

JUDE

A LETTER ABOUT

TRUTH.

DISCERNMENT.

PERSEVERANCE.

STUDY GUIDE

3 STUDIES THROUGH JUDE

01

THE ICTHUS

READ THE WORD. LIVE IT.

A study of Jude for discipleship groups and personal study.

THE ICTHUS / BIBLE STUDIES JUDE CONTEND FOR THE FAITH
one of the New Testament's shortest and most urgent letters. STUDY GUIDE

A three-study journey through

Jude is short enough to read in a few minutes and weighty enough to occupy the church for a lifetime. It begins with believers who are called, loved and kept; it passes through severe warnings about rebellion and false teaching; and it ends with the God who is able to keep His people from stumbling.

These studies are designed for a discipleship group or for personal study. Keep an open Bible beside you. Read the whole passage before working through the notes. The aim is not merely to finish the questions, but to hear the Word of God, understand it in context, and respond in faith and obedience.

THREE MOVEMENTS 01 Contend for the Faith - Jude 1-4 02 A Warning from the Past - Jude 5-16 03 Keep Yourselves in the Love of God - Jude 17-25

How to use the study

READ - Begin with the passage itself. Mark repeated words, commands, contrasts and surprises.

UNDERSTAND - Work slowly through the explanation and cross-references. Let clearer passages illuminate difficult ones.

DISCUSS / REFLECT - Answer honestly. In a group, make room for Scripture to govern the conversation rather than allowing the loudest opinion to do so.

APPLY - Ask what must be believed, rejected, confessed, pursued or changed.

PRAY - Turn what you have learned into prayer.

01 STUDY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH JUDE 1-4
guard the gospel.

Called, loved and kept - and summoned to

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CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

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CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

JUDE 1-4

Before you begin

Read the passage slowly at least twice. On the second reading, mark repeated ideas, commands, warnings, descriptions of God, and anything you do not immediately understand.

BIG IDEA Because the gospel has been entrusted to the church, believers must guard apostolic truth without turning grace into licence or courage into quarrelsomeness.

Observe the text

How does Jude describe himself?

How does he describe his readers?

What command appears in verse 3?

What two accusations are made against the intruders in verse 4?

WALK THROUGH THE PASSAGE

A servant, a brother, and a people kept

Jude identifies himself first as a servant of Jesus Christ and then as the brother of James. That is striking. His natural relationship to Jesus does not become a platform for self-importance. The risen Christ is his Lord. Christian maturity does not make us less dependent on Christ; it makes His lordship more precious to us.

Jude describes his readers with three gospel words: called, loved, and kept. Their security begins in God's initiative, not their spiritual performance. The same letter that will command believers to persevere begins by reminding them that God has acted for them and is preserving them for Jesus Christ.

Mercy, peace, and love multiplied

Jude's greeting is not decorative. Mercy is needed by guilty people, peace by reconciled people, and love by people brought into the fellowship of God. Jude does not merely wish that these gifts exist; he prays that they be multiplied. The Christian life is not sustained by graduating from grace but by receiving more of what God gives in Christ.

The letter Jude did not expect to write

Jude wanted to write about 'our common salvation', but an urgent pastoral danger changed his purpose. Love sometimes speaks gently; love also sounds an alarm. A church that refuses to warn because warning feels uncomfortable has misunderstood pastoral care. Jude's urgency is not panic. It is the seriousness of a shepherd who knows that truth matters because souls matter.

Contend for the faith

The command is to contend earnestly for 'the faith' once for all delivered to the saints. Here 'the faith' is not the intensity of my believing but the apostolic truth Christians believe: the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. It is received, not invented. The church is a steward before it is an innovator.

Yet contending is not permission to become quarrelsome. Jude's final section will command mercy toward doubters. Biblical courage and Christian tenderness belong together. We contend for truth because we love God and people, not because we enjoy combat.

Grace distorted

The intruders Jude describes do two things: they turn grace into permission for sensuality and deny the mastery and lordship of Jesus Christ. False teaching is therefore not only a matter of vocabulary. Doctrine and life are joined. Grace that leaves sin enthroned is not the grace Jude received, and a Jesus who may be admired but not obeyed is not the Lord proclaimed by the apostles.

CROSS-REFERENCES

Read several of these passages. Note what each contributes to Jude rather than merely collecting references.

Acts 20:28-32 - wolves arising and the church guarded by truth

2 Timothy 1:13-14 - hold fast the pattern of sound words

Titus 2:11-14 - grace trains us to deny ungodliness

1 Peter 3:15-16 - defend the hope with gentleness and respect

2 John 7-11 - truth, love, and discernment

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

1. What do Jude's descriptions 'called', 'loved' and 'kept' teach us about where the Christian life begins?

2. Why is it significant that Jude calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ? What does that teach us about Christian identity?

