



An In-Depth, Theologically-Rich Study of the Book of Jude

You'll be amazed at how much you can learn as you walk verse-by-verse through this small epistle. You'll learn, why Jude uses metaphors like waterless clouds and wild waves, what was going on in Jude's time theologically, why it matters, and so much more.

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Keeping in Truth

My husband and I were part of a church plant in the beginning of our marriage. One day, before our congregation had a building to call home, we met outside for a baptism service. We, a small, close-knit church body, stood in a semicircle around a backyard lake. To our side, our pastor walked downward, from grass to murk to sandy bottom, accompanying a new believer in Christ.

Professing faith and then being tipped backward into the water, this believer was then launched forward into a life of outward testimony to the risen Christ. We all felt raised in joy alongside this convert. As a small congregation, we had the privilege of pointedly celebrating together each new believer's life, dwelling on the realities of salvation through this unique kind of event. Before our eyes, an inwardly personal decision of faith in Christ was expressed outwardly—our fellow believer was plunged as though into His death and joyous resurrection.

Where death once was, life had come forever. In a town where suburb starts to diverge into rural living, where yards are more expansive and patches of woods surrounded us, our little congregation paused to witness and celebrate spiritual life. These truths bring holy pause to our spirits as believers because they are lofty realities, to be remembered in a world that does not know them, does not know God.

Jude uses the first words of his epistle—after introducing himself—to raise his recipients' heads and hearts to the tremendous realities of salvation: "To those who are called." The epistle of Romans features the same word, "called," twice in

WEEK ONE

its opening paragraphs, speaking of recipients who are “called to belong to Jesus Christ” and “called to be saints” (Rom. 1:6, 7). This concept has been defined as God’s “identification of those whom He names as His own.”¹ This call, being named God’s own people who are saved out of the world and raised into a position to serve Him in it, informs and directs our days on this earth.

The epistle of Jude, as we study it, will summon our lives forward into more of God’s truth. It will inform us about our calling to this position we have gained and help us learn new dimensions of our belonging with Him—soul, spirit, and body.

For the first week, we start with an introduction to Jude’s humble, loving, and urgent words to know the truth, to take hold of it and keep it foremost. With Jude’s opening words, we pause to remember the implications of our lofty calling.

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

JUDE 3b

Cross reference: The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

1 TIMOTHY 1:5

Father, I thank You for Your Scriptures, which alone are the final, authoritative source of truth. Thank You for the example in Jude of protecting this truth with a heart of sincerity and love.

CONTENDING IS PROTECTING

Recalling the sight of our two-year-old daughter standing on the wrong side of the unlatched baby gate in front of an open, formidable hardwood staircase still makes me cringe. I thank the Lord that shouting her name from the kitchen froze her. Soon, with my arms around a wide-eyed little girl, I had to explain: “You are precious. You mean so very much to me—that is why I had to talk so loudly. Those stairs are dangerous for you, sweetheart. I wanted to keep you from falling!” Before

our talk, she only had one side of the story, and I probably sounded short-tempered. But my concern was expressed commensurately with the urgency of the danger and was spoken with a desired effect—to keep my daughter from taking one more step in the wrong direction.

One tone is dominant in the epistle of Jude: forcefulness in defending the church against false teachers within its ranks who are distorting the Christian faith. I also hear the tenderness of Jude’s heart, the clarity of his holy understanding of truth, the Christ-keeping-us promise aglow in his concluding thoughts and, most of all, the divine Author superintending his words of love and directness. Jude is not unlike the apostle Paul, who targets false teachers with a “charge” while writing to his protégé Timothy. Paul gives reason behind his words: “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5).

At the very start of his letter, Jude hints at why he writes with a sense of urgency, giving early insight into his intentions. Jude’s thesis is this: “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Being a gospel believer, Jude originally wants to write a letter primarily about the glorious truths of shared salvation—that sin, eternal damnation, and death have been replaced with righteousness, peace in God’s eternal presence, and life forevermore through personal faith in Jesus Christ, who died in place of sinners on the cross and rose in victory. But instead, Jude is compelled to communicate: “Warning! Warning! Beloved church, heed my teaching and keep yourselves for Christ—even as He keeps you for Himself.” Knowing his forceful words to be warranted, he speaks with genuine concern the most loving words his recipients could have heard in their danger—that contending results in protection of people and preservation of the truth in our contexts. Jude asks his recipients to contend in accordance with their Christ-bought calling, and for the rest of the letter, he shows them how.

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FOR STUDY *and* REFLECTION
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Read through this letter. Try not to dwell on unfamiliar concepts—Jude writes of such things as the archangel, Korah, Enoch, wandering stars, etc.—but as you read, watch for and then describe Jude’s tone. (Remember the toddler near the stairs.)

