THE LETTER OF JUDE

The King Who Keeps You

Jude, Unfiltered

For teens who think they've heard it all

BILL McLEOD

Papa Bill Books

The King Who Keeps You: The Letter of Jude, Unfiltered

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All Scripture quotations in this book are from the NIV. Some are abridged, with omissions marked by ellipses; paraphrases are not placed in quotation marks.

Pronouns referring to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are capitalized for reverence in the author's own words. Inside Scripture quotations, capitalization and wording follow the 2011 NIV exactly.

AI Disclosure. This book was written by Bill McLeod with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting, research, and editing. All content was reviewed and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for it. Readers are encouraged to open the Scriptures and study them for themselves.

A WORD TO THE READER

Before You Start

If you've read the earlier books in this series, you know the saying by now: "If you want to get something done, hire a teenager while they still know it all." It's been in every book. Jude grew up in the same house as Jesus, and for years he didn't believe his big brother was anything special. So if you've ever had doubts, Jude gets it.

Jude is one of the shortest books in the Bible, just twenty-five verses. It's also one of the most intense. It's full of fallen angels, an archangel arguing with the devil, ancient cities destroyed by fire, a talking donkey's owner, wild waves, wandering stars, and a quote from a mysterious ancient book that isn't in most Bibles. Some people skip it because it seems strange. That's a mistake.

Jude wrote because something dangerous was happening in the church. People had slipped in who were twisting God's grace into an excuse to do whatever they wanted. Jude tells his readers to fight for the faith. But read to the end, and you'll see that he also tells them to show mercy to people who doubt and to pull people out of the fire. Standing firm and being kind go together.

And Jude ends with one of the most beautiful prayers of praise in the Bible, a promise that God can keep you from falling and bring you into His presence with joy.

So read it like a letter from a little brother who finally figured out who his big brother really was. Let's go.

How This Book Works

This book walks through Jude in four short chapters, one for each section of the letter: the call to contend for the faith (verses 1–4), the examples and warnings (verses 5–16), how to stand firm and show mercy (verses 17–23), and the closing praise (verses 24–25). Each one explains what Jude is saying in plain language and adds background about the Old Testament stories and the Jewish writings he uses.

Before chapter 1, a section called Setting the Scene explains who Jude was, what happened to his family, what kind of trouble he was writing about, and why he quotes books outside the Bible. Read it first.

Each chapter ends with a Key Verse quoted word for word from the New International Version (NIV), the same translation used for every Scripture quotation in this book (pronouns for God are capitalized in the author's own words out of reverence; inside Scripture quotations, capitalization follows the NIV exactly); Real Talk questions to think through alone or argue about with friends; and a Try This challenge.

Since Jude has only one chapter, verses are cited by number alone, like verse 3 or verses 24–25. This book quotes Jude sparingly and explains it mostly in my own words, so keep a Bible open next to it. Read each section of the letter first, then the chapter here. Don't take my word for it. Take His.

FOR THE ADULTS

A Note for Parents and Youth Leaders

Thank you for putting this book in a teenager's hands. Like the earlier books in this series, on the Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, Hebrews, James, and the letters of Peter and John, it's written for readers who can smell a sermon coming a mile away. I've tried to write honestly, directly, with some humor, and with real respect for what these readers can handle.

Because Jude is short, I've divided it into four brief chapters and filled out the book with background that I hope is genuinely useful: Jude's family and the account of his grandsons before the emperor Domitian, the Old Testament stories he draws on, and the Jewish writings he mentions. Wherever Scripture is quoted directly, in the chapters and in the Key Verses, the wording is from the New International Version (NIV).

Jude refers to the story of Michael and the devil disputing over Moses' body, which early writers connected with a book called the Assumption of Moses, and he quotes from 1 Enoch (verses 14–15). I've explained what these books are, how Christians have understood Jude's use of them, the parallel of Paul quoting pagan poets, and the fact that 1 Enoch is part of the canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Jude's call to contend for the faith (verse 3) is presented as standing firm on the truth about Jesus while treating people with mercy,

gentleness, and respect, as Jude himself urges in verses 22–23. The letter's close relationship with 2 Peter is summarized, with a reference to the fuller discussion in the 2 Peter book of this series.

Passages highlighted as especially relevant for teens include building yourself up in faith and prayer (verses 20–21), showing mercy to those who doubt (verse 22), with a gentle box for teens who are struggling with doubts themselves, and the promise that God is able to keep believers from stumbling (verse 24).

The Real Talk questions are designed for discussion. They work well for a youth group, a small group, a family dinner table, or a car ride. Don't rush to the right answer. Let them wrestle. Faith that has been thought through tends to last.

My prayer is that every reader will stand firm, show mercy, and rest in the God who is able to keep them.

Grace and peace,

Bill McLeod

Papa Bill Books

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE LETTER

Setting the Scene

Jude, Judas, Judah

The name Jude is really the same as Judas, which was the Greek form of Judah, the name of one of Jacob's twelve sons and of the tribe that King David came from. It was a very popular name among Jews in the first century. Most English Bibles call the writer of this letter Jude, probably to avoid confusing him with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. The New Testament mentions several men named Judas: Judas Iscariot; another apostle, Judas son of James, sometimes called Thaddaeus (Luke 6:16; John 14:22); Judas the Galilean, a rebel leader (Acts 5:37); and Judas called Barsabbas, a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22). And there was Judas, the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3).

The Brother of James

The writer introduces himself simply as Jude, a slave or servant of Jesus Christ, and James's brother. There was only one James so famous that he could be identified by his first name alone: James the brother of Jesus, the leader of the Jerusalem church and the writer of the letter of James. So most Christians throughout history have understood the writer to be Judas, who is listed in the Gospels as one of Jesus' brothers, along with James, Joseph, and Simon (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

That means Jude was also a brother of Jesus. Christians have understood that relationship in different ways, as I explained in my

book on James. Most Protestants think he was a younger half-brother, a son of Mary and Joseph. Orthodox Christians often think he was a son of Joseph from an earlier marriage. Catholic tradition has often understood Jesus' brothers as close relatives, such as cousins. Whichever view is right, Jude grew up in the same family as Jesus.

