

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.

I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.

As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they must have longed for us to know Him as they did.

As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.

Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,

Margie Martin

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Jude, like his brother James, thought of Jesus as an older brother—until Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 1:14) when he became convinced of Jesus' deity. Jude is thought to have written this letter after A.D. 66 or 67 because the decline he protests against is more developed than what Peter wrote about in his second letter.

Jude's description of the deep apostasy facing believers at this time furnishes background for John's warnings to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.



New Testament World

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 1-2

“To those who have been called . . . loved . . . and kept.”

I know I’ve read this letter from Jude before, but I’ve never looked at it closely. How about you? I think we’re in for a wild ride.

Jude tells us that he’s a servant of Jesus Christ, a description also used by Paul, Peter, and James. In addition, he tells us that he’s a brother of James. Many scholars believe that James was a half-brother of Jesus, which makes Jude a half-brother of Jesus.

If I had such a famous relative and were writing a letter, I think I’d be tempted to use His name to add credibility to my words and raise my status. You too? Because he didn’t, however, I’m concluding that Jude had made the transition from thinking of Jesus as his crazy older brother (Matthew 12:46-50) to knowing Jesus as his Lord. When did this transition happen? Probably when word got out that Jesus wasn’t in the tomb and had been raised to life. Jesus’ brothers were mentioned as being in the room with the other believers waiting for the Holy Spirit to come on them and be the power within them so they could be Jesus’ witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:12-14).

What a transformation must have happened in this younger brother. And what a transformation happens in us when the Spirit takes up residence in us so we have the power of resurrection life to draw on. Then we know that we have been called, sought out, wooed, and chosen; we’re loved by God the Father and have a close and loving relationship with the powerful Creator of all; and we’re kept by Jesus Christ, safe from going where our lives had been headed. Added to this knowledge of our new relationship and standing, we have *mercy* (not getting what we deserve), *peace* (rather than being at war with God), and *love* (based on Who we belong to rather than on what we do).

How we daily choose to respond to this offer from God depends on us. As Jude writes in this letter, our choice will be obvious in how we act, how we speak, and in our lifestyles.

What issues are you facing today? What you choose to believe and act on today will determine the direction of your life.

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Jude 3-4

“ . . . contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Has someone ever entrusted you with something important? As parents, God entrusts us with our children. Financially, we are entrusted with resources we're to handle as stewards rather than owners since everything has been given to us by God—our smarts, our abilities, our backgrounds.

Sometimes I get blasé and think that I can coast through life. Today is such a day. But Jude urges us (me) to *contend* for the faith, to fight for it because it has been *entrusted* to the saints—everyday believers like you and me. A war is in progress, and we're frontline soldiers wherever we are.

So who's the enemy? In this short paragraph, Jude tells us to look out for those who redefine grace to allow for sexual immorality and those who deny Jesus Christ as the only Sovereign and Lord. Let's see what he says:

Redefine grace and allow immorality: How do you define grace? The definition I've had for years is God's Resources at Christ's Expense—all that God has available because Jesus chose to go to the cross for us. But if we forget the last half of that statement, we begin thinking that God just wants to give us whatever we want to make life easy and comfortable. We start down the slippery slope of pleasure that leads to immorality. Think of all the pleasure pursuits and toys that the media throws at us every day.

Deny Jesus Christ as the only Sovereign and Lord: For the past 20 years it seems that we've been concentrating on God and the Holy Spirit in church and in our worship music. Jesus, when we do sing about Him, is far off and lifted up instead of being our Lord who also lived here on earth and understands completely but is still God. Emotional worship music is valued more than obeying Jesus.

Jude tells us that men (and women) are slipping in among us, encouraging us to go down this slippery slope. Their influence is already among us. Have you been affected? Think about these questions:

- How are you being encouraged to concentrate on your body and gather possessions and toys?
- Is modesty an attribute that describes you?
- Who's in charge in your life?

Your answers will determine if you're blasé about life or contending for the faith that's been entrusted to you. Ready for the fight?

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Jude 5-7

“Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that . . .”