3. Why did Jude change the subject he intended to write about? What does this teach us about when warning is loving?

4. What is 'the faith' in verse 3? How is this different from merely saying, 'I have my own faith'?

5. What would it look like to contend for Christian truth without becoming argumentative, proud, or unkind?

6. According to verse 4, how can a distorted view of grace show itself in a person's life?

7. Where are you most tempted either to compromise truth for acceptance or to defend truth without love?

DOCTRINE IN FOCUS

The faith once delivered

Christianity is historical and received. Its centre is not private spiritual experience but God's saving action in Jesus Christ, witnessed and interpreted by the apostles. The church may explain that faith freshly in every generation, but it has no authority to alter its substance. This is why doctrine matters: to abandon apostolic truth is not to move beyond Christianity but away from its foundation.

Grace and lordship

Jude will not allow grace and obedience to be enemies. Grace is God's undeserved favour toward sinners, supremely displayed in Christ; the Lord who saves also claims His people. We are not accepted because obedience earns salvation, but saving grace does not leave us content beneath the rule of sin.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

What truth from this passage do I need to hold more firmly?

Where must my manner of contending become more Christlike?

Is there an area where I have treated grace as an excuse rather than a power toward godliness?

PRAYER

PRAY TOGETHER Lord Jesus, keep us faithful to the gospel You have entrusted to Your church. Give us courage without pride, conviction without harshness, and a love for grace that produces holiness. Make us servants of Christ who treasure truth because we treasure You. Amen.

02 STUDY A WARNING FROM THE PAST JUDE 5-16
character and destiny of rebellion.

Ancient warnings expose the doctrine,

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A WARNING FROM THE PAST

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A WARNING FROM THE PAST

JUDE 5-16

Before you begin

Read the passage slowly at least twice. On the second reading, mark repeated ideas, commands, warnings, descriptions of God, and anything you do not immediately understand.

BIG IDEA God has judged rebellion before; therefore the church must recognise falsehood by its doctrine, character and fruit, and refuse the presumption that religious privilege makes sin safe.

Observe the text

List every biblical or historical example Jude mentions.

Circle the words or images that describe the false teachers.

What sins or attitudes are repeated across the paragraph?

Where does Jude emphasise judgment?

WALK THROUGH THE PASSAGE

Remember what you already know

Jude does not treat novelty as spiritual maturity. He reminds believers of truths they already know. The Christian needs new understanding, but never at the cost of forgetting old truth. Three judgments establish the pattern: unbelieving Israel, rebellious angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah. Privilege does not make rebellion safe.

Israel: rescued, yet unbelieving

The generation brought out of Egypt experienced extraordinary deliverance, yet many refused to trust and obey God. Jude's point is not that redemption is unreliable; it is that outward association with God's people is no substitute for persevering faith. The warning exposes presumption. Past experiences, Christian surroundings, and religious vocabulary cannot be used as shelter for present unbelief.

Angels and the boundaries of God

Jude refers to angels who did not keep their proper domain and are kept for judgment. Interpreters differ over the precise background, including its relationship to Genesis 6 and Jewish traditions known to Jude's readers. The central point is clearer than every detail: created beings rejected the place assigned by God, and rebellion against His order ends in judgment. We should be modest where Scripture does not answer every question and firm where Jude's argument is plain.

Sodom and Gomorrah

Sodom and Gomorrah become a public example of divine judgment. Jude stresses sexual immorality and the pursuit of forbidden desire. In the flow of the letter, the cities illustrate the same refusal of God's boundaries seen in the preceding example. God's grace never requires us to rename rebellion as freedom.

Michael: even an archangel does not speak arrogantly

Jude's reference to Michael disputing with the devil draws on a Jewish tradition associated with Moses' death. The episode is not preserved in the Old Testament in this form. Jude's use of a known tradition does not require us to treat every part of that tradition as Scripture. His inspired point is the contrast: Michael refuses presumptuous abuse and leaves judgment to the Lord. The false teachers, by contrast, speak arrogantly about matters they do not understand.

Cain, Balaam, and Korah

Three Old Testament names become a compressed spiritual biography of rebellion. Cain represents worship and life corrupted by sin and hatred. Balaam represents greed and the willingness to corrupt God's people for gain. Korah represents proud rebellion against God-given authority. Jude sees the same family resemblance in the intruders: self-will, appetite, greed, and defiance dressed in religious clothing.