Why Didn't He Say So?

Here's something striking. Jude never mentions that he's Jesus' brother. He calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ instead. Like his brother James, he seems to have understood that being related to Jesus physically didn't make him more important. Once, when Jesus was told that His mother and brothers were outside, He said that whoever does God's will is His brother and sister and mother (Mark 3:31–35). Jude also had something else to be humble about. During Jesus' ministry, His brothers didn't believe in Him (John 7:5). But after the resurrection, they were among the believers praying together in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14). Something had changed Jude's mind completely. Many think it was seeing his brother alive again.

A Traveling Family

We don't know much about Jude's life after that. Paul mentions that the Lord's brothers traveled as missionaries, taking their wives with them (1 Corinthians 9:5), so Jude may have spent years traveling and preaching. Later traditions say he preached in various places, but they're not reliable.

Jude's Grandsons and the Emperor

One of the most fascinating stories about Jude's family comes from Hegesippus, a second-century Christian writer whose work is

quoted by the historian Eusebius. Hegesippus says that the Roman emperor Domitian, who ruled from AD 81 to 96, was worried about descendants of King David, since Jews hoped for a Messiah from David's family. Someone reported that the grandsons of Jude, the Lord's brother, were descendants of David. So Domitian had them brought before him.

The emperor asked whether they were descended from David, and they said yes. He asked how much property and money they had. They said that together they owned only a small farm, worth about nine thousand denarii, which they worked themselves to pay their taxes and support themselves. Then they showed him their hands, rough and calloused from hard labor. When Domitian asked about Christ and His kingdom, they explained that it wasn't an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly one, which would come at the end of the world, when Christ would return to judge the living and the dead. Domitian decided they were harmless, dismissed them, and, according to Hegesippus, stopped persecuting the church. Jude's grandsons became leaders in the churches, and lived until the reign of Trajan.

We can't confirm every detail. But it's a remarkable picture: the grandsons of Jesus' brother, ordinary farmers with calloused hands, standing before the most powerful man in the world and telling him about a heavenly kingdom.

Who Wrote Jude?

Most Christians throughout history have accepted that Jude, the brother of Jesus and James, wrote this letter. Some modern scholars think a later writer used Jude's name, pointing to the letter's good Greek and to verse 17, which looks back on what the apostles said,

as if from a later time. Others answer that Galilee was a region where Greek was common, that Jude had decades to develop his skills, and that he may have had help. Verse 17 may simply mean that Jude himself wasn't one of the twelve apostles, which is true. The letter is usually dated somewhere between AD 50 and 90.

Some early Christians questioned whether Jude belonged in the Bible, mainly because it quotes 1 Enoch. Jerome, around AD 400, mentioned that some rejected it for that reason. But it was accepted by many from early on. It appears in the Muratorian Fragment, an early list of New Testament books, and was quoted or used by Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. It became a settled part of the New Testament by the end of the fourth century.

Jude and St. Jude

In Catholic tradition, the writer of this letter is often identified with the apostle Judas son of James, also called Thaddaeus, and honored as St. Jude, the patron saint of desperate situations and lost causes. One popular explanation is that because his name sounded like Judas Iscariot's, people were reluctant to pray to him, so he became the saint people turned to when they had nowhere else to go. Many scholars think the writer was a different Jude, since the writer calls himself the brother of James rather than an apostle, and verse 17 seems to set him apart from the apostles. Either way, there's something fitting about it. Jude's letter ends with the promise that God can keep anyone from falling.

The Trouble

Jude had planned to write a happy letter about the salvation he shared with his readers. Instead, he had to write a warning. Certain people had slipped into the church unnoticed. They claimed to be

believers, and joined in the church's fellowship meals. But they were twisting God's grace into an excuse for immorality, rejecting authority, mocking spiritual realities, causing divisions, flattering people to get what they wanted, and denying Jesus as Lord in the way they lived. They claimed special dreams or visions to justify themselves (verse 8). Jude wrote to wake his readers up.

Jude and 2 Peter

If you've read 2 Peter, much of Jude will sound familiar. Jude 4–18 and 2 Peter 2:1–3:3 share many of the same themes, examples, and even phrases: false teachers who slipped in, angels held in darkness, Sodom and Gomorrah, slandering celestial beings, Balaam, waterless clouds or springs, and scoffers in the last days. Most scholars think 2 Peter used Jude, but some think Jude used 2 Peter, and others think both drew on a common source. I explained the evidence for each view in the box called Who Borrowed from Whom? in chapter 2 of my book on 2 Peter, so I won't repeat it all here.

Books Outside the Bible

Jude does something no other New Testament writer does so openly. He refers to two Jewish books that aren't in the Bible used by most Christians. He mentions a dispute between the archangel Michael and the devil over Moses' body (verse 9), a story that early Christian writers said came from a book called the Assumption of Moses. The NIV footnote says Jude is alluding to the Jewish Testament of Moses, from around the first century AD. And he quotes a prophecy of Enoch (verses 14–15), which comes from a book called 1 Enoch, as the NIV footnote explains. We'll look at

what these books are, and what it means that Jude used them, in chapter 2.

Why Jude Matters

Jude is short, intense, and sometimes strange. But it speaks to questions every generation faces. What's worth standing up for? How do you recognize people who twist the truth? How do you stay strong when people around you are drifting? And how do you treat people who doubt or wander? Jude's answers are surprisingly balanced: contend for the faith, but show mercy; watch out for danger, but trust the God who keeps you.

The Map

Chapter 1 (verses 1–4): Called, loved, and kept; the call to contend for the faith.

Chapter 2 (verses 5–16): Warnings from history, Michael and the devil, vivid pictures of false teachers, and Enoch's prophecy.

Chapter 3 (verses 17–23): Remember, build yourself up, pray, and show mercy.

Chapter 4 (verses 24–25): The God who can hold you up.