Jude’s overarching theme is to preserve the truth of the faith as established by Christ and passed forward by the apostles. Do you see any repeated words and themes in this book that support that thesis?

Jude will essentially “raise his voice” in the warnings of this letter. As will be evident throughout this coming week of study, Jude writes as one who loves what is worth protecting and preserving. How about you? We live in a cultural context that prizes accommodation to the detriment of conviction. Are you willing to welcome what is convictional—what God asks you to stand for and/or face about yourself?

Jude refers to the lay Christian as a “saint” (v. 3), a holy representative of Christ who has received His truth. How does this description mold your sense of calling in this life?

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

JUDE 3b

***Cross reference:** So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.*

2 THESSALONIANS 2:15

Father, many in history have risked their livelihoods and reputations, even their very lives, to affirm sound doctrine and pass a right interpretation of who You are along to me. Thank You. Grow in my heart a devotion to You and honor of what You have revealed in Scripture.

DOCTRINE IN RELATIONSHIP

If I did not know that my husband, Tyler, likes technological gadgets, I would not have much inspiration for what he might enjoy as a birthday present. If I didn't know that he would serve other people endlessly, I might never suggest he take some time for himself. If I didn't remember information about his colleagues, responsibilities, and work environment, I wouldn't be able to meaningfully engage

in many evening conversations. If I said to Tyler, “I love you so much. But I don’t care to know much about you, your interests, your likes and dislikes, or your pursuits,” I couldn’t really love him very well at all.

I imagine the same kind of disconnect in my relationship with the Lord, were I to think I could love Him without learning and investing myself in what matters to Him—without knowledge of Him, or doctrine. Albert Mohler indicates that doctrinal content plays a crucial role in the evangelical Christian faith:

There is no faith relation with Christ free of doctrinal content. The knower must have some knowledge of the known, or no relation exists. That seemingly redundant and self-evident statement should underline the issue. Jesus Christ and our knowledge of Him are not in any sense coextensive. But one cannot have a relation with Him without knowledge, and that knowledge represents incipient doctrine.²

In day 1, we learned that Jude advocates contending. Contending for what? That’s our focus for today. “I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3b). “Faith” is used in two ways in the New Testament, “designated by two Latin expressions: *fides quae*, ‘the faith that we believe,’ and *fides qua*, ‘the faith by which we believe.’”³ In other words, faith is our expression of trust in Christ.

So the faith—*fides quae*—is what we believe in, meaning the doctrinal content. Jude does not need to summarize the body of doctrinal information to which he refers, since at the time of Jude’s writing, the “apostolic faith was crystallized (v. 3); the words of the apostles could be recalled (v. 17).”⁴ So he assumes his audience’s familiarity with it and accountability to it—though some of them are apparently at risk of forgetting. To prevent their drifting, they are to contend, or strive to reverse the current of a lackadaisical attitude toward the faith.

Jude’s concern for the faith is an example that has been shared throughout the historic Christian tradition. The great tradition of the Christian faith, with its movements of the Holy Spirit among broad bodies of believers, clarifies human

understanding of scriptural doctrine. It seeks to pass forward to future generations a faithful interpretation of Scripture and follows the example of Paul: “So then, brothers, stand firm and *hold to the traditions* that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thess. 2:15, emphasis added).

As one example of this kind of tradition, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) was founded in 1977 in order to defend the precious doctrine of the Scriptures as being without error.⁵ This historic council produced “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” which can be found in the appendix. One of the founding members, Jay Grimstead, also helped lead a separate group of theologians and pastors in forming a well-received, transdenominational faith statement, “The 42 Articles on the Essentials of a Christian Worldview.”⁶ These documents are examples of how prominent believers have contended for truth in our modern-day context, following the admonition of Jude.

While we could easily spend many weeks examining the substance of the faith, I intend to follow Jude’s sequence of writing by moving forward with more themes from this epistle in the days ahead. We will briefly touch on doctrinal content in the study questions below.

FOR STUDY *and* REFLECTION

Describe your familiarity with the faith—for example, concerning the nature of the Bible, salvation, God, and mankind.

Read through the statement on biblical inerrancy in the appendix. To similarly review a succinct statement of faith concerning God, the universe, truth, salvation, and more, you can link to “The 42 Articles on the Essentials of a Christian Worldview” via my website: www.liannabdavis.com/faith-statement. Record what is especially new to you. Feel free to note any questions that come to mind as points for further personal study.

What is your reaction to the quote from Al Mohler and to the extent of Jude’s concern for the faith?

What does Mohler imply about how Christians grow closer with Christ? Does this affect the way you think about growing closer with Christ?

Does doctrine seem to be life-giving, dry, or something in between? Are your feelings about doctrine compatible with the scriptural example of believers who have given of themselves for this work of contending?

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James . . .