Hidden reefs and empty clouds

Jude piles image upon image: dangerous reefs at fellowship meals, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds, fruitless trees, wild waves, wandering stars. The pictures differ, but the verdict is consistent. These people promise nourishment while producing barrenness; they occupy places of influence while serving themselves; they are unstable where faithful teachers should guide others toward Christ.

Enoch and certain judgment

Jude cites a prophecy known from 1 Enoch, a Jewish work familiar in the ancient world. Quoting a true statement from a non-canonical work does not make the whole work canonical, just as Paul can quote pagan poets without making their writings Scripture. Jude uses the saying to underline a biblical truth taught throughout Scripture: the Lord will come in judgment and expose ungodliness.

Grumbling, boasting, flattering

Jude finally brings the diagnosis close to ordinary life. Grumbling, discontent, self-directed desire, boastful speech, and flattering people for advantage may look less dramatic than open heresy, but they reveal the same inward centre: self rather than God. Falsehood eventually produces a kind of life. Sound doctrine should do the opposite: humble us under Christ and make us truthful, grateful, and holy.

CROSS-REFERENCES

Read several of these passages. Note what each contributes to Jude rather than merely collecting references.

Numbers 14:20-35 - unbelief in the wilderness

Genesis 19:1-29 - Sodom and Gomorrah

Numbers 16:1-35 - Korah's rebellion

Numbers 22-24; 31:16 - Balaam and corruption

Genesis 4:1-16 - Cain

Deuteronomy 34:1-8 - death of Moses

2 Peter 2 - close parallel to Jude's warnings

Matthew 7:15-23 - false prophets known by their fruit

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

1. What common lesson connects Israel, the rebellious angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah in verses 5-7?

2. Why is remembering God's past judgments spiritually useful rather than merely negative?

3. What does Michael's restraint teach us about authority, spiritual pride, and careless speech?

4. Compare Cain, Balaam, and Korah. What different expressions of rebellion does Jude bring together?

5. Choose two of Jude's images in verses 12-13. What does each image reveal about false teachers?

6. How should Christians handle Jude's references to traditions outside the Old Testament without either panicking or treating those works as Scripture?

7. Verses 16 describes ordinary-looking sins such as grumbling, boasting, and flattery. Why do these belong in Jude's warning about serious spiritual corruption?

8. What tests from this passage could help a church or small group evaluate teaching today?

DOCTRINE IN FOCUS

Judgment and holiness

Modern readers can be tempted to treat divine judgment as an embarrassing edge of Christianity. Jude treats it as necessary to understanding God's holiness. A God who never judges evil would not be morally indifferent only in theory; He would finally abandon victims, truth, and righteousness. The wonder of the gospel is not that God ceased to be just, but that at the cross justice and mercy meet in Christ.

Discernment

Biblical discernment is more than detecting a wrong sentence. Jude asks us to notice doctrine, moral fruit, appetite, pride, greed, treatment of authority, and the effect a teacher has on the flock. At the same time, discernment must distinguish central gospel error from legitimate disagreement among faithful Christians.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

What warning in this passage do I most need to take seriously?

Whose teaching influences me most, and what fruit does it produce?

Where are pride, appetite, greed, grumbling, or self-interest becoming spiritually dangerous?

PRAYER

PRAY TOGETHER Holy God, guard us from presumption and give us discernment. Keep us from being impressed by words where there is no godly fruit. Expose pride, greed and rebellion in us, and make our lives consistent with the truth we confess. Thank You that mercy is found in Christ. Amen.

03 STUDY KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD JUDE 17-25
hope in the God who is able to keep you.

Persevere with mercy and

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KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD

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KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD

JUDE 17-25

Before you begin

Read the passage slowly at least twice. On the second reading, mark repeated ideas, commands, warnings, descriptions of God, and anything you do not immediately understand.

BIG IDEA Christians persevere by remaining rooted in apostolic truth, prayer, obedient love and future hope - all while depending upon the God who is able to keep His people.

Observe the text

List every command or exhortation in verses 17-23.

What different groups of people appear in verses 22-23?

What is God able to do in verses 24-25?

What words of praise conclude the letter?

WALK THROUGH THE PASSAGE

Remember the apostles

Jude turns from the intruders to 'you, beloved'. The first defence against error is remembrance. The apostles had already warned that scoffers would come. The church should not be shocked when Scripture's warnings prove necessary. Remembering apostolic teaching steadies believers when fashionable voices insist that historic Christianity must be reinvented.

Build, pray, keep, wait

Jude gives a compact pattern for perseverance. Build yourselves up in your most holy faith: grow upon the apostolic foundation. Pray in the Holy Spirit: depend upon God rather than religious technique. Keep yourselves in the love of God: remain in the sphere of obedient fellowship with the God who first loved you. Wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ unto eternal life: Christian obedience faces forward in hope.