How do you respond when someone tells you what you already know? Are you like our sons when as teenagers they said, “Dad, you’ve already told me once!” Or do you open your ears, mind, and heart to what’s said? I admit that when I started reading this paragraph I was hoping that Jude was going on to a new and interesting topic; instead he gives us three examples of why we should be taking his words seriously. Since we do want to hear what God has to say to us, let’s look at Jude’s three examples.

Israelites leaving Egypt: Did you realize that of the million men and women who left Egypt with Moses, crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and saw God provide for their needs daily, only two were allowed to live in the promised land—Joshua and Caleb? Why weren’t the others allowed to enter? Jude says it was because they didn’t believe. They saw, heard, and experienced, but they didn’t believe. What about you? Are you walking by faith in your circumstances or just walking?

The Angels: Jude tells us that angels have positions of authority, but when some chose to go their own way, their fate was sealed forever. Are your choices taking you down a path you really don’t want? We get many opportunities to believe, but at some point our hearts will get so hard that it’s like our fate is sealed. Peter and Judas both denied their Lord; one changed his mind and was restored and the other didn’t and wasn’t. Which path is for you?

Sodom and Gomorrah: Even the angel of the Lord came to their town to warn them (some scholars think this was the pre-incarnate Christ), but they refused to give up their sexual immorality and perversion. The sulfur that rained down from heaven on them is an example of what is to come for those who follow their example.

It’s easy to think that God doesn’t care about what’s going on around us. Paul says, however, that God’s kindness is our opportunity for changing our minds and going in His direction (repentance). (Romans 2:14) At some point God *will* act according to His righteousness and justice, and our responses now to the opportunities He provides will determine what will happen when He does act: either we’ll be safe in Him or experience judgment and eternal fire. The choice is up to us as we daily make choices. We’re to plan now for then.

Jude isn’t done with us. If these examples haven’t sobered us, tomorrow’s should.

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Jude 8-10

“In the very same way, these dreamers . . . ”

Dreamers? Godless men who lead others away are *dreamers*? I would never have used that word to describe them. I would have used words like arrogant, full of themselves, and selfish. But Jude says they're *dreamers*. Let's look at how he describes them and try to see them as they really are.

Dreamers: They live in an allusion, not reality, and indulge in wishful thinking.

Pollute own bodies: They expose themselves to and take in what's bad for them—too much food, alcohol, drugs, sugar, additives; too much or no exercise; anger; criticalness; and judgmental thinking.

Reject authority: They have the attitude of “I know better.”

Slander celestial beings: Jude is referring to an incident from a book called *The Assumption of Moses* rather than the Bible, a book well known in the first century. But if these men slandered celestial beings, then they're also slandering God because He created the angels.

Speak abusively against what they don't understand: They quickly dismiss what another person says, believing that what *they* teach and live is what's true and that matters. They actually speak harshly against anyone else's ideas. But God's truth can be understood only when we have a broken and humble heart.

What they do understand by instinct will destroy them: By instinct we all know that we should be treated well, with honor, and respectfully. But when this doesn't happen, which is all too often, we tend to react, become demanding, and put the other person on the spot, making the situation worse. We can believe what the other person says, or we can go to Jesus, believe what He says, and treat the other person the way we want to be treated. Their instinctive reactions will end up destroying them.

Do you see yourself in any of these descriptions? I do because it's so easy to fall into this trap without thinking. I think Jude is telling us, “Wake up! Contend for the faith instead of thinking or saying, ‘whatever.’” Did he get your attention too?

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 11

“Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain.”

How is your knowledge of the Old Testament? I’m pretty comfortable with Cain’s story and I’ve heard of Balaam, but Korah’s rebellion? Jude knew that these three men’s stories were familiar to his readers, so we should probably know about them as well. Today we’ll look at Cain in Genesis 4.