JUDE 1a

Cross reference: *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.*

ROMANS 6:17

Father, I see that the opposite of being a slave to sin is a life obedient to the standard of teaching You have put forward in the Scriptures as being a joyful, willing slave to You. My life belongs to You.

A HUMBLE REPRESENTATIVE

Thinking ahead to the ungodly, selfish ways of the false teachers exposed later in Jude's epistle—which you likely observed in your initial reading—Jude's example of godly leadership is a clear, refreshing juxtaposition: he is desirous of being a humble servant, is well-qualified for his endeavors, and is devoted to the truth.

Jude describes himself in verse 1 as, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ.” Now turn to Romans 6:16–18. From these verses in Romans, we can note that being a servant of Jesus Christ—also translated “bondslave” (Greek *doulos*)—is true of all born-again Christians. All mankind has only two options, two types of possible slavery—slavery to sin and death or slavery to Christ.

First, being Christ’s is the great result of salvation. Because we are in Christ, having become God’s own with our whole lives, present and future, we can joyously consider the connotations of being a slave of Christ: “pertaining to a state of being completely controlled by someone or something—‘subservient to, controlled by.’”⁷ Believers are not only released from sin, but set in the safe and utter belonging of God.

Second, a servant, or bondslave, of Jesus Christ is also a specific title in Scripture used to describe someone “who is charged to labour in Christ’s service” as an “authorized . . . representative.”⁸ This specialized meaning is true in both the Old and New Testaments (see, for example, Josh. 14:7; 2 Kings 17:23; Ps. 89:3, 20; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Col. 4:12; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).

Referring to himself as a servant, or bondslave, in his introduction, “the implication is, not simply that Jude is a Christian but that he is a recognized leader with a claim to speak and be listened to.”⁹ When Paul writes to Timothy, he warns of false teachers: “They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm” (1 Tim. 1:7 NIV). By contrast, Jude is an approved leader; he diligently handles God’s revelation (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

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FOR STUDY *and* REFLECTION
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Do you see yourself as having ownership over yourself? What does it mean to welcome the ownership of someone else? (See Gal. 2:20.)

Why is Jesus Christ deserving of this ownership? (Refer to Col. 1:18 and Eph. 1:20–22.)

How does Romans 6:16–18 describe the joys of being a bondslave of Christ?

Jude is an authorized representative (i.e., trained and commissioned by church leadership) of doctrine. As a lay Christian, how can you honor the value of biblical expertise and of trained Christian leaders? (See 1 Thess. 5:12–13.)

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you . . .

JUDE 3a; cf. JUDE 1a

Cross reference: Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ . . .

2 PETER 1:1

Father, thank You that I have access to Your truth. It was not merely given to a private group of Your followers but delivered to the whole of us. Thank You that You desire to be known by Your people and that we share in You together.

LEADING FROM THE TRUTH

While Jude's letter is on the topic of contending for the faith against false teachers, Jude originally desires to compose his letter about general, joyous themes of salvation in Christ, which he and his letter's recipients share in common. This salvation of Christ is shared among all believers (see Eph. 4:5–6), and Paul summarizes this message when writing to those at Corinth:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

—1 Corinthians 15:3–5

Though Jude desires to dwell on these themes, he changes direction because a specific situation has come to his attention (see vv. 3–4). According to authors David J. Hesselgrave and Ronald P. Hesselgrave, Jude’s original desire in writing his letter is instructive.

Only those who desire to major on God’s “so great salvation” are justified in dwelling upon the erroneous teachings, attitudes, and actions that abrogate it. If a teacher becomes wholly preoccupied with error in the Church, there is a strong likelihood that his spirit will become sour, critical, and abrasive. . . . It is the teacher who wants to major on salvation who is best qualified to warn against error because, inevitably, he will do it with compassion in his heart, a tear in his eye, and compulsion in his voice.¹⁰

Because of Jude’s love for his letter’s recipients and his joy in the salvation of Christ, he changes the content of his letter to that of a warning. This desire to warn and instruct for the good of others when their reactions to warning are unknown is a mark of a leader. Jude does not list all his qualifications in this letter. He gives validity to the letter through the prominence of James, likely referring to the disciple/apostle (Matt. 17:1; Gal. 2:9) and pillar of the Jerusalem church who was Jesus’ half brother (Acts 15:13–21; 21:18; Gal. 1:19). Jude seems to avoid being presumptuous with his qualifications out of a desire to draw attention to the message of his letter; its recipients were to heed his words not simply because of Jude’s personal stature, but because the truth he writes matters to the Lord, and thus, to both writer and recipients through Him.

