

January 2016 “Not Your Average” Bible Study

WEEK ONE (January 3-9) – READING JUDE

PRAY THAT GOD WILL GIVE YOU WISDOM AS YOU STUDY THE LETTER OF JUDE.

➤ Read the entire Letter of Jude aloud in one sitting.

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Jude, like most New Testament letters, was written to an entire church (or several churches). It would have been read aloud to the gathered community. Reading the letter aloud (or listening to someone read it) helps you experience it in the same way as its original recipients.

Think about Jude's purpose in writing the letter. What groups does he identify? What does he say about them? Note every time Jude refers to his recipients (you). What does he remind them of? What does he warn them about? What specific instructions does he give them? How can you apply his instructions to your life?

Jude and 2 Peter have many similarities. Compare 2 Peter 2-3 to Jude. What themes do they share? How do the letters differ? What do Peter and Jude's parallel warnings against false teachers suggest? (Compare 2 Pet 3:14-18 with Jude 20-25.) How do the two writers encourage their readers to avoid false teachings?

Reflect and pray through these questions throughout your week.

WEEK TWO (January 10-16) – CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

PRAY THAT THE SPIRIT WILL STRENGTHEN YOU AS YOU “CONTEND FOR THE FAITH.”

➤ Read Jude 1-7. Reflect on Jude 1-4.

Jude opens his letter by identifying himself and addressing his recipients. Note how he describes himself and his audience in Jude 1. Would you describe yourself as a "servant of Jesus Christ"? What does it mean to be Christ's servant? What does Jude's description of the recipients of his letter reveal about God? What is the relationship between being a servant of Christ and being called "beloved" and "kept"?

In stating his intention to deal with the false teachers in their midst, Jude uses the Greek word *epagonizomai* ("to contend"), a word often used in reference to athletic competitions. What does it mean to "contend for the faith"? Read 1 Timothy 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. How do these passages contribute to your understanding of what it means to contend for the faith?

How does Jude describe the false teachers in Jude 3-4? The word *aselgeia* ("licentiousness") typically refers to sexual immorality. What does it mean that these false teachers changed "the grace of our God into licentiousness"? How do you enjoy freedom in Christ while avoiding sin (compare Galatians 5:13 and 1 Peter 2:16)?

Jude says these false teachers crept in "stealthily." How do you think false teachers were able to slip unnoticed into the community? What steps can you take to ensure that you are not influenced by false teaching?

Reflect and pray through these questions throughout your week.

WEEK THREE (January 17-23) – GOD’S JUDGMENT IN HISTORY

PRAY THAT GOD WILL GUARD YOU FROM TEMPTATION.

➤ **Read Jude 1-13.** Reflect on Jude 5-7.

Jude reminds his readers of three Old Testament events that demonstrated God's judgment on those who opposed Him. First, Jude refers to the exodus. What does Jude say about Jesus' role in that event? Compare 1 Corinthians 10:1-4. How do these verses influence your idea of Jesus' role in Old Testament events?

Read Numbers 14:1-35. Despite being delivered out of slavery in a miraculous way, the wilderness generation showed a lack of faith. What does this say about the perseverance necessary to maintain our faith? Read 1 Corinthians 10:5-13. How does the example of the wilderness generation encourage you to remain faithful? How can you guard against temptation?

The second Old Testament event Jude mentions is angels leaving their "proper dwelling place." This image refers to an early Jewish understanding of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4. How do false teachers go beyond their proper authority? What does God's punishment of the angels in Jude 6 say about His attitude toward false teachers?

The third Old Testament example Jude uses is God's punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction of these evil cities is recorded in Genesis 19:23-29. What does that event teach you about the seriousness of sin? Note the progression of judgment in these three examples: "destroyed" (Jude 5), "kept in eternal bonds" (v.6), "the punishment of eternal fire" (v. 7). How do these judgments warn against false teaching? What does Jude say about God's attitude toward those who preach false things about Him?

Reflect and pray through these questions throughout your week.

WEEK FOUR (January 24-30) – SELFISH SHEPHERD

PRAY THAT CHRIST’S LOVE WILL ENCOURAGE YOU TO LOVE OTHERS HUMBLY.

➤ **Read Jude 3-13.** Reflect on Jude 8-13.

After reminding his readers of God's past acts of judgment, Jude continues to describe the false teachers that have infiltrated the community. What three sins does Jude attribute to false teachers in Jude 8? Are these sins related? In what ways? Is there any relationship between these three sins and the three examples Jude cites in Jude 5-7?

Jude refers to a tradition about Moses' body not found in the Old Testament account (compare Deut 34:5-6). The word for "blasphemous" (*blasphemia*) can refer to slander. What does it mean that Michael would not slander the devil? What does this say about the presumptuous nature of the false teachers who slander what they do not understand?

Jude compares the false teachers to three Old Testament figures: 1) For the "way of Cain," read Genesis 4:1-16; 2) For the "error of Balaam," read Numbers 22-24 and 31:16; 3) For the "rebellion of Korah," read Numbers 16:1-35.

What characterizes these three figures? How do you guard against jealousy, greed and wrongful rebellion?

How does Jude describe the false teachers in Jude 12-13? What are they guilty of? What illustrations from nature does Jude use to describe them? What does it mean to be shepherds that feed themselves? Read Ezekiel 34:2-10 and John 10:11-18. What attributes characterize a good shepherd or leader? How can you display those characteristics in your life?

Pray through these questions throughout your week.