Cain was the first born of Adam and Eve—their hopes and dreams were wrapped up in him, and he was Abel’s older brother. Cain was a farmer (he worked the soil); he planted, cultivated, and provided vegetables for his family. When he and his brother brought offerings to the Lord, God liked Abel’s but not Cain’s. Why? We’re not told exactly, but we are told that Cain was angry and that his face pictured his emotions. The Lord spoke to him about doing what was right, so Cain *knew* what to do but chose not to do it. The Lord told him that sin was crouching at the door (of his heart), ready to pounce like a lion and that sin desired to have him but he must master it—but Cain didn’t budge. An initial response of anger isn’t sin, but sin can take advantage of an opportunity and begin to take over.

So what if the Lord had told both sons that the offering He wanted was an animal offering, that he wanted the sons to kill the animals and burn the fat as a sweet aroma to Him. The Lord God had demonstrated a sacrifice when He made garments of skin for Adam and Eve after they sinned; He shed blood and covered them. (Genesis 3:21) Abel had no problem with what the Lord wanted, but Cain knew that to comply meant he’d have to ask his younger brother for a favor, perhaps even work for him to earn the animal to be sacrificed since Abel was a keeper of flocks. What older brother wants to ask a younger brother for help?

So like most of us, Cain said, “Forget it!” and made up a basket of what he had produced with his own hands. But the Lord God saw Cain’s attitudes for what they were and confronted him. Cain had two choices: change his mind or keep going. Like most of us, he lashed out at the object of his anger, got defensive, destroyed another, blamed God, took on the role of the victim, and allowed his sin pattern to pass on to future generations.

Being like Cain is the easy way to go. It’s hard to humble ourselves and do what the Lord says, so we bring an offering that’s easy for us but not what God asked for. Then we get upset when God doesn’t accept it, and our story keeps getting worse. What if Cain had said, “You’re right Lord; I’ll do it your way” and then followed through on his words? What if we were to do the same?

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 11

“Woe to them! . . . they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error.”

In Numbers 22-24, Balaam is described as a non-Israelite seer who becomes a prophet without a backbone. He sees reality as few ever have but wastes it. Today’s passage is the conclusion of the story.

Moses tells us in Numbers 31:16 that Balaam had the idea for the Midianite women to seduce the Israelite men to turn them away from the Lord and toward worshipping the Baal of Peor. The men were strong in battle but easily gave into temptation.

After the Israelites set their hearts right and the 24,000 who had worshipped the Baal of Peor died by plague, Moses sent the army to destroy the Midianites who had used their women to deceive the Israelites. Balaam died in this battle. (Numbers 31)

Peter tells us that Balaam loved the wages (profit) of wickedness and God used “a donkey (a beast without speech) who spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.” (2 Peter 2:15-16)

John tells us in Revelation 2:14 that Balaam’s teaching led Balak (King of Moab) to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality.

Other references to Balaam are in Deuteronomy 23:4-5, Joshua 13:22 and 24:9-10, Nehemiah 13:2, and Micah 6:5.

Seven books in the Bible refer to Balaam. His story is a key event in Israel’s relationship to other cultures. His ambition and greed led him to renounce God and actually turn against Him, with horrible consequences.

So what can we learn from Balaam? Here’s what I see. While a man (woman) can see God act in mighty ways and can even be used by Him for His glory (like with the donkey), that doesn’t mean that he belongs to God. As long as he schemes for his own profit, encourages others to walk away from God through what they long for (worship), and condones immorality, he walks the way of Balaam. His end will be death and separation from God forever.

But what would have happened if Balaam’s initial reaction to his encounter with God would have been like Isaiah’s in Isaiah 6? What if Balaam had seen himself as he really was, owned up to his need of God, and changed his ways for the rest of his life?

All of our choices have consequences. Do you want your life to look like Balaam’s or Isaiah’s? Today’s choices are taking you down that path.

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 11

“Woe to them! . . . they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.”

So who is Korah, and what was he rebelling against? For his story we need to review Numbers 16 that covers the time of Moses’ leadership.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had some complaints about their circumstances:

- They wanted a different role than the one God had given them.
- They didn’t want to be under authority.
- They became insolent in their demands.
- They talked behind the scenes to instigate a rebellion.
- They blamed the wrong people for their circumstances.