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FOR STUDY *and* REFLECTION
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Consider that Jude is not parading his qualifications and originally desires to write about the shared message of salvation. What do these characteristics communicate about his priorities and the genuineness of his concerns? What Christian leadership qualities does he embody? Refer to Mark 10:42–45; 1 Peter 5:3; Philippians 2:3–8; and 1 Timothy 4:16.

Jude’s lack of pointed appeal to his own qualifications does not mean he writes with any less certainty about the message of his letter. What is the basis for the certainty of his message? See Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Look back to the questions of day 1 to remember the tone of Jude’s letter. As you consider the humility of Jude and his leadership qualities when introducing himself, do you have any different impressions about the tone of the letter now?

How might Jude's intentions help you evaluate your motivations prior to correcting someone else or standing for truth against false teaching?

Jude, a trained and commissioned leader, points away from himself to Jesus Christ and to the authority of another. How can you follow his model? Give an example.

WEEK 1 | DAY 5

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

JUDE 1B

“And Can It Be, That I Should Gain?” by Charles Wesley

And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ
my own.

Refrain:
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me!¹¹

KEPT IN LOVE

For a brief letter replete with warnings, Jude manages to frequently remind his recipients of their status as God's beloved (see vv. 1, 3, 17, and 20). The love of Christ is in view. Now, Jude's letter warns about those who are doctrinally in error—perhaps some who are genuine believers sorrowfully swayed by falsehood and some who have never been genuine believers. But Jude writes not directly to this group that is in error but about them. He writes to the church, with the implication that all believers stand to benefit from reading of God's warnings of destruction for those who are unbelieving.

Perhaps this is why Jude reminds his recipients of God's love. Without it in view, a genuine believer may be tempted to dismiss God's warnings, believing she is above and/or beyond needing them as a recipient of grace. Or, she may worry that if these warnings do have application to her, then she is not really who she thinks she is—perhaps not a true believer after all.

If you and I fear the truth about ourselves, perhaps we are worried that Christ's love will disappear when all is revealed about how needy we are, failing to recognize the grace that Christ's love is received by those who are, by definition, poor and lost. Or if we view Scripture's warnings as unnecessary, perhaps we are slow to recognize the gravity of sin, diminishing our hatred for why our precious Lord died. Or perhaps we are not recognizing that Christ has come to form us into who we could never be without His love—people with increasing longing for holiness. Or, perhaps some of us have not exposed ourselves to the warnings of Scripture very much at all.

Whatever our reactions to the warnings of Scripture, we do well to calibrate our hearts to be receptive to them. In Christ's love, the necessary punishment for the believer's sin has been lifted. Not fearing the punishment of God is the very freedom that leads us to be perfected, or sanctified. It gives the security and confidence that is needed to openly acknowledge sins so that they can be confessed and abandoned. And contemplating the extent of Christ's sacrificial and suffering love

helps us to increasingly hate sin. Reminded of being beloved by God, we are given all the reason, soberness, and security we need to take Jude’s warnings to heart.

The warnings of God benefit the beloved of God; these warnings function to keep us near to God’s heart in a world filled with messages that oppose the truth. “Kept” is how Jude addresses his believing recipients in verse 1 immediately after calling them “beloved.” Jude does not invent this concept of God’s loving keeping. Jesus prays, for example, for the safe keeping of His own in the High Priestly Prayer of John 17:8–19. He outlines a pattern of security in this world for the people of God. No longer slaves to sin, believers are those not of the world because they have inwardly received the Word from heaven (vv. 8, 14). Having received the Word of heaven they are brought nearer to heavenly ways and are made saintlier in the truth (v. 17). Being made more heavenly, they can further partake of the character of divine love, which is true and holy (v. 26).

As our study in Jude progresses, we can take heart that receiving the truth of God’s love in Christ is how we are freed to receive difficult truths with confidence and, in heeding these difficult truths, we become freed of sin and falsehood, able to fellowship in a more heavenly way with Christ in us, in purer love.

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FOR STUDY *and* REFLECTION
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Read John 8:31–38 and John 17:26. Describe how God’s words being in us and Christ being in us are related.

How does Jude's purpose statement (see days 1 and 2) issue from the very desires of the Lord in John 17:8–19? Do you see any ways in which Jude's thesis is an answer to the Lord's prayer in John? Explain.

As is clear from an introductory reading of Jude, warnings are ahead in this study. What is your heart's reaction to scriptural warnings of judgment for sin? Do we experience fear that who we really are will be exposed through Scripture's warnings? Are we tempted to dismiss the warnings of Scripture as unneeded because "I am saved"?

According to Jude 21, to what do warnings lead us? According to Jude 24–25, what is our heart's response after we have received biblical warnings as intended?

How does this encourage you to welcome Jude's warnings ahead?

Reread the words to "And Can It Be, That I Should Gain?" or listen to a recording of this great hymn. What gospel truths communicated in this hymn nourish your spirit today as God's beloved?

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