

JUDE

How to Use This Discussion Guide with Your Group

Start with a prayer, and then read the introduction from the sheet. Read the portion of the text from your Bible or an app (use whatever translation you're comfortable with, but we suggest the New Living Translation (NLT) or the English Standard Version (ESV)). Then read the summary paragraph(s) and talk through the questions for that section. You can work through this guide in one session or spread it out over several – whatever works for your group. As you read and discuss, consider how what you're reading applies to your life today. Don't forget to close with prayer!

INTRODUCTION TO JUDE

Jude ('Judas') and James are mentioned in the gospels, along with the other brothers and sisters of Jesus (Mark 6:3). They became believers after Jesus' resurrection, and James became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13–21).

We don't know who Jude is writing to, but he deals with a particular problem. The church is in danger from false teachers, who are misleading Christians, undermining their commitment to holy living and splitting the fellowship.

Jude uses some illustrations from Jewish literature: the Assumption of Moses (v. 9) and the Book of Enoch (v. 15). These indicate that he is writing to Jewish Christians.¹

1. When was the last time someone read you the riot act? What had you done wrong? How did it feel to be soundly rebuked?

Read the letter of Jude – you can read it all at once or read the verses indicated below followed by the summary text.

THE DANGER OF FALSE TEACHERS

Jude verses 3–4

Jude has been meaning to write a longer letter, but now writes a short and urgent warning instead. False teachers have infiltrated the church. They are teaching a deviant form of Christianity. They are giving believers permission to sin, because Christ will freely forgive them. This is a perversion of the truth and a denial of the holiness which Jesus requires (Matthew 5:48). Jude urges his readers to fight this lie, which threatens to destroy the gospel.

¹ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 682.

FREE—TO SIN?

False prophets preach a tempting message. They tell Christians there is no need to live a clean life, because God will forgive them anyway. So, carry on sinning! Why not?

Paul deals with this issue in his letter to the Romans. He points out that people who sin are slaves to sin. Christians have been liberated from sin, and are now free to do good (Romans 6:1–2).²

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Jude verses 5–19

Jude gives examples of people who have strayed from the truth in the past. After the exodus, God condemned those Israelites who rebelled (v. 5). In ancient times, he similarly judged rebellious angels who, according to legend, came to earth to mate with humans (v. 6). He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, because of sexual immorality (v. 7; Genesis 19:5).

Jude accuses the false teachers of similar immorality, rebellion and lies. By claiming to know about heavenly realms, they slander the angels. He calls them ‘dreamers’, because they peddle fantasies (v. 8). Even Michael, the chief angel, didn’t voice such misleading and fantastic speculations. Jude refers to a story from the Assumption of Moses, when Michael and the devil argue over the body of Moses. Michael simply answers Satan with words of scripture: ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ (Zechariah 3:2).

The false teachers are twisting God’s truth. Jude likens them to three scandals of the past: Cain murdering his brother (Genesis 4:1–16); Balaam prophesying against God’s people (Numbers 22–24); and Korah leading opposition to Moses (Numbers 16).

These false teachers are impostors, like hidden reefs lurking beneath the surface of Christian fellowship. They deceive, like clouds without rain, or trees without fruit or roots (v. 12). They are disruptive and shameful, like waves spewing scum, or misleading stars (v. 13).

Jude quotes a prophecy from the Book of Enoch. God and his angels will judge these false teachers. Their destruction is certain (vv. 14, 15). They may seem attractive and eloquent, but in fact they are domineering and manipulative (v. 16). The apostles have warned about such people, who claim to be spiritual, but in reality are dangerous and divisive (vv. 17, 18; 2 Timothy 3:1–9).

² Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 683.

IN CONCLUSION

Jude verses 20–24

Jude advises his Christian readers to build themselves up in the true faith. Their resources are prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit, the security of God’s love and the mercy of Jesus Christ (v. 21). They must make every effort to rescue those who are going astray, loving the sinner while hating the sin (vv. 22, 23).

Finally, Jude commends his readers to the majestic power and saving grace of God. It is this glorious God who will protect and sustain them in faith and holiness, and bring them home to his presence with great joy (v. 24). Praise him, always and forever!³

QUESTIONS TO DIG INTO THE TEXT

2. What are your first impressions of Jude, the man and his letter?

3. How does he describe himself and his fellow Christians (vv. 3-5)? From this description, what does it mean to be a Christian?
4. What concerning these “godless men” (v. 4) is so godless?
5. How do each of the examples from history (vv. 5-7, 11) relate to problems of unbelief, immorality, violence and rebellion?
6. To someone who questions the certainty, severity or justice of God’s judgments, what do these examples teach? How do the vivid images in verses 12-16 further condemn the skeptics?
7. Should Jude’s readers have been surprised by this coming judgment (vv. 17-19)? Why or why not?
8. How is the good distinguished from the bad in this divided church (vv. 17-21)?
9. What is our duty to the doubter who is merely flirting with falsehood (v. 22)? To one already sinned with evil (v. 23)? How does the rescuer avoid falling into the same danger as those who play with fire?
10. What role does God play in the believer’s safety, sacrificial commitment, and sense of joy (v. 24)? How do you explain this picture of God with the contrasting one in verses 5-7?

QUESTIONS TO APPLY

11. What can make a church vulnerable to false teachers today: (a) Boredom? (b) Lust? (c) Attraction to personalities? (d) Apathy?

³ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 683.

12. What spiritual body-building plan could help to keep you strong in God's love (vv.20-21)?
13. What goes on daily at your workplace, in your community or even in your church, which would fall within the range of Jude's indicting sermon?
14. Someone has said, "All it takes for evil to prevail is for a few good men to do nothing."
What is one thing you could do this week to help keep this truism from becoming a reality where you live and work?
15. What has caused you to doubt your faith at times? Who helped you then? How?
16. In light of the warnings in Jude, what hope do you find in verses 24-25? How does that help you as you struggle?