

Small Group Guide: Jude -- Warning Signs and True Faith



Overview

This week's message walked through Jude's urgent letter to the early church, a letter he did not want to write but felt compelled to send. Rather than the encouraging message he had planned, Jude wrote a warning about false teachers who had crept into the church and the destruction their influence could bring. Using examples from Israel's history, angelic rebellion, and the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jude calls the church to stay rooted in scripture, genuine faith, and God's true authority.

Key Takeaways

- Jude's letter was motivated by love for the church, not a desire to be negative or divisive. Warning people is sometimes the most caring thing a leader can do.
- False teachers do not always look dangerous from the outside. They often come in under the shade of the church and gradually shift what is considered holy and what is considered acceptable.

- God judges between genuine faith and false faith, even among people who are in the right place at the right time. Sitting in the right pew is not the same as trusting in the right Savior.
- The three warnings Jude issues -- the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the rebellion of Korah -- describe works without faith, religion for personal gain, and rejection of God's true authority.
- Michael the archangel overcame the devil not by his own power or position, but by appealing to God's word. Scripture is the objective standard for testing all teaching and authority.
- True authority in the church flows from Christ, the head of the church, and is measured against what he and his apostles actually said -- not against institutional tradition alone.
- Salvation is grounded in faith in Christ. Faith produces genuine works, but works cannot produce saving faith.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. When you first heard that Jude wanted to write an encouraging letter but felt he had to write a warning instead, what did that tell you about his character and his love for the church? Have you ever been in a situation where you had to say something difficult to someone you cared about instead of what you originally planned?

Diving Deeper

2. Jude uses the example of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea to make the point that being in the right group or the right place does not guarantee saving faith. What does that challenge you to think about in your own spiritual life?
3. Korah's rebellion was rooted in pride and a refusal to accept God's ordained leadership. In what ways do you see that same spirit showing up in the church today, and in what ways might it show up in your own heart?
4. The sermon described false teachers as birds nesting under the mustard plant -- present within the church but slowly pecking away at its fruit. What are some practical ways a person or a congregation can identify that kind of influence before it takes root?

5. Jude connects the sin of the fallen angels and the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah to the broader warning that false teachers will lead the church toward moral corruption. How do you think a church should respond when its surrounding culture begins to pressure it to redefine what is morally acceptable?
6. The sermon described three types of false influence Jude warns against: works without faith (the way of Cain), religion for personal profit (the error of Balaam), and rejection of God's ordained authority (the rebellion of Korah). Which of these three do you think is most present and most dangerous in the church today, and why?
7. The sermon addressed ecclesial anxiety -- the fear that you might not be in the right denomination or the right institution to be truly saved. How does looking directly at what Christ and his apostles said in scripture help settle that anxiety? Have you or someone you know experienced this kind of fear?
8. Michael the archangel responded to the devil's accusations not with his own arguments but with the words of scripture. What does that tell us about how we should prepare ourselves to resist false teaching in our own lives?

Reflection

9. The sermon drew a clear line between faith that produces works and works that attempt to replace faith. Where in your own life might you be tempted to substitute religious activity for genuine trust in Christ?
10. Jude says he felt compelled to write what the church needed to hear rather than what he wanted to say. Who in your life has done that for you? How did you receive it at the time, and how do you view it now?

Practical Applications

This week, consider doing one or more of the following:

- Identify one source of teaching you regularly consume -- a podcast, a social media account, a book, a church you attend -- and take time to evaluate it against scripture. Ask yourself whether it points you toward faith in Christ or toward something else.
- Read the book of Jude in one sitting. It is only 25 verses. As you read, note every warning Jude gives and every example he uses. Consider what each one would look like in a modern church context.

- If you have experienced ecclesial anxiety -- uncertainty about whether you are in the right church tradition to truly be saved -- spend time this week reading John 3:16, Romans 10:9, and Romans 3:23-24. Let the words of Christ and his apostles speak directly to that fear.
 - Think about the difference between faith that produces works and works performed without faith. Write down two or three things you do regularly in your Christian life and honestly ask whether they flow from genuine trust in Christ or from a desire to earn standing before God or others.
 - Have a conversation with someone in your group or a trusted friend about a time when you encountered teaching that did not line up with scripture. How did you recognize it? What did you do?
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Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together for:

- Discernment for your church and for the broader body of Christ to recognize false teaching before it takes root
 - Genuine, saving faith for every person in the room -- not faith in works or tradition, but faith in Christ alone
 - Courage to speak truth in love when it is difficult, the way Jude did for the early church
 - Protection over a generation that is searching for truth and is vulnerable to voices that twist scripture for their own purposes
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Scriptures referenced in this sermon: Jude 1, Numbers 16, Genesis 6, Zechariah 3:2, John 3:16, Romans 10:9, Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:23

