

“Hey, Jude!” // Jude 1–4 // Jude # 1¹

(TEXT READ LIVE AT CAMPUSES)

Announcement

Student Camp: Stand up! One story, I think, captures the essence of Student Camp. One of our student pastors, Reagan Jones, was doing this audience participation thing and he chose random students to give a high from the previous day ... one guy raised his hand, and Reagan put the mic in his face, and the kid said, “My high has been watching our friend (and he said his name) sleep each night in his clothes.” Reagan said, “Why is he doing that?” And the kid said, “Because he didn’t bring any sheets for the bed, or a pillow ...” (So every night this kid is sleeping on a bald polythene mattress that’s been slept on by thousands of people before him because he forgot his sheets.) But when he said that, the kid spoke up: “Yeah, but I remembered to bring my Bible!” That sums it up. Student Camp is a thing—it’s not for the faint of heart, to be sure, but these students were eager for God’s Word and hungry for his presence. It’s one of the most incredible things I’ve ever experienced. A couple of nights after the service was done and the invitation was over, we had 100, 150 students stay around in groups, just praying around the altar for over an hour. The worship team was unplugged, but just leading in extended worship times in God’s presence. God is doing something in our students, and students, we are ready for you to inspire and lead us!

So put your hands together, and you guys can sit down. We’ve done high school, middle school, and kids camp. Thank you to all our volunteers—it’s been one of the most powerful and most fun summers we’ve ever had.

Introduction

OK, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, open them to the book of Jude if you haven’t done so already.

Jude’s short little letter—it’s only one chapter long—is toward the very end of your Bibles, just before the book of Revelation. So open to the back, and come back in a little bit. If you get to a set of maps that look like they are chronicling the journeys of Odysseus, you’ve gone too far.

How many of you have had the rather unpleasant experience of discovering termites in your home? The problem with termites is by the time a homeowner notices a sagging floor, or bubbling paint, or a door that just won’t close, termites have been feeding for years. Termites literally eat a

¹ Sources consulted: Miguel Nuñez, *2 Peter and Jude for You* (Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2022); Alistair Begg, “[An Appeal to Contend](#)”, October 29, 2013, Truth for Life website; Tim Mackie, “[The Book of Jude Summary](#)”, December 14, 2016, The Bible Project; Tim Mackie and Jon Collins, “[An Introduction to an Urgent Letter](#)”, January 12, 2026, Bible Project Podcast; Eric Geiger, “Jude,” via RightNow Media; Skip Heitzig, “[A Call to Battle](#)”, April 18, 2021, Calvary Church; Tommy Nelson, “[The Faith Once Delivered](#)”, March 23, 2008, Denton Bible Church. And others as noted throughout.

house, almost invisibly, from the inside out. The wood surfaces of your home can look perfectly solid, but then the inspector shows you that you take a screwdriver and poke through a wood beam because all that remains of the wood is a paper-thin shell. And—some of you know this from painful firsthand experience—most homeowners policies exclude termite damage because it is considered preventable through regular inspection. And some of you are right now making a note, “*Check on termite inspection.*”

Jude writes because he’s concerned something similar is happening in his church.

Jude’s little letter may be one of the most neglected parts of the entire Bible, so today we’re going to give it some attention. Everyone look at your Bible and say, “Hey, Jude!”

This little book is incredibly important. I’ll be walking through the opening and conclusion of this letter on weeks 1 and 3, and I’m gonna leave the really difficult middle part for our teaching team next weekend.

So this morning, let’s walk through these first four verses phrase by phrase: **1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,**

- **Jude’s name would have been pronounced “Judas” in Greek. There was no “Jude” name** back then; our English Bible translators shortened Judas’ name to Jude so that the author of his book wouldn’t be confused with Judas the Betrayer.
- **Jude was one of Jesus’ four half-brothers we see mentioned in both Matthew and Mark.**² You say, “Jesus had brothers?” Yes, Scripture makes clear he had four half-brothers. I say “half-brothers” because James and Jude didn’t have the same Father as Jesus since Jesus was, of course, born of a virgin, but Mary had other children through Joseph after she had conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel writers make clear that at first, none of Jesus’ brothers, including Jude, believed Jesus was the Messiah as he claimed. It was only after they’d seen him resurrected. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul makes it sound like Jesus appeared specially to them. **Three** of them became recognized leaders in the early church, and **two** of them even wrote Bible books—Jude and James.³

Which, I might add, is a strong argument for the resurrection, right? Think of it this way: **Raise your hand if you have an older brother.** What would it take to convince you to start worshiping your brother as God? You say, “Ha. Son of God? Hardly. Son of the devil, maybe.” What was it that convinced James and Jude that Jesus, this brother whom they’d grown up with, who slept in the bed next to them, was God in the flesh and the Savior of the world? Only one thing, the Resurrection.

Notice in this opening verse that Jude calls himself the “servant” of Jesus Christ, and the word Jude uses for servant is *doulos*, which indicates the lowest kind of servant, like a “bondservant” or “slave.” Jude could have used the more respectable *diakonos*, which means “household servant.” “Assistant to the regional manager.” But instead, Jude goes right for the bottom, putting himself squarely at the feet of Jesus, which also really

² Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3.

³ John 7:3–5; Acts 1:14. James was recognized leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13–21; 21:18) and authored the Epistle of James. **According to early church tradition**, yes. Hegesippus (2nd century, quoted by Eusebius) says Simon succeeded James as leader (bishop) of the Jerusalem church after James’s martyrdom

speaks to Jude's humility. I mean, if I were the biological half-brother of Jesus, any letter I wrote would open with, "J.D., who, just to remind you, is related to Jesus." That would be in my email signature: "J.D. Greear, Ph.D. And Jesus' brother, to note." But Jude never mentions his biological connection to Jesus. He said, "Just like all of you, I'm the slave, the bond-***servant of Jesus.***"

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

- One of the things you'll notice in Jude is that everything he does, he does in 3s, and this is the first set of those 3s.
- Believers are "called," "beloved," and "kept."
- Those three qualities, by the way, comprise the three-word description repeatedly given to "The Servant" of Jehovah, the Messiah," in Isaiah 40–55, and now Jude applies them to the church, Christ's followers.
- So let's take a minute and **think about what they mean**, because this is going to serve as **Jude's anchor point** and **his hope** in the midst of the difficult things he has to say.

Called: God has called you out to be his own. The initiative didn't come from you; it came from him. Some of you college football fans might know the famous story of how Mike Leach, head coach of Texas Tech in the early 2000s, was really struggling to get Texas Tech's kicking game going, and during one of their first couple of games, they were doing one of those between-quarter audience participation games where a random fan gets selected to try and kick a field goal, and if they did it, they got free room and board for a year. Well the guy they randomly chose, Matt Williams, was a Texas Tech freshman. He'd played soccer in high school, and he went out and blasted a field goal through the uprights. The place went nuts, and Coach Leach sent an assistant coach to find out who this kid was and invited him to play on the team. He single-handedly turned around their kicking game that season. I love it. Out of 50,000 fans, this kid