As you read through this list, do you immediately think of any New Testament admonitions that address their thinking? Amazing how humility, thankfulness, and integrity would have resulted in a whole new life for the thousands who died over these two days. The problem probably started with Korah when he brought the brothers into his anger and greed, and their influence destroyed their own families, the nation’s leadership, and most of the tribe of Levi. I think today’s example speaks to two of our needs:

1. We continually need to look at our own motives as we interact with others, especially as we challenge them. All too often we justify our actions and words without seeing them from God’s view. Paul says we have “divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
2. If we’re being challenged, we need to let God resolve the problem instead of using the same tactics being used against us. If God has put us in a role of authority, God will confirm His decision. Moses didn’t run away and pout or complain; he spoke truth and gave God time to act.

We may think that our “little” fits of rebellion and selfishness that begin with ambition and greed are okay, but Jude is telling us through these three examples that if they’re allowed to go unchecked, they’ll take us down the road to godlessness, and we’ll experience horrible consequences (“woe to them”) that are beyond imagination.

Has today been a wake-up call for you? It has for me. I want blessings rather than woe in my life, and I bet you do too. Are you recognizing an area of your life where you need to humble yourself and walk God’s way?

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 12-13

“These men are . . .”

These godless men that Jude is warning us about are so destructive to the body of believers that he wanted these believers to be able to identify them quickly and easily, without having to wait to see the results of their actions. Jude says they are:

Blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. The love feasts were these believers’ version of our potlucks (covered dishes in the South), fellowship groups, Bible studies, and time to observe the Lord’s Supper all rolled into one. These men felt no guilt about joining the believers; in fact, they probably made their presence obvious. Instead of being shepherds who care about their flock, they cared only about themselves. Jude says they’re like a pimple on a pretty face.

Clouds without rain, blown away by the wind. These men have no substance (rain) while they may look promising. You never know if they’ll be around tomorrow because they aren’t dependable.

Autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. What good are trees that are suppose to produce fruit (perhaps olive trees?) but don’t? They’re as good as dead. If they can be easily uprooted, they haven’t been getting the nourishment they need to be strong and healthy—they’re twice dead.

Wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame. When I lived in northern California, I didn’t get to the coast all that often, but when I did I was amazed that the ocean never looked the same way twice. Following storms, the waves were pounding and dangerous, producing foam on the shore and giving up all kinds of dead creatures and trash. At these times the beaches were usually off limits. Jude compares the godless men to these ocean conditions: pounding, deadly, trashy, and dangerous.

Wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. Instead of being fixed and depended on, they’re like shooting stars that are bright but go away like meteors or comets.

If the biblical references Jude gives aren’t enough of a warning, then Jude’s examples from nature are graphic pictures of men who initially look and sound good but who can’t stand up under God’s test of time. How would those we love to listen to match up to God’s standards? How do we?

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 14-16

“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men.”

Enoch, however, stands as a contrast to these worthless, ungodly men. But who was Enoch? Here's what we're told from Genesis 4 and 5:

- The great-grandfather of Noah so lived before the flood
- Lived between the time of Adam and Noah
- The father of the oldest man who ever lived—Methuselah
- Such a great friend of God's that after a walk together, “he was no more because God took him away.” He was one of two men who didn't have to die to go to heaven (Elijah was the other). Genesis 5:21-24
- The writer of Hebrews tells us that before Enoch was taken, he pleased God, and the only way to please God is by believing that He exists and God rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:5-6)

What a man! Amazing all that Enoch knew even before the patriarchs were born, before a word of Scripture was written, and before Jesus came to live among us. I'm thinking that if such a man has a warning to give, it's a warning worth paying attention to. So what is Enoch's warning? It actually comes from the book of Enoch that Jude was well aware of but that didn't make it into our canon of Scripture. While these other books and letters during the first century were helpful, they weren't what we need for a life with God. Enoch's warning that Jude gives us is that the Lord is coming back with His holy ones to:

- Judge everyone.
- Convict all the ungodly of their ungodly acts they have done in an ungodly way.
- Convict all the ungodly of the harsh words the ungodly sinners have spoken against [the Lord].

