

Small Group Guide: Contending for the Faith

Based on the Book of Jude, Verses 1-4



Background and Context

The book of Jude was written by Judas, a half-brother of Jesus who, during Jesus' earthly ministry, did not believe in him and even attempted to put him in harm's way (John 7:1-5). His transformation after the resurrection into a humble servant of Christ is itself a testimony to the power of the gospel. In this opening passage, Jude reveals that he set aside the encouraging letter he wanted to write in order to deliver a harder, more necessary message: the church must contend earnestly for the faith.

Key Takeaways

- **Humility is the foundation of faithful leadership.** Jude, a biological brother of Jesus, calls himself only a bondservant. His humility, and that of his brother James, ultimately elevated them to positions of influence in the early church.
- **The church has a commander in chief.** Jesus holds ultimate authority. The apostles, through Scripture, serve as the marching orders. Believers are the army called to carry out the Great Commission.

- **Truth told with compassion is love.** Withholding hard truth to protect someone's feelings, or to protect your own reputation, is not love when it leads to destruction.
 - **The church is called to reach outward, not compete inward.** The decline in Christian identification and church membership in America is at least partly a result of churches competing for existing believers rather than pursuing the lost.
 - **The gospel is the greatest story ever told.** The eternal God entered time, suffered, died, defeated death, and offers his righteousness freely to all who receive it. That message is worth contending for.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. Think about a time when someone told you a hard truth instead of what you wanted to hear. Looking back, how did that honesty affect you? Was it ultimately an act of love?
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Section 1: Who Is Jude? (Verses 1-2)

2. Jude calls himself a bondservant of Jesus rather than his brother. What does it tell us about his transformation that he chose that title over one that would have carried far more personal prestige?
 3. Jude and James both disbelieved in Jesus during his earthly ministry, yet both became pillars of the early church. What does their story say about how God uses unlikely people? How does that challenge the way you see yourself or others in your own community?
 4. The pastor described the church as an army with a commander in chief, a major general, and enlisted members. How does thinking of yourself as a member of a spiritual army change how you approach your daily life and your role in the church?
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Section 2: A Necessary Message (Verse 3)

5. Jude wanted to write an encouraging letter about salvation but felt compelled to write a corrective one instead. Have you ever felt called to say something difficult

when you would have preferred to say something encouraging? How did you handle it?

6. The phrase "contend earnestly for the faith" implies active effort and even struggle. What does contending for the faith look like in your everyday life, your workplace, your neighborhood, or your family?
 7. The pastor noted that the same tensions Jude was addressing in the first century are present in the church today. Does that surprise you? What does it tell us about the nature of the church's ongoing struggle?
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Section 3: The Problem in the Church (Verse 4)

8. The pastor described churches that have become more focused on cultural acceptance than on the salvation of souls. Without pointing fingers at specific congregations, where do you think the line is between being culturally sensitive and compromising the truth of the gospel?
 9. The statistics shared showed a dramatic decline in Christian identification and church membership in America over the past five decades. What do you think are the root causes of that decline? What responsibility, if any, do we bear for it?
 10. The pastor argued that churches competing with one another for existing believers, rather than working together to reach the lost, is part of the problem. Do you agree? What would genuine cooperation among churches in your community look like practically?
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Section 4: The Gospel Worth Contending For

11. The pastor closed with a description of the gospel, from the eternal God entering time as an infant, to the cross, to the resurrection, to the offer of eternal life. Which part of that description struck you most deeply, and why?
 12. He said, "If it changed you, you know how much the cross meant to you. How much could it mean to someone who doesn't know about it yet?" Who in your life does not yet know the gospel? What is one step you could take this week toward sharing it with them?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

- **Identify one hard truth you have been avoiding.** Is there someone in your life who needs to hear something difficult from you? Pray for the compassion and courage to speak it clearly and lovingly.
- **Audit your church involvement.** Ask yourself honestly whether your engagement in church life is oriented more toward your own comfort and preferences or toward reaching people who do not yet know Jesus.
- **Pray specifically for the lost.** Write down the names of three people in your life who are not connected to a church or who have not received the gospel. Commit to praying for them by name this week and ask God to open a door for a conversation.
- **Study the Great Commission.** Read Matthew 28:18-20 and reflect on what it means for you personally to make disciples. Journal your thoughts and bring them to share with the group.
- **Practice humility this week.** Jude's humility opened the door to his influence. Identify one area of your life where pride may be limiting your usefulness to God, and take one concrete step toward laying it down.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together for the following:

- Courage to speak the truth in love, even when it is uncomfortable
- Unity among believers and churches in your community around the mission of the gospel
- Specific people in your lives who do not yet know Jesus
- A renewed sense of calling as members of the army of Christ, sent to carry the greatest message in human history

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, 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." -- Jude 3

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Book of Jude and the Call to Contend for the Faith



Day 1: Humility as the Foundation of Faithful Service

Reading: Jude 1-2; Matthew 23:11-12

Devotional: Jude introduces himself not as the brother of Jesus, but as a bondservant. He had every reason to claim a unique status. He grew up in the same household as the Son of God. Yet after the resurrection, all of that pride collapsed. He no longer saw himself as an equal or an insider. He saw himself as a servant. True humility is not self-deprecation. It is an accurate understanding of who God is and who we are in relation to him. When we stop positioning ourselves and start surrendering ourselves, God can actually use us. Ask yourself today where pride may be blocking your willingness to serve.

Day 2: Contending for Truth in a Culture of Comfort

Reading: Jude 3-4; 2 Timothy 4:2-4

Devotional: Jude wanted to write an encouraging letter. He was prepared to do it. But he was compelled instead to deliver a harder message because the moment demanded it.

There is a version of ministry and a version of Christian living that only says what people want to hear. It feels kind. It avoids conflict. But when the truth is hidden in the name of comfort, people are left without what they actually need. Speaking the truth with compassion is an act of love. Withholding it to protect a relationship or a reputation is not love at all. Consider today whether there is a truth you have been avoiding that someone in your life genuinely needs to hear.

Day 3: Preserved and Sent

Reading: Jude 1; John 17:15-18; Romans 8:38-39

Devotional: Jude describes believers as those who are called, sanctified, and preserved in Jesus Christ. That word preserved carries the weight of a promise. You are not holding yourself together by your own effort. You are being held. The same God who called you into faith is the one keeping you in it. This does not mean the road will be easy. It means the outcome is already secured. You are preserved not so that you can stay comfortable and protected from the world, but so that you can be sent into it without fear. The army Jude is addressing has already been told the war is won. Go accordingly.

Day 4: The Unchanging Gospel in a Changing World

Reading: Jude 3; Galatians 1:6-9; Hebrews 13:8

Devotional: Jude writes of a faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. The gospel is not a document under revision. It is not a message that needs to be softened or updated to match the preferences of a new generation. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The statistics of declining church membership and Christian identity in America are not an argument for changing the message. They are a warning about what happens when the message gets compromised. A gospel reshaped by culture to gain acceptance loses the very power that makes it the gospel. Hold to what was delivered. It has not expired.

Day 5: The Greatest Story, and Your Place in It

Reading: John 3:16-17; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Devotional: The creator of the universe entered into human suffering not from a distance, but from within it. He was beaten, mocked, and crucified by the very creation he loved, and he did it willingly so that the debt of sin could be paid in full. That is not just a doctrine to be

memorized. It is the most staggering act of love in all of human history. And now, having received that gift, you have been given a role in extending it to others. You are an ambassador of reconciliation. The question is not whether the message is worth sharing. The question is whether you believe it changed you enough to share it.