

West Valley Church
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Jude: Living in the Truth Part One: verses 1-4¹

We are starting a new, short series on the New Testament letter of Jude. It's a small book of the Bible; it only has one chapter, made up of 25 verses. Part of the reason we are doing this is because Jude is very closely related in content to Peter's letters, as you will see – especially 2nd Peter, and as you know we just finished our series on 1st and 2nd Peter.

But more than that, this little letter is jam-packed with some wonderful and powerful words for us today on how to live a truly genuine Christian life – telling us what a true Christian is.

So let's start today by looking at the first four verses of Jude; I'd like to read them to you, but you'll be able to follow along on the screen. If you have a Bible or Bible app with you, open it to Jude so you can refer back to it as we go. But here's what Jude starts out saying:

“Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James.

To those who are called, loved by God the Father and kept safe by Jesus Christ.

May you have more and more mercy, peace, and love.

Dear friends, I wanted very much to write to you concerning the salvation we share. Instead, I must write to urge you to fight for the faith delivered once and for all to God's holy people. Godless people have slipped in among you. They turn the grace of our God into unrestrained immorality and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Judgment was passed against them a long time ago.” (Jude 1-4, ceb)

Okay, ready to jump into this? Let's start with...

1. The person.

Just who is this guy named Jude? Needless to say, he is *not* the guy in the famous Beatle's song. By the way, here's some trivia for you: according to that song's author, Paul McCartney, he wrote that song for John Lennon's son, Julian, to console him after his father left his mother for Yoko Ono. It was originally called “Hey Jules,” but he thought that would

¹ Resources used for this series:

- [The Letters of John and Jude \(The Daily Study Bible Series\)](#), William Barclay
- [1 & 2 Peter, Jude: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition](#), Daniel G. Powers
- [Hebrews through Revelation: Beacon Bible Commentary](#), Ralph Earle, Ed.
- [More Hard Sayings of the New Testament](#), Peter H. Davids
- [James, 1 & 2 Peter, Jude: The Communicator's Commentary](#), Paul A. Cedar
- [1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition](#), David A. Case and David W. Holdren

draw too much attention on the toddler, so he changed the name. So get that song out of your head now (if you can. Wouldn't that be terrible if in this conversation about the Word of God, all you remember is some trivia I told you about a 50-year-old pop song! Sorry about that.).

Jude could be one of five possible Judes that we can find in the New Testament. Jude was a common Jewish name, named after the patriarch of one of the twelve tribes of Israel – Judah, which became synonymous with the Jewish people. So the Hebrew way to say it is Judah, and the original Greek was actually Judas (which is another form of the name Judah). But the early church shortened it from Judas to Jude because, well, who wants a book of the Bible to be confused with the name of *that* guy? It's the same reason you don't meet any "Adolphs" today.

We can narrow down who he is because he identifies himself as "the brother of James." There are actually two Judes who were the brothers of Jameses, but to save us time, let me just say this: most scholars agree that this guy is the brother of James, who was a very prominent early church leader, the Apostle of the Church in Jerusalem, and the author of the New Testament book of James. And *that* means that Jude is *also* one of the half-brothers of Jesus himself. This also matches the timeline of when this letter was likely written, which I'll go into more detail about next week.

So if he was actually one of the half-brothers of Jesus, why didn't he just come out and say *that*? Well that gives us our first understanding about this man, and it's from his example that we can learn not only the kind of person *he* was, but the kind of people *we* want to be. The reason Jude identified himself that way was because he was **humble**. Jude recognized that while he had some earthly relation to Jesus, that gave him no special privileges; even the half-brother of Jesus needed to be saved from sin; even *he* needed Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Clearly, Jude didn't feel worthy to be recognized as a half-brother of Jesus; he was a sinner in need of God's grace, just like everyone else. He did not need another brother; he needed a savior.