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Book of Jude: Contending for the Faith



Day 1: The Danger of Drifting Faith

Reading: Jude 1:1-7 and Numbers 16:1-35

Devotional: The Israelites crossed the Red Sea, witnessed miracles, and walked under the very presence of God — yet some still refused to believe. Korah's rebellion reminds us that proximity to holy things does not equal genuine faith. Sitting in the right building, knowing the right language, and following the right rituals mean nothing without authentic trust in God. Jude's warning is not meant to frighten the faithful but to awaken the comfortable. Ask yourself today: is your faith a living trust in God, or a performance of religion? True faith is not inherited or assumed. It is chosen, daily and deliberately.

Reflection Questions:

- In what areas of your spiritual life have you been going through the motions rather than genuinely trusting God?
- What would it look like for your faith to move from habit to conviction this week?

Practical Application: Spend five minutes in silence today, asking God to reveal any area where your faith has become routine rather than relational.

Day 2: The Anchor of God's Word

Reading: Jude 1:8-9 and Zechariah 3:1-5

Devotional: When Michael the archangel faced the devil's accusations over the body of Moses, he did not rely on his own authority or power. He said simply, "The Lord rebuke you" — a direct quotation rooted in the word of God found in Zechariah 3:2. Even in the heavenly realm, Scripture is the standard. If an archangel recognized that victory comes not from personal authority but from the authority of God's word, how much more should we anchor ourselves there? In a world flooded with competing voices, opinions, and philosophies, the word of God remains the one objective standard that does not shift with culture or convenience.

Reflection Questions:

- When you face spiritual opposition or confusion, what is your first instinct — to rely on your own reasoning or to turn to Scripture?
- Are there areas of your life where you have allowed cultural opinion to carry more weight than God's word?

Practical Application: Memorize one verse this week that speaks directly to a struggle you are currently facing. Return to it each time that struggle rises.

Day 3: Faith That Produces Fruit

Reading: Jude 1:10-11 and Genesis 4:1-7

Devotional: Cain's great failure was not simply that he brought the wrong offering. His failure was that his offering revealed a heart that trusted in itself. He brought what was convenient, not what was costly. Abel's sacrifice was an outward expression of an inward faith. Jude warns that false teaching will always produce a religion of works without faith — a Christianity of appearances that ultimately leads nowhere. True salvation is not earned by what we bring to God but received through faith in what Christ has already brought on our behalf. Works do not produce faith. Faith, when it is genuine, produces works that honor God naturally and freely.

Reflection Questions:

- Are the good things you do for God flowing from genuine faith, or are they attempts to earn something from him?

- What would it look like to release the pressure of performance and rest in what Christ has already done?

Practical Application: Write down one act of service or generosity you can offer this week not to be seen or rewarded, but simply as an overflow of gratitude for what God has given you.

Day 4: Recognizing False Authority

Reading: Jude 1:11-13 and Matthew 7:15-23

Devotional: Balaam had genuine knowledge of God's voice, yet he sold that knowledge to the highest bidder. His story is a sobering reminder that spiritual knowledge and spiritual integrity are not the same thing. Jude warns that false teachers will arise who use the language of faith to serve their own gain, their own comfort, and their own ambition. Jesus himself said we would know them by their fruit, not by their credentials, their platform, or their persuasiveness. The measure of any teacher is not how compelling they sound but whether their life and their message align consistently with the whole counsel of Scripture.

Reflection Questions:

- What voices are you regularly allowing to shape your understanding of God and Scripture?
- How do you currently evaluate whether a teacher or leader is trustworthy?

Practical Application: Choose one teacher, podcast, or resource you regularly engage with and spend time this week evaluating their teaching against Scripture directly, not just by how it makes you feel.

Day 5: The True Head of the Church

Reading: Jude 1:17-25 and John 3:16-17

Devotional: Jude ends his letter not in despair but in doxology. Despite all the warning, all the corruption, and all the danger of false teaching, the church belongs to the one who is able to keep it from stumbling and to present it blameless before his glory. Christ is the head of the church, not any institution, council, or tradition. His words are plain: whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. Salvation rests on faith in Christ alone, and that faith is available to every person who calls on his name. No ecclesial

anxiety, no denominational claim, and no human institution can override what the head of the church himself has declared.

Reflection Questions:

- Have you placed your full confidence in Christ himself, or have you allowed the complexity of church tradition and denominational claims to cloud your assurance of salvation?
- How does knowing that Christ himself is the head of the church bring you peace today?

Practical Application: Write out in your own words what you believe about your salvation and why. Let it be grounded entirely in what Scripture says Christ has done, not in what any institution or tradition has told you that you must do to secure it.
