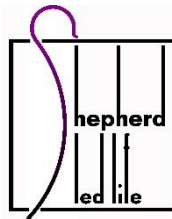
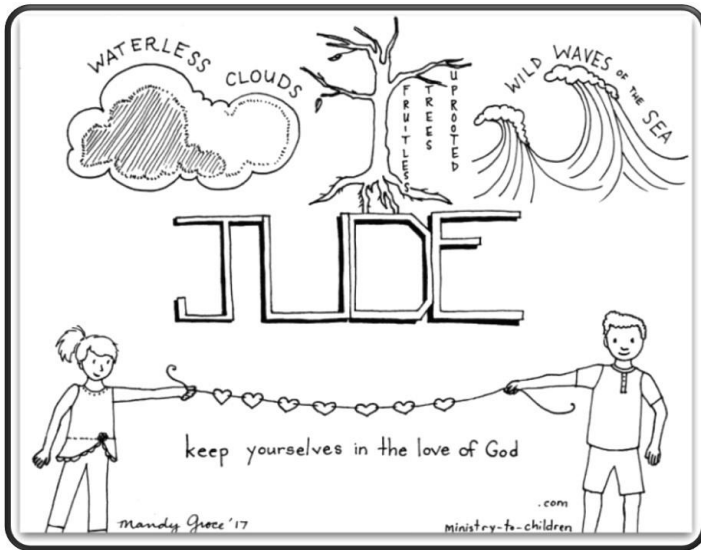


# Devotional Series

## On

## Jude



*A Shepherd Led Life Resource*

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*Day 1: Hey Jude...*

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***Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Jude 1&2***

If you have never read the book of Jude, I suggest you do so. It's just before Revelation, and it is only 25 verses. I need to issue a warning though – it is going to seem really strange and obscure, although you will probably recognise the last two verses as they are often sung as a benediction in church. Also check out the Bible Project – Jude on youtube to get a nice overview of the letter.

For all its apparent obscurity, it's a surprisingly relevant letter, and we will consider some highlights this week.

It's written by Jude (or Judah) who was a brother of Jesus (well, half-brother technically), but notice how he doesn't consider himself worthy to mention that – only that he was a brother of James and a servant of Christ.

I mention this detail because we are dealing with someone who lived with Jesus, was sceptical of Jesus, and then gave his life to Jesus after encountering Him in the resurrection. He had credentials to flaunt if he wanted to. He didn't.

Humility. And there is a lesson. If a spiritual leader promotes himself as the reason to listen to him or go to his church, you have to know there is a problem. I remember driving

through a town in the Northern Cape that had this huge, and I mean huge, billboard with the smiling pastoral couple on it advertising a church, and it left me wondering as to exactly whom I would be going to that church to meet! As a friend of mine once teased me “You should write a book: The Three most humble men on earth and how I trained the other two”

Unfortunately the church is not immune to celebrity culture. We can't get away from the fact that we live in a marketing culture, and we need to exercise discernment in how we use it. There are plenty of good names out there that rightfully need to be marketed, because their lives are not about self-promotion, but promoting Christ: they desire to serve the body, not themselves.

I'm just wondering who my life is promoting.

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*Day 2: What do you believe?*

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***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***

Imagine that – Jude wanted to write about our common salvation – the central theme of Scripture, but he felt it necessary to rather write a letter of appeal to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

So from early in church history, what was understood as the content of our faith was already understood, and it was a settled issue – this coming from someone who was part of the earthly family of Jesus.

There was nothing that needed to be added. So anyone that comes along and claims extra revelation to scripture, is simply deluded and lying (clear examples are Mormonism and Islam, but tragically there are plenty professing Christians who claim the same sort of thing). This also highlights the fact that there was no such thing as a conspiracy to exclude certain books and include others when putting together the New Testament: it was simply a recognition of what was already recognised as authoritative!

One thing is clear: what we believe matters, and perhaps more importantly, who we believe matters even more!

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*Day 3: 006...Licence to Sin?*

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***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. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 3&4***

Jude gets into the reason for writing this letter: there are false teachers in their midst who are distorting the gospel.

The gospel has always had two enemies which get dealt with throughout the NT: legalism and liberalism (the correct term is antinomianism). In other words, there are some who preach a gospel of Jesus plus rules, and there are some who preach of gospel of no rules at all – anything goes (sexual immorality usually goes with this).

Jude is addressing the anything goes crowd: false teachers who teach that God's grace allows immorality or sensuality. And in an age like today, his words do seem a little extreme – how often do you hear the phrase “designated for this condemnation”? We've lost track of the seriousness with which God views our walk with Him.

But these guys didn't come in and declare “Hey! We're false teachers!” Jude tells us they crept in unnoticed. They were

guys who were part and parcel of the life of the church, and probably on the surface seemed like nice people.

