this because the enemy is all about stealing, killing, and destroying. That's what he's come to do, and that's what he's sent people like this into the church to do.

So Lord, the onus is on us, and we know that we have the Holy Spirit in us to give us that discernment. But would You, O, God, please, we pray, we ask, give us spiritual discernment, especially in these last days as the evil waxes worse and the deception, seemingly with each passing day, is just off the charts, and it's going to get worse.

So Lord, thank You. Thank You for the Holy Spirit. Thank You for Jude. Thank You for these two verses in Jude. Now from here, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, would You take this and start that process of applying it to our lives, blessing it to our hearts? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.