Contents

Setting the Scene 7
1 Called, Loved, Kept *vv. 1–4* 14
2 Lessons from History *vv. 5–16* 20
3 Stand Firm, Show Mercy *vv. 17–23* 30
4 The God Who Can Hold You Up *vv. 24–25* 36
Now What? The Bottom Line 40

CHAPTER 1

Called, Loved, Kept

Jude 1–4

Jude opens his letter the way most ancient letters began: with the writer's name, the readers, and a greeting. But even in these first lines, he packs in a lot.

He calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ. The Greek word is doulos, which really means a slave, someone who belongs completely to a master. That's an amazing thing for Jude to say. This is the brother who once thought Jesus had lost His mind (Mark 3:21) and who didn't believe in Him (John 7:5). Now he introduces himself as Jesus' slave. He doesn't call himself the Lord's brother, which would have given him instant status. He just says he's James's brother, so his readers will know who he is.

BACKGROUND CHECK **From Skeptic to Servant**

Imagine growing up with Jesus. You eat dinner with Him, share chores with Him, maybe argue with Him about whose turn it is to fetch water. He never sins, which might have been pretty annoying. Then He starts preaching and healing, and crowds follow Him. And you think He's gone too far. That's where Jude was. Something changed him so completely that he spent the rest of his life serving the brother he once doubted. The most likely explanation is the one the New Testament gives: Jesus rose from the dead, and appeared to His family (1 Corinthians 15:7 says He appeared to James). If

you have doubts, you're in good company. Jude had them too. Jesus didn't give up on him.

Then Jude describes his readers with three beautiful phrases. They have been called by God. They are loved by God the Father. And they are kept for Jesus Christ, guarded and protected until He returns. (The NIV footnote says the phrase can also be translated "by" or "in" Jesus Christ.)

BACKGROUND CHECK **Bookends**

Notice the word kept. Jude uses it at the very start of his letter, and he comes back to it again and again. The rebellious angels didn't keep their positions, so God keeps them in darkness (verse 6). Jude tells his readers to keep themselves in God's love (verse 21). And he ends by praising the God who can keep them from stumbling (verse 24). The whole letter is wrapped in the same promise. Before Jude says anything about danger, he reminds his readers that they're safe in God's hands. That's a good order to remember. Before you look at the threats around you, remember who's holding you.

His greeting is a prayer that mercy, peace, and love would be multiplied in his readers' lives. Most letters in the New Testament use "grace and peace." Jude says mercy, which is fitting, because mercy will be one of the big themes at the end of his letter.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Three Times Three**

Jude loves groups of three. His readers are called, loved, and kept (verse 1). He prays for mercy, peace, and love (verse 2). He gives three Old Testament examples of judgment (verses 5–7), then three things the false teachers do (verse 8), then three famous rebels: Cain, Balaam, and Korah (verse 11). Near the end, he describes three groups of people to show mercy to (verses 22–23). Some scholars think this was a deliberate way of writing, which made the letter easier to remember when it was read aloud. When you read Jude, look for the threes.

Jude says he had been really eager to write to his friends about the salvation they had in common. That was the letter he wanted to write. But something happened, and he felt he had no choice but to write a different one. He needed to urge them to contend for the faith.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Letter He Didn't Want to Write**
>
> Have you ever planned to talk to a friend about something fun, but then you had to talk to them about something serious instead? That's what happened to Jude. He would much rather have written a joyful letter about salvation. But when people you love are in danger, love sometimes means saying hard things. A good friend doesn't stay quiet when you're about to get hurt. Jude's warnings come from the same heart that wanted to celebrate salvation. Notice that he calls his readers dear friends, or beloved, three times in this short letter (verses 3, 17, and 20).

The word for contend is epagonizomai. It comes from agon, a word for an athletic contest or a struggle, the word that gives us agony. It's the kind of effort a wrestler or a runner puts in. Jude is saying: give everything you've got to defend and hold on to the faith.

But what does Jude mean by the faith? Here he doesn't mean your personal trust in God. He means the content of what Christians believe: the good news about Jesus, who He is, and what He has done. Jude says this faith was handed over to God's people once for all. It isn't something that needs to be updated or reinvented every generation. The core message about Jesus has been delivered, like a package, and our job is to receive it, keep it safe, and pass it on.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Contend, but with Mercy, Not Meanness**
>
> Some Christians have taken the word contend as permission to be harsh, to win arguments, to mock people, or to treat anyone who disagrees as an enemy. That's not what Jude means. Look at how the letter ends. He tells his readers to show mercy to doubters and to rescue people from the fire (verses

22–23). Contending for the faith means standing firm on the truth about Jesus, refusing to let it be twisted. It doesn't mean fighting people. Paul says that the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, gently instructing those who oppose them (2 Timothy 2:24–25). Peter says to answer anyone who asks about your hope with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). You can hold on to the truth with a firm grip and still offer an open hand to people. In fact, the more firmly you know what you believe, the less you need to be defensive about it.

BACKGROUND CHECK **What's Worth Contending For?**

Not every disagreement among Christians is a fight for the faith. Christians disagree about worship styles, how to baptize, the end times, and many other things. Those questions matter, but sincere believers who love Jesus come down in different places on them. What Jude was defending was far more basic: that Jesus is Lord, that God's grace calls us to holy lives, and that we can't twist the gospel into something that serves ourselves. A useful rule many Christians have followed is this: in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love. Learning the difference is part of growing up in faith.

Here's why Jude had to change his plans. Certain people had sneaked into the church. They didn't arrive with a sign saying "false teacher." They came in quietly, and they looked like everyone else. Jude says their judgment had been described long ago. (The NIV footnote offers another translation: they had been marked out for condemnation.) He probably means that the Scriptures had already warned about people like them, and that their fate was no surprise to God.