Mercy for doubters; rescue for others

Contending for the faith does not mean treating every struggling person as an enemy. Jude distinguishes people and therefore distinguishes our response. Some doubt and need mercy. Others are near destruction and need urgent rescue. Others require mercy mixed with holy caution. Truth without compassion becomes harsh; compassion without truth cannot rescue. Jude refuses both errors.

The God who keeps His people

The letter reaches its summit in doxology. Believers have been told to keep themselves, yet Jude ends by praising the One who is able to keep them from stumbling. Divine preservation does not cancel Christian perseverance; it makes perseverance possible. The Christian works because God is at work, watches because God keeps, and hopes because Christ will present His people faultless before God's glory with exceeding joy.

Glory belongs to God

Jude ends where faithful theology always ends: not with the cleverness of the defender, but with the glory of God. He alone is God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Majesty, dominion, and power belong to Him before all time, now, and forever. The goal of contending is therefore not winning arguments. It is that the church remain faithful to Christ and that God receive the glory due His name.

CROSS-REFERENCES

Read several of these passages. Note what each contributes to Jude rather than merely collecting references.

Acts 20:29-32 - apostolic warning and the word of grace

Colossians 2:6-7 - rooted, built up, established

Romans 8:26-27 - the Spirit helps us in prayer

John 15:9-10 - abiding in Christ's love

Galatians 6:1 - restoring with gentleness and watchfulness

Philippians 2:12-13 - perseverance and God's work

1 Peter 1:3-5 - kept by the power of God through faith

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

1. Why does Jude tell believers to remember the apostles before giving them new instructions?

2. Look at the four movements in verses 20-21: build, pray, keep, wait. Which one most needs attention in your life, and why?

3. How can we reconcile 'keep yourselves in the love of God' with verse 24, where God is the One able to keep us?

4. Why does Jude call for different responses to different people in verses 22-23? What happens when we treat every doubter as a rebel?

5. What might it mean practically to 'save with fear' while also 'hating even the garment defiled by the flesh'?

6. List everything Jude says about God in verses 24-25. Which truth gives you the greatest encouragement?

7. After studying the whole letter, how would you explain 'contend for the faith' in one paragraph? What will you do differently because of Jude?

DOCTRINE IN FOCUS

Perseverance and preservation

Jude places responsibility and security side by side. Believers must build, pray, keep and wait; God is able to keep and present them. The Bible does not solve this by weakening either truth. God's preserving grace creates persevering Christians. Assurance therefore does not produce carelessness; rightly understood, it produces worship, dependence and endurance.

The church and those who doubt

Not every question is apostasy. Jude's mercy toward doubters is an important corrective for churches that know how to identify error but not how to shepherd people through confusion. Christian truth is strong enough to be spoken patiently. The goal is not to defeat the struggling person but, where possible, to bring them safely toward Christ.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Which of Jude's commands will I practise deliberately this week?

Is there someone who needs patient mercy or courageous rescue from me?

How does the doxology change the way I face my own weakness?

PRAYER

PRAY TOGETHER God our Saviour, build us up in the faith, teach us to pray in the Holy Spirit, keep us in Your love, and fix our hope on the mercy of Christ. Make us merciful to those who doubt and courageous in rescuing those in danger. Keep us from stumbling and receive all glory, majesty, dominion and power. Amen.

SERIES CLOSE

Jude at a glance

Jude begins with grace, calls the church to contend, exposes the shape and destiny of rebellion, commands believers to persevere with mercy and discernment, and ends in worship. The letter is severe because truth and souls matter. It is hopeful because the final security of God's people rests in God Himself.

ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY Guard the apostolic faith, resist grace-distorting rebellion, persevere in the love of God, show discerning mercy to others, and trust the God who is able to keep you.

KEY THEMES

Called, loved, kept

Christian identity begins with God's gracious initiative.

The faith

The apostolic gospel is entrusted to the church, not reinvented by it.

False teaching

Error is revealed in doctrine and in the kind of life it produces.

Judgment

God's holiness means rebellion is serious and final judgment is real.

Perseverance

Believers actively continue in faith, prayer, obedience and hope.

Mercy

The church must distinguish the deceiver from the doubter and seek rescue.

Doxology

The deepest confidence of the Christian is the God who keeps His people.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Read Jude alongside 2 Peter 2, Acts 20:17-32, Matthew 7:15-23, Titus 1-2, and 1 Peter 1. Trace how the New Testament joins doctrinal fidelity, holy living, pastoral vigilance, and confidence in God.