Way back then Enoch knew these truths: the Lord was going to come to earth to judge, the faithful will have life, and the ungodly will be convicted.

Jude goes on to describe the ungodly as grumblers and faultfinders. They follow their own evil desires, they boast about themselves, and they flatter others for their own advantage.

Do you see yourself in this list? I see my own tendencies that take me down this road. We can either be like the ungodly whose judgment is sure, or we can be like Enoch, a friend of God's who is known for having a life of faith. Which man are you like today?

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 17-23

“But you, dear friends . . .”

Peter’s letter told us what is going to happen, how we’re to *be*, and therefore how we’re to live. (1 Peter 4:7-11) Jude’s admonition is similar. Jude says that Jesus wanted His apostles to warn us of the scoffers who follow their own ungodly desires. They are divisive and follow their natural instincts because the Spirit isn’t in them, even though they talk and “act” as if they’re part of the Body of Christ, insiders in the faith.

Do you have some in your local church who speak negatively about others and so are divisive? Do they also seem to follow their own natural instincts (do what they want when they want) instead of living redeemed lives that reflect humility and submission to what God’s has said in His Word? If neither of these descriptions fit you all of the time, they describe all of us some of the time. Jude gives us the way he wants us to be, just as Peter did. He says we’re to:

Build yourself up in our most holy faith: Know what we believe and live it by dying to our natural instincts and living as a redeemed man or woman. Elevate how we think about our faith to keep it holy rather than mundane and everyday.

Pray in the Holy Spirit: Don’t just say words, but know we’re talking to God and believe that He really hears us because the Spirit translates what we’re saying into what we’re *really* trying to say.

Keep yourself in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life: Keep our love relationship with God strong every day. Wait *with* Him as He works rather than just waiting *for* Him, missing out on what He wants to include us in that’s right around us.

Be merciful to those who doubt: Doubting isn’t the same as scoffing. Remember how others had to wait for you to come to faith and then grow in this faith?

Snatch other from the fire and save them: Don’t be afraid to speak and act to keep others from the fires of hell, speaking these words and actions comes from a deep caring for another.

Show mercy to others, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh: Love people while hating what they do; remember where we’ve come from, what we’ve done, and what we’ve been saved from.

Our conclusion? Keep growing in the faith Jesus died for, stay in God’s love, and as God had mercy on you and snatched you from hell, be merciful to others with God’s mercy that is seen in humility and action. Which part of this conclusion do you need to live today?

Walking With the Father Through Jude

Jude 24-25

“To him who is able . . .”

Recently the eye doctor and I had one of our theological discussions. He asked why only certain letters were in the New Testament when so many were available. How would you answer this question?

What I’ve learned is that those in the first century who were deciding what was going to be included were looking for letters that contained doctrine that future generations would need. I also learned that because God was in control, He was the one who chose these letters because He knew what we would need.

This truth of God’s sovereignty and power burst into my thinking as I finished reading Jude’s letter. Throughout this letter he’s talked about godless men wanting to destroy Christianity and Christians and how we’re to respond to them. Now Jude reminds us that God is alive and only He can keep us from falling into the traps set by these godless men. He says:

God is able [and absolutely willing] to keep us from falling: His strength, power, knowledge, and love can keep us safe.

God is able to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy: When we see God after we die, it’s because He presents us to Himself and we’re ready to be presented to Him because all of our sins and our sin natures have been dealt with and done away with. No longer will we be associated with fault, condemnation, or guilt; instead we will have *great joy* because of what He’s done for us.

Who gets the glory and honor and praise for all of this? The only God our Savior. To Him be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever more—past, present, and future.

So what does this mean for us? I think it means that when we begin to think that we can keep ourselves safe from the challenges of this world, we need to remember that only God can deal with the past and only He knows and has control over the future. We do our part by living lives now that reflect His life within us in humility and submission, but He is the one who keeps us from falling.

This balance is like a waltz; the more we follow His lead, the better we can follow, be comfortable in the clothes suitable for the ball, and be safe in His arms. Are you following or still trying to lead?