Jude describes them in two ways. First, they took God's grace and turned it into an excuse for sexual immorality and self-indulgence. They seem to have thought, "God forgives everything, so it doesn't matter what I do." Second, they denied Jesus, our only Master and

Lord. They may not have rejected Him in words, but they rejected Him with their lives, refusing to let Him be in charge.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Cheap Grace**

God's grace is free. You can't earn it. But that doesn't mean it's cheap. The German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed for resisting the Nazis, warned about what he called cheap grace: forgiveness without repentance, grace without following Jesus. He said real grace is costly, because it cost God the life of His Son, and because it calls us to follow Him. Paul asked the same question: should we keep on sinning so that grace may increase? His answer: by no means (Romans 6:1–2)! Grace doesn't give you permission to sin. It gives you the power to change.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Spotting the Twist**

How do you recognize when someone is twisting God's grace? Here are some warning signs. They talk a lot about freedom but never about holiness. They make you feel that anyone who talks about obeying God is a legalist. Their teaching always seems to justify what they already wanted to do. They don't like being accountable to anyone. And they talk about Jesus as Savior but never as Lord. Real grace makes you love Jesus more and want to follow Him more closely. Twisted grace makes Jesus fit your plans.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Master and Lord**

Jude calls Jesus our only Sovereign, or Master, and Lord. The Greek word for master is despotes, the word that gives us despot. It describes someone with complete authority. Remember, Jude called himself Jesus' slave in verse 1. Now he says Jesus is the only Master. Coming from Jesus' own brother, that's an incredible statement. He wasn't just saying his brother was a good teacher. He was saying his brother was Lord of all.

KEY VERSE

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.

Jude 3 (NIV)

REAL TALK

1. Jude once didn't believe in his own brother. What do you think changed his mind? What would it take to change yours, or strengthen what you already believe?
2. How can you contend for the faith without being mean? Can you think of someone who does this well?
3. What's the difference between an essential belief and a non-essential one? Give an example of each.
4. Have you ever heard someone use grace as an excuse to do whatever they want? How would you respond?

TRY THIS *Write down, in five sentences or fewer, the core of the Christian faith as you understand it: who Jesus is and what He has done. Then compare it with a creed, like the Apostles' Creed. What did you include? What did you leave out?*

CHAPTER 2

Lessons from History

Jude 5–16

Jude says his readers already know everything he's about to tell them. He's not giving them new information. He's reminding them. Sometimes the most important thing isn't learning something new, but remembering what you already know.

He gives three examples from the Old Testament and Jewish tradition, showing that God takes rebellion seriously.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Example One: The People Who Didn't Trust**

The first example is the people of Israel. The Lord rescued them from slavery in Egypt, splitting the sea, feeding them in the desert. But when they reached the edge of the promised land, they refused to trust Him. They listened to the scouts who said the land's inhabitants were too strong, and they wanted to go back to Egypt. So God said that generation would die in the wilderness (Numbers 14). The point: being rescued once doesn't mean you can keep rejecting God. Starting well isn't the same as finishing well. Hebrews makes the same point (Hebrews 3:16–19).

BACKGROUND CHECK **Jesus in the Exodus?**

The NIV footnote on verse 5 notes that some early manuscripts say Jesus instead of the Lord. That would mean Jude saw Jesus Himself as the one who rescued Israel from Egypt, before He was ever born in Bethlehem. That might sound strange, but Paul says something similar: the rock that went with Israel in the desert was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). Christians believe that the Son of

God existed before He became human, and was active all through the Old Testament story. Scholars debate which reading of Jude 5 is original, but either way, the one who rescued Israel is the God revealed in Jesus.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Example Two: The Angels Who Left**

The second example is angels who didn't stay in the place of authority God had given them, but left their proper home. Jude says God is keeping them in chains in deep darkness until the day of judgment. He's probably thinking of the strange story in Genesis 6:1–4, where the sons of God took human wives. Many Jews in Jude's time understood the sons of God as angels who rebelled, and 1 Enoch tells this story in detail. Peter mentions the same angels (2 Peter 2:4). Others understand Genesis 6 differently, as the godly line of Seth marrying ungodly people, or as powerful rulers. Whatever the details, Jude's point is clear: even angels who rebelled against God weren't exempt from judgment. Notice the wordplay: they didn't keep their position, so God keeps them in darkness.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Example Three: Sodom and Gomorrah**

The third example is Sodom, Gomorrah, and the nearby towns (Genesis 19). Jude says, like the angels, they gave themselves to sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, literally other flesh. Many interpreters think he's comparing the angels, who crossed the line between heaven and earth, with the men of Sodom, who wanted to abuse the angelic visitors staying with Lot. The prophet Ezekiel adds that Sodom was also arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned, and didn't help the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49). These cities became a picture of God's judgment, and Jude says they show what eternal fire means.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Why All the Judgment?**

Reading about judgment can be uncomfortable. But think about it this way. A God who never judged evil would be a God who didn't care about victims. If someone hurt you or someone you love, you'd want justice. Jude's examples show that God won't let evil win. But don't miss the other side of these stories. God rescued Israel from Egypt. He rescued Lot and his family from

Sodom. In every story of judgment, there's a story of rescue too. God's judgment and His mercy aren't opposites. Both come from His love.

Jude now turns to the people who had slipped into the church. Relying on their dreams, he says, they did three things. They defiled their bodies, like the people of Sodom. They rejected authority, like the rebellious angels. And they slandered glorious heavenly beings. These people probably claimed to have special visions that gave them permission to live as they pleased. Jude says those dreams were worth nothing.

BACKGROUND CHECK **When Someone Says "God Told Me"**

Be careful when someone uses a dream, a vision, or a feeling to justify doing something God has clearly said is wrong. God doesn't contradict Himself. If someone says God told them it's okay to cheat on their spouse, or lie, or hurt someone, you can be sure He didn't. Test every spiritual experience against Scripture (1 John 4:1). God may speak to people in many ways, but He'll never lead you away from what He's already said.