The second example Jude gives us is that he was **reverent**. He so revered and honored Jesus that he couldn't bring himself to even say he was Jesus' brother. Now, we know from the Bible that Jesus' brothers did not believe in him during his earthly ministry (Mark 3:21, 31-35). But "Jude realized that his relationship with Jesus transcended the fraternal bond and was now an *eternal* bond in faith and obedience. What a witness for Jesus that His siblings came to grips with His true identity!"²

So Jude knew that the greatest thing he wanted to be known for – the greatest honor – was to be known as a **slave** of Jesus Christ.

Your Bible might translate that word as "servant," but that's really too soft of a word. The Greek word is one that paints a clear picture in the original language: a slave has no voice in what he or she does. A slave does not get vacation days or nights off, or time to blow off steam, or weekends to do whatever he or she wants. A slave is exactly that – every minute

² David A. Case and David W. Holdren, [*1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Commentary for Bible Students*](#) (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 361.

of every day is lived in obedience to the master. That's what Jude said about his life, and that is what Jude says a true Christian is.

Can we say that about our lives?

Do you see the greatest honor of your life that you are known as a slave of Jesus Christ?

Because later, Jude is going to call on us to contend for our faith, so he's setting the example here: the way you contend and defend your faith is utter, absolute, obedience. You and I don't get to live the way we want to on days off or nights or weekends or vacation from our faith. Every minute of every day is spent in obedience to the Master, Jesus. That's what a humble, reverent, slave does.

Now let's learn about...

2. The people.

Who were the people that Jude was writing to? No doubt the audience are readers who were Jewish Christians. We know that because Jude refers to several things in this short letter – using words and stories – that would have been very familiar to people who had Jewish backgrounds. If he had written this to Gentile Christians, he would have had to explain several of his references (we'll talk about that more next week).

Okay, so how are they described by Jude? Well, that gives us some more descriptions of what a true Christian is. He says they are called, loved, and kept. Actually, in the original language, the order is loved, kept, and called.

Let's see what that means, because it describes true Christians, and is supposed to be describing us, too, if we say we are Christian.

Jude says we are **loved**. This is the basis and nature of our salvation, our sanctification, our calling, and it's the motive of how we live our lives.

Being loved by God the Father is the heart of the Gospel: God is love (1 John 4:16), and God so loved us that He gave us His Son (John 3:16). And John writes, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). That is the message that begins to draw the human mind and heart to God, and opens the way for life transformation.³ This love then becomes our very motivation for everything we do for others.

Then Jude says we are **kept**. Here it means that Jesus keeps us by his love.

Jude mentions "being kept" three times in this letter: in the first verse, then verse 21, and then at the very end in verse 24. Two different Greek verbs are used for the three times, though. The Greek word for *kept* here in verse 1 means steadfast care and nurture of something in one's possession. In other words, we are in the steadfast care and nurture of Jesus. But we shouldn't think that it means we are permanently saved no matter what we do (that's what the false teachers were teaching, which he addresses later). In verse 21,

³ David A. Case and David W. Holdren, [*1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Commentary for Bible Students*](#) (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 361.

Jude uses the word “kept” to tell *us* to *keep ourselves* in God’s love.⁴ So Jude uses the word “kept” as a two-way street to describe our relationship with Jesus.

Finally, Jude says we are **called**. Now, when we hear someone say they are “called,” we often think it means they are in the ministry of the church. But what Jude means is that God calls *every* Christian in all kinds of ways for all kinds of things. If you do a very basic study of Scripture, the very basic things about being “called” are:

- Jesus called His disciples (and us) to follow Him (Matthew 4:18–20).
- Jesus called to everyone, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28–30).
- We have a call to holy living (1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:15).
- We are challenged to live up to our calling as Christians (Ephesians 4:1).
- We must work to make our calling sure, or secure (2 Peter 1:10).
- We are called to imitate God and walk in love, like Christ (Ephesians 5:1–2).
- God calls us to be living sacrifices (Romans 12:1).
- We are called to walk in Jesus’ steps (1 Peter 2:21). *Every one of us* has a set of high callings from God!⁵

God’s call on all of our lives is what gives each of us a place and a purpose. Our mission at West Valley Church is to Introduce People to Jesus, to Equip People with a Faith that Works, and to *Live as People with Purpose*. What Jude is saying is what it means to live out our purpose. Jesus calls *all of us* to Himself, to reconciliation with him and with others, and he calls us to holiness and to service. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US.