Deception works like that. Discernment is the antidote, and this we will explore a bit further. One thing is clear: keeping Jesus as Master and Lord is the best protection ever!

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*Day 4: Unholy Trinity*

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***Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe...Jude 5***

Jude is writing a letter to Christians to warn them against false teachers that have crept into the church. He warns of the judgement that these false teachers will receive, and from v5-16 Jude utilises examples from the OT as well as other ancient Jewish sources to illustrate his point about the inevitability of judgement.

Throughout the examples given, three key areas get highlighted to identify a false teacher. Firstly, a love for money, secondly a passion for self-defined sexual preference and standards, and thirdly an antipathy towards authority – in other words, the unholy trinity of money, sex and power which the human heart loves.

Of course there is nothing wrong with money, sex and power – they are gifts of God to be appropriately stewarded. But when they take primary place in the human heart, there is a problem.

Sounds like modern culture doesn't it? We expect this in the culture of the world. It's not to be expected in the culture of the bride of Christ.

But it was already happening. Take note of how Jude doesn't get into points of doctrinal error. He simply says: look at the

lifestyle – no respect for authority, liberal views over sex and a love of money. If you have that in the church, you have a problem.

Houston...we have a problem...

Actually, to be honest, I think I have a problem...



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*Day 5: Guard your heart*

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***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***

Jude is urging his listeners to contend for the faith: to be on their guard against the false teachers that have infiltrated and who by their lifestyles reveal themselves to be false. Huge clues are given to identify a false teacher: a love of money, liberal views on sex and an antipathy towards authority.

Why such a strong warning?

One reason would be that we run the danger of assimilating and internalising the same attitudes – and we may not even be aware that we do. Remember, these false teachers did not come in with fanfare and identify themselves as false teachers – they crept in unnoticed!

And if we are brutally honest, we will find these three issues within the church. The health and wealth (prosperity) gospel is well known; it's not unusual for professing Christians to cohabit or live together before marriage (heard the 'piece of paper' argument?) and authority is understandably viewed with suspicion.

That's stuff we clearly see. But while I have clear reason to be concerned about what is 'out there,' I also need to be

even more concerned over what is in here...in my own heart.  
Do I question legitimate God given authority? Perhaps I  
harbour resentment to leadership? Do I question Biblical  
norms on sexuality because it doesn't fit in with what I want?  
Do I love money and want it more than I want God?

Because accommodating attitudes of the world is incredibly  
easy: I'm bombarded with it every day. It takes intentionality  
and rootedness in Scripture to go in the other direction. I  
need God's Word to renew my mind (Romans 12).

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*Day 6: Don't give up*

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***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***

We have been looking at this short letter of Jude, and even though it is so short, it sure packs a punch!

So far we have seen that Jude is warning the church against false teachers. He is warning people who love Jesus about people who love religion. The inevitability of judgement for these false teachers is illustrated with examples from OT history. The areas of behaviour to look out for in identifying a false teacher is in how they behave with respect to money, sex and power. Of course, strong warning is given because it is easy to be led astray and internalise wrong attitudes into our own hearts – so we need to be on our guard.

I would venture to add that another reason for such a strong warning is because to go down the road which these false teachers were teaching would actually mean settling for less than what God desires for His people. The commands of God always promote life, and we need to live with eternity in view.

As I look at Jude's appeal to contend for the faith, and the strong warnings he gives against the behaviour of false teachers, I am reminded again that the first line of defence in contending for the faith is to live it. If I were to summarise

Jude's letter, it would be as follows: Guard your heart and stay the course.

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*Day 7: Keep on keeping on*

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**But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. Jude 17-21**

There’s nothing new about people who mock the faith, and there’s unfortunately nothing new about people who make a mockery of the faith through what they teach and how they live.

But we don’t have to listen to them. While we do not keep ourselves saved, we do have the capacity to keep ourselves in the love of God through praying in the Spirit and obedience to His Word.

People who want to internalise the attitudes of the world will bring damage to the body of Christ, but let us not be like that.

Let us be on our guard and stay the course, because abundance beyond measure in eternity awaits.

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*Day 8: I'm blameless*

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***Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 24&25***

What a beautiful doxology! After a letter that packs a punch in warning against false teachers, Jude ends off with the above.

Be on your guard and stay the course, and you will know God's enabling grace to keep you from stumbling – God is fully able to protect and preserve His people – and this letter serves as just one example of God providing that protection through warning.

So folks, be on your guard against wrong teaching that can infiltrate the church and your heart. Consider the lifestyle of those who teach: are they in love with money, sex and power?

Remember Calvary: Jesus, the Way, Truth and Life got crucified by lies to death, and experienced the full judgement of God on our behalf, and because of that, He is able to keep you from falling. Not only that, but also able to present you and me blameless before the Father....why don't you meditate on that?

What a Saviour!