Then Jude tells one of the strangest stories in the Bible. Michael, the archangel, once argued with the devil over the body of Moses. But even Michael didn't dare to bring a slanderous accusation against the devil. Instead, he left it to God.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Who Is Michael?**

Michael is one of only two angels named in the Protestant Bible (the other is Gabriel). His name means "Who is like God?" In Daniel, he's described as a great prince who protects God's people (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). In Revelation, he leads the angels in a war against the dragon (Revelation 12:7). Jude calls him the archangel, which means chief angel. If anyone had the authority to tell the devil off, it was Michael. But he didn't.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Body of Moses**

The Old Testament tells us that Moses died on Mount Nebo, outside the promised land, and that God buried him in a valley in Moab, and no one knows where his grave is (Deuteronomy 34:5–6). That mysterious burial led to many Jewish stories. The story Jude mentions isn't in the Old Testament. The NIV footnote says Jude is alluding to the Jewish Testament of Moses, from around the first century AD. Early Christian writers, like Clement of Alexandria and Origen, said the story came from a book called the Assumption of Moses. Scholars debate whether these were the same book or two related books. The surviving copy of the Testament of Moses is missing its ending, which may be where the story was told. According to later accounts, the devil claimed Moses' body, possibly arguing that Moses was a murderer (he had killed an Egyptian, Exodus 2:12) or that the body belonged to the material world, which he claimed to rule. Michael didn't argue the case himself. He left it with the Lord.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Lord Rebuke You**

Michael's words echo a scene in Zechariah 3, where Satan stands beside the high priest Joshua to accuse him, and the Lord rebukes Satan. Jude's point is humility. Even the mightiest angel didn't take judgment into his own hands, or speak about the devil with contempt. He trusted God to deal with him. The false teachers, by contrast, mocked spiritual powers they didn't understand. There's a lesson here about how Christians talk about spiritual things. Spiritual warfare is real, but it's not about swaggering or trash-talking the devil. It's about trusting God's power, not your own.

Michael's humility makes a sharp contrast. These people, Jude says, mock whatever they don't understand. And the things they do understand, they know only by instinct, like animals that can't reason. Those very things are destroying them.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Animals Without Reason**

Jude's point is that the false teachers claimed to have higher spiritual knowledge, but actually lived by their appetites, like animals. They were ruled

by what they wanted, not by God's Spirit. It's a warning to all of us. Our appetites, for food, sex, attention, comfort, or excitement, aren't evil in themselves. God made us with them. But when they take control, we become less human, not more. Freedom isn't doing whatever you feel like. It's being free from being ruled by your feelings.

Jude now pronounces a woe, a solemn warning of grief and judgment, like the woes Jesus spoke (Matthew 23). These people, he says, have followed in the footsteps of three famous rebels from the Old Testament.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Cain, Balaam, and Korah**

Cain was Adam and Eve's son, who murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy (Genesis 4). In Jewish tradition, he became a symbol of envy, hatred, and someone who teaches others to sin. Balaam was a prophet hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel (Numbers 22–24). God wouldn't let him curse them, and his own donkey talked to him. But Balaam later advised Moab to lead Israel into idolatry and sexual sin (Numbers 31:16). He became a symbol of someone who uses religion for money. Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, claiming that he and his followers had just as much right to lead (Numbers 16). The ground opened up and swallowed them. He became a symbol of rejecting God's chosen leaders. Together, the three rebels show the paths of hatred, greed, and rebellion. Notice Jude says the false teachers have already been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. Their fate is so certain he describes it as already done.

Now Jude paints some of the most vivid pictures in the whole Bible. He uses five images, drawn from every part of the natural world: the sea, the sky, the land, and the heavens.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Hidden Reefs at the Love Feast**

The early Christians ate fellowship meals together, called love feasts (in Greek, agape), which often included the Lord's Supper. These false teachers joined in, feasting without shame, caring only for themselves. The NIV calls

them blemishes, but the Greek word spilades can also mean hidden reefs, rocks just under the surface of the water that could tear open a ship. That's a frightening picture. You can't see the danger until it's too late. They look like part of the fellowship, but they're wrecking it.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Shepherds Who Feed Themselves**

Jude says they're shepherds who care only for themselves. He's echoing Ezekiel 34, where God condemns Israel's leaders for feeding themselves instead of the sheep, for exploiting the weak, and leaving the injured to fend for themselves. God promises to be the shepherd Himself. Jesus said He was that good shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). A true leader serves; a false one uses people. Watch out for any leader, in church or anywhere else, who treats people as a way to get money, attention, or power.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Clouds, Trees, Waves, and Stars**

Jude piles up four more pictures. Clouds without rain: they look promising, especially in a dry land, but the wind blows them away, and they give nothing. Trees in late autumn without fruit: at harvest time, when you'd expect fruit, there's nothing, and the trees are pulled up by the roots, dead twice over, dead because they're fruitless, and dead because they're uprooted. Wild waves of the sea: they throw up their shameful deeds like foam and garbage on the beach (compare Isaiah 57:20, which says the wicked are like a restless sea churning up mud). Wandering stars: in the ancient world, planets were called wandering stars, because they didn't stay in fixed places like the other stars. Sailors couldn't navigate by them. And in 1 Enoch, the stars that left their courses were pictures of the rebellious angels. Jude says the deepest darkness has been reserved for them forever.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Looking Good, Giving Nothing**

What do all these pictures have in common? They promise something but don't deliver. A cloud promises rain. A tree promises fruit. A star promises guidance. But these give nothing. That's what made the false teachers dangerous. They looked impressive from a distance. Today, you'll see plenty of people online and in real life who look amazing but have nothing real to

offer. Before you follow someone, ask: does their life produce good fruit? Do they give, or just take? Jesus said you'll recognize people by their fruit (Matthew 7:16).

Now Jude does something remarkable. He quotes a prophecy from Enoch, who was the seventh generation from Adam. In the prophecy, Enoch sees the Lord coming with countless thousands of holy ones, coming to judge all people, and to convict the ungodly of all the ungodly things they've done and all the harsh words they've spoken against Him. Jude says this prophecy is about the false teachers.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Who Was Enoch?**

Enoch appears briefly in Genesis 5:21–24. He was the father of Methuselah, the oldest man in the Bible. Genesis says Enoch walked faithfully with God, and then he was no more, because God took him away. He's one of only two people in the Bible who didn't die (the other is Elijah, 2 Kings 2:11). Hebrews says he was taken from this life because he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). Counting from Adam, he was the seventh generation (Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch). Seven was a number of completeness, so Jews saw Enoch as an especially significant figure. Because Genesis says so little about him, many stories grew up around him.