Something else here: each of the three verb forms, *loved*, *kept*, and *called* emphasize the *active* grace of God in our lives, along with the commitment and discipline expected of us – it goes both ways.

So a true Christian is someone who is loved by God and loves others, is kept by Jesus and keeps himself or herself in that active relationship, and is called to a life of love, reconciliation, holiness, and service.

But wait – there’s more! (This is not some kind of cheap TV pitch: “If you buy in now, we’ll throw in a set of steak knives!”) On top of the already abundant and overflowing life we are given because of Jesus, Jude says we are given “more and more” **mercy, peace, and love**.

⁴ David A. Case and David W. Holdren, [*1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Commentary for Bible Students*](#) (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 361–362.

⁵ David A. Case and David W. Holdren, [*1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Commentary for Bible Students*](#) (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 362.

These three words describe what God’s grace is toward us. The word for mercy refers to compassion, and pity. God overlooks so much in us that actually deserves his anger. But He longs for us to come to our senses and repent, finding forgiveness and have our lives transformed by Christ.

Peace is a key term in describing the Kingdom of God. Several times, the Bible refers to “the God of peace” (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). We are called to peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Jesus said that in Him we can have peace (John 16:33), and the world cannot take it away. Jesus blesses the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), and one part of the fruit of the Spirit is peace (Galatians 5:22). Then, we are called to a ministry of reconciliation in bringing peace and harmony to relationships between us and others and for others (2 Corinthians 5:16–20).⁶

Then, as if we didn’t get enough, Jude says we can have more and more LOVE. This love God gives us just doesn’t stop!

A true Christian is a humble, reverent, slave of Jesus who is loved, kept, called, and is given and gives more and more mercy, peace, and love – all of which we are called to give out to everyone else in the world. That’s what a true Christian has and does.

Finally, see...

3. The Purpose.

Jude says that originally, he was eager to write his letter about the salvation that we all share, and that’s something we should always be eager to talk about. Salvation isn’t something that we experience once at an altar or at a camp or on our knees in our rooms, and then we leave it behind. It is *everything* to us, and because of it we have everything. And, it is new every morning. Remember from Peter that we are *being saved*. We should always be excited to talk about how we are sinners saved by the incredible, unending, unlimited love and grace of God in Christ.

So Jude *wanted* to write about *that*, but Jude says there was a situation that was far more imperative and emergent that he needed to address, and he needed to do it before they ended up forfeiting the very salvation he was so eager to write about. He says:

“I must write to urge you to fight for the faith delivered once and for all to God’s holy people.” (Jude 3)

The word “fight,” means to “contend” or “to engage in the struggle”. It’s a word that was used to describe a soldier in battle or how an Olympic athlete is disciplined to always be at their very best, and then give their very best in competition.

⁶ David A. Case and David W. Holdren, [*1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: A Commentary for Bible Students*](#) (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 362–363.

And we are to do that for what Jude calls “the faith that was delivered once and for all.”

Usually in the New Testament, the word “faith” is used to describe the *act* of believing. But here, Jude uses it to mean the *content* of what we believe, that was given to us once and for all.

So, with all the things the Bible says, and with all the gajillions of different things that we’ve learned from Bible studies and books and preachers, what does Jude mean by the content of our faith? He means what we already know about God and about Christ – that God loves us and saves us – and about the Christian life we live because of it. He’s emphasizing the *ethical* implications of the Gospel – about how we think and how we live. And he’s already described what a true Christian is. In other words, he isn’t telling us to argue with atheists, he’s telling us to THINK and LIVE like true Christians, who love God and others. And just to make sure we know he’s talking about true Christians; he calls them – and us – “saints.” The word means “holy ones,” and he’s not talking about historic church leaders that we superstitiously pray to; he is talking about all true Christians – those who have been loved, kept, and called, and are determined to live it out every moment of every day as humble, reverent, slaves of Jesus who lavishly loves us more and more, heaping up and overflowing our lives with mercy, peace, and love, so that we can do the same for others.

Pray