BACKGROUND CHECK **What Is 1 Enoch?**

The words Jude quotes come from a Jewish book called 1 Enoch, which the NIV footnote dates to around the first century BC. It's really a collection of writings, probably written by different authors between about 300 BC and the time of Jesus, all claiming to come from Enoch. It describes Enoch's visions of heaven, the rebellious angels of Genesis 6 (called the Watchers), the coming judgment, and the Messiah. The passage Jude quotes is from 1 Enoch 1:9. Fragments of 1 Enoch in Aramaic were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which shows that it was popular in Jesus' time. Many early Christians read it too. But most Jews and Christians never accepted it as Scripture. The full text survives only in Ge'ez, an ancient Ethiopian language.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Enoch in Ethiopia**

One Christian church does include 1 Enoch in its Bible: the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one of the oldest churches in the world, with tens of millions of members. Its Bible has more books than most, including 1 Enoch and another book called Jubilees. That's the reason the complete text of 1 Enoch survived at all: Ethiopian Christians copied and preserved it for centuries when it had disappeared almost everywhere else. Other Christian traditions, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant, don't include it in their Bibles, though many scholars study it closely because it helps us understand the Jewish world of the New Testament.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Did Jude Think Enoch Was Scripture?**

Christians have understood Jude's quote in different ways. Some, like the early writer Tertullian, thought 1 Enoch deserved respect partly because Jude quoted it. Most Christians have concluded that quoting a book doesn't mean you think the whole book is inspired Scripture. Jude says Enoch prophesied, which suggests he believed this particular prophecy was true. But he never says the book is Scripture, and he doesn't introduce it with "it is written," which New Testament writers usually used for Scripture. He was quoting something his readers knew and respected, to make a point they would understand. Some Christians think Jude may simply have recognized that this saying, whatever its origin, spoke truth that matched the rest of Scripture.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Paul Quotes Pagan Poets**

Jude isn't the only New Testament writer to quote books outside the Bible. In Athens, Paul quoted Greek poets: "in him we live and move and have our being," and "We are his offspring" (Acts 17:28), lines associated with the poets Epimenides and Aratus. Paul wasn't saying their poems were Scripture, or that everything they wrote was true. They were writing about the Greek god Zeus! He was showing that, in these lines, they had glimpsed something true about the real God. Paul also quoted a line from the playwright Menander: bad company corrupts good character (1 Corinthians 15:33), and a Cretan prophet in Titus 1:12. Christians have long said that all truth is God's truth, wherever it's found. Jude used a book his readers respected in the same way.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Does This Shake Your Trust in the Bible?**

Some teens get nervous when they learn that the Bible quotes other books. But it shouldn't shake you. Bible writers lived in real places and real cultures, and they used the books, stories, and poems of their time to communicate. That's actually a sign the Bible is rooted in real history. God's inspiration didn't make Bible writers live in a bubble. He worked through their minds, their reading, and their cultures, to say exactly what He wanted said.

Jude finishes the section with one more description. These people are grumblers who complain about everything. They find fault with everyone else. They follow their own desires. They brag loudly about themselves. And they flatter other people when they want something from them.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Grumblers and Flatterers**

Grumbling was Israel's big sin in the wilderness, the same generation Jude mentioned in verse 5. Complaining might seem minor, but it's often a sign of a heart that doesn't trust God. And flattery is the opposite of honest love. Flatterers say what you want to hear, because they want something from you. A true friend tells you the truth, even when it's hard. Notice the combination: boasting about themselves, flattering others. It's all about getting ahead. It's the opposite of the humility Michael showed.

KEY VERSE

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jude 9 (NIV)

REAL TALK

1. Which of Jude's three Old Testament examples do you find most surprising? Why?
2. What can we learn from the way Michael spoke about the devil? How does that apply to the way Christians talk about people they disagree with?
3. Which of Jude's pictures from nature is the most vivid for you? Can you think of a modern picture that would make the same point?
4. Why do you think Jude quoted 1 Enoch? Does it change how you think about the Bible?

TRY THIS *Go one whole day without grumbling or complaining. Every time you catch yourself, stop and thank God for something instead. At the end of the day, write down what you noticed.*

CHAPTER 3

Stand Firm, Show Mercy

Jude 17–23

After all those warnings, Jude turns to his readers again, calling them dear friends. Now he tells them what to do.

First, remember. The apostles of Jesus had warned this would happen. They had said that in the last days, there would be people who mock the faith and live by their own ungodly desires.

BACKGROUND CHECK **What the Apostles Said**

Jude doesn't tell us exactly which apostles he's thinking of, but we have examples. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that savage wolves would come in among them, and that even some of their own would distort the truth (Acts 20:29–30). He told Timothy that in later times some would abandon the faith (1 Timothy 4:1), and that in the last days people would be lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:1–5). Peter wrote that scoffers would come in the last days (2 Peter 3:3), using almost the same words as Jude. Jesus Himself warned about false prophets (Matthew 24:11). The point: false teachers aren't a sign that God has lost control. They were predicted. That should make you more watchful, but not afraid.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Last Days**

When the New Testament talks about the last days or last times, it usually means the whole period between Jesus' first coming and His return. Peter said the last days began at Pentecost (Acts 2:17). So we're living in the last days now, and have been for two thousand years. That's why the warnings

still apply. Every generation of Christians has had to deal with scoffers and false teaching.

These people, Jude says, are the ones causing divisions. They follow their natural instincts, and they don't have the Spirit. That's ironic. They probably thought they were the spiritual ones, with their special dreams and visions. But Jude says they're the ones who are unspiritual. The evidence is that they divided the church.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Division**

How do you tell the difference between someone who stands for the truth and someone who divides a church? It's not always easy. But here's a clue from Jude: the false teachers divided people because they followed their own desires and wanted their own way. People who truly stand for the truth do so humbly, with love, and they want people brought together around Jesus, not around themselves. Watch out for anyone who wants to create an inner circle, who makes people feel that they're more spiritual than everyone else, or who pulls people away from the wider church to follow them.

Then comes the heart of Jude's advice. He gives four instructions. Three are things to do; one is the main command they support. Build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit. And, the main command, keep yourselves in God's love. And wait expectantly for the mercy of Jesus, which leads to eternal life.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Building Yourself Up**

Notice that the word yourselves is plural. Jude is talking to the whole church. You build yourselves up together. But it applies to you individually too. How do you build yourself up in faith? Read the Bible, not just a verse, but whole books, like this one. Learn what Christians believe and why. Join a group that studies Scripture. Ask hard questions and look for answers. Worship with other believers. Faith is like a muscle: it grows when it's used and exercised. The best defense against false teaching isn't memorizing a list of errors. It's knowing the truth so well that a fake sounds wrong.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Praying in the Holy Spirit**

What does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit? Christians understand it in different ways. Some, especially Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, think it includes praying in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:14–15). Most understand it more broadly: praying with the help and guidance of the Spirit, who helps us when we don't know what to pray (Romans 8:26). Paul tells believers to pray in the Spirit on all occasions (Ephesians 6:18). Either way, the point is that prayer isn't just you trying hard. It's God's Spirit working in you. If you don't know how to pray, ask the Spirit to help you. That's a prayer He loves to answer.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Keep Yourselves in God's Love**

This is the main command. Remember, at the start of the letter, Jude said his readers are kept by God (verse 1). Now he tells them to keep themselves in God's love. Is it God's job or theirs? Both. God holds you, and you stay close to Him. Jesus said something similar: remain in My love (John 15:9–10). Think of it like standing in the sunshine. You don't make the sun shine. But you can choose to stay in it, or walk into the shade. You stay in God's love by trusting Him, obeying Him, praying, and staying connected to His people.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Waiting for Mercy**

Jude says to wait for the mercy of Jesus that leads to eternal life. That's interesting. He doesn't say wait for judgment, or wait for a reward. He says wait for mercy. Even on the day Jesus returns, what believers will need most is His mercy. We don't get to heaven because we're good enough. We get there because He is merciful. That's good news for anyone who's worried they don't measure up.

And then Jude says something that might surprise you, after all his warnings about false teachers. He tells his readers to show mercy to people who are wavering. He describes three groups. Be merciful toward doubters. Rescue others by snatching them out of the fire. And to others, show mercy, but carefully, with caution and fear,

hating even their sin-stained clothes. (The NIV footnote points out that the Greek manuscripts vary here. Some have two groups instead of three, but the message of mercy is the same.)

BACKGROUND CHECK **Mercy for People Who Doubt**

Notice that Jude doesn't tell his readers to attack doubters, or kick them out, or shame them. He says be merciful. Doubters aren't the enemy. They're people who need help. If you have a friend who's struggling with doubts about God, don't panic, and don't lecture them. Listen. Take their questions seriously. Share what you've found. Pray for them. And stay their friend. Jude knew something about doubt. He once doubted his own brother.

BACKGROUND CHECK **If You're the One Who Doubts**

Maybe you're reading this, and you're the one with doubts. Maybe you wonder whether God is real, or whether Christianity is true, or whether God could love you. Maybe you feel guilty about doubting, or you're afraid to tell anyone. Here's what I want you to know. Doubt isn't the same as unbelief. Some of the greatest people in the Bible had doubts: Abraham, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Thomas, and Jude himself. A father once said to Jesus, I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief (Mark 9:24). Jesus didn't send him away. He helped him. God isn't afraid of your questions. Bring them to Him. Talk to someone you trust, like a parent, youth leader, or pastor. Read and look for answers; there are many thoughtful books by Christians who wrestled with the same questions. And remember the last two verses of this letter: you are held by a God who can keep you. Your grip on Him may be weak right now. His grip on you isn't.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Snatching from the Fire**

The picture of snatching someone from the fire also comes from Zechariah 3:2, the same passage Michael's words echoed, where the high priest Joshua is called a burning stick snatched from the fire. Some people are in real danger, heading toward destruction. Mercy sometimes means urgent action. If a friend is in danger, hurting themselves, being drawn into something

harmful, or being exploited, don't just watch. Get help. Tell a trusted adult. Love sometimes acts fast.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Mercy with Fear**

The third group needs mercy too, but Jude adds a caution: show mercy with caution and fear, hating even the clothes that the flesh has stained. That also echoes Zechariah 3, where Joshua's filthy clothes are taken off and replaced with clean ones (Zechariah 3:3–5). Jude means: love people, but be careful not to be pulled into the same sin. Some situations are dangerous for you, too. If you're helping a friend with an addiction, a toxic relationship, or a destructive lifestyle, you need wisdom, boundaries, and the help of mature adults. Paul says something similar: restore people gently, but watch yourself, or you also may be tempted (Galatians 6:1). Love the person; hate the sin that's hurting them.

KEY VERSE

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Jude 20–21 (NIV)

REAL TALK

1. What's one practical way you could build yourself up in your faith this month?
2. What does it mean to you to keep yourself in God's love? What tends to pull you into the shade?
3. Why do you think Jude tells his readers to show mercy to doubters, right after warning them about false teachers?
4. Have you ever had doubts about your faith? What helped, or what would help?

TRY THIS *Think of one friend who's struggling, whether with doubts, hard circumstances, or something harmful. Pray for them by name every day this week. Then do one kind, practical thing for them, without preaching at them.*

CHAPTER 4

The God Who Can Hold You Up

Jude 24–25

Jude has warned his readers about danger, reminded them of history, and told them how to stand firm. Now he ends, not with one more warning, but with praise. These two verses are called a doxology, from the Greek word doxa, meaning glory. A doxology is a word of glory, praise offered to God.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **A Famous Ending**
>
> Jude's doxology is one of the most loved passages in the New Testament. It's often used at the end of church services as a benediction, a blessing spoken over the congregation as they leave. There are other doxologies in the New Testament, like Romans 16:25–27 and Ephesians 3:20–21, which also begin by praising the God who is able. Many Christians have memorized Jude's words, because they're a perfect way to end a day, a service, or a life.

Jude praises God as the one who has the power to keep his readers from stumbling. After all those warnings about people who had fallen, this is the answer. You won't stand firm because you're strong. You'll stand firm because God is holding you. The word for stumbling describes a horse or a person tripping and falling on a rough path. God is like a hand that steadies you on a rocky trail.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Kept**
>
> Here's the letter's theme one last time. In verse 1, Jude's readers are kept for Jesus. In verse 21, they keep themselves in God's love. In verse 24, God is able

to keep them from stumbling. The false teachers didn't keep their place, like the rebellious angels. But God's people are kept, from beginning to end. You can't keep yourself safe. But you don't have to. Jesus said no one can snatch His sheep out of His hand (John 10:28–29). That doesn't mean you'll never struggle or fail. It means God won't let go of you.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Faultless and Full of Joy**

Jude says God is able to bring His people into His glorious presence, blameless, and with great joy. Think about that. One day you'll stand before God, the King of the universe. You might expect to be terrified, ashamed of everything you've ever done. But Jude says you'll stand there faultless, not because you never sinned, but because Jesus has made you clean. Remember Joshua's dirty clothes in Zechariah 3? God replaced them with clean ones. That's what He does for you. And the main emotion won't be fear. It will be great joy. Joy for you, and joy for God. Jesus told stories about the party in heaven when one lost person comes home (Luke 15).

Finally, Jude gives glory to the one and only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He piles up four words: glory, majesty, power, and authority. And he says these belong to God across all of time: before all ages, now, and forever. Then he says amen, which means "it's true" or "so be it."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Glory, Majesty, Power, Authority**

Glory is God's shining greatness. Majesty is His royal greatness, the dignity of a King. Power is His strength to do anything He wants. Authority is His right to rule. Jude says all of these belong to God through Jesus Christ. Remember the false teachers who rejected authority (verse 8) and denied Jesus as Master and Lord (verse 4)? Jude ends by giving all authority back to the one who deserves it.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Before All Ages**

Jude's phrase is remarkable: God's glory belongs to Him before all ages, now, and forever. It covers the past, the present, and the future. Before the

universe existed, God was glorious. Right now, while you're reading this, He is glorious. And when the world as we know it ends, He will still be glorious. Your life fits into a much bigger story. When you feel small, remember that the eternal God has chosen to hold you, and that one day you'll share in His joy.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Brother Who Became a Worshiper**

Think about who's writing these words. Jude grew up with Jesus. He doubted Him. Maybe he even laughed at Him. Now, at the end of his letter, he gives glory to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. His older brother has become his Lord. The person he once thought was out of His mind is now the one through whom all glory goes to God. That's what Jesus can do with a skeptic. And He's not done doing it.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Ending with Praise**

Jude's letter is full of warnings, but it doesn't end in fear. It ends in worship. That's a good pattern for your own life. When you're worried about the world, the culture, your friends, or yourself, end by looking up. Whatever is going wrong, God is still able, still glorious, still on His throne. Praise isn't pretending things are fine. It's remembering who's in charge.

KEY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Jude 24–25 (NIV)

REAL TALK

1. What does it mean to you that God can keep you from stumbling?
2. How do you feel when you imagine standing before God? Does Jude's description change that?
3. Why do you think Jude ended a letter full of warnings with praise?
4. Which of the four words (glory, majesty, power, authority) means the most to you right now? Why?

TRY THIS *Memorize Jude 24–25 this week. Say it out loud every night before you go to sleep. When you've memorized it, pray it for a friend or family member by name.*

THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

Now What? The Bottom Line

You've just read Jude, a letter from a man who grew up with Jesus and didn't believe in Him, until he did. Jude ends by praising the God who has the power to hold you up and bring you into His presence with joy. That God is calling you.

Here's what the Bible says, as plainly as I can put it.

1 God made you, and He loves you.

God made you on purpose, and He loves you more than you can imagine. He wants you to know Him.

> *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* **John 3:16 (NIV)**

2 We've all turned away.

We've all gone our own way instead of God's. John says that if we claim to have no sin, we're fooling ourselves. The Bible calls it sin, and it separates us from God.

> *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,* **Romans 3:23 (NIV)**

3 Sin has a real cost.

God is good, so He doesn't shrug off evil. The Bible says the result of sin is death, separation from God forever.

> *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* **Romans 6:23 (NIV)**

4 Jesus came for you.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again. God didn't wait for us to love Him first.

> *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 (NIV)**

5 You can't earn it. You receive it.

Salvation isn't a reward for being good enough. It's a gift you receive by trusting Jesus.

> *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.* **Ephesians 2:8–9 (NIV)**

6 Turn and trust.

Turn from running your own life, and trust Jesus as your Savior and King. Then you can know, not just hope, that you have eternal life.

> *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* **Romans 10:9 (NIV)**

So what do you do with that? You don't need perfect words. You can talk to God honestly, right now, wherever you are. If it helps, you could pray something like this:

> *God, I've been running my own life, and I've sinned against You. I can't fix that myself. Thank You for loving me first. Thank You that Jesus died for me and rose again. I believe You raised Him from the dead. I'm turning to You. Forgive me and make me clean. I trust Jesus*

as my Savior, and I want to follow Him as my King. Keep me from stumbling, help me stand firm in the faith, and make me merciful to people who doubt. In Jesus' name, amen.

If You Just Said Yes

Tell someone. A parent, a youth leader, a pastor, or a Christian friend. Start there.

Read the real thing. Read Jude straight through. Then read Revelation, the last book of the Bible, with a parent or youth leader. It shows the end of the story: Jesus wins.

Find your people. Get connected to a church where the Bible is taught and Jesus is honored. Ask about being baptized.

Build yourself up. Jude says to build yourself up in the faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Make time with God a daily habit.

Not Sure Yet?

Not ready? That's honest, and honesty is a good place to start. Keep asking. Keep reading. John wrote down what he saw and touched so you could check it out for yourself. Just don't settle for "I already know all that."

Because if Jude is right, the big brother he once doubted is the Lord of everything, and He can hold on to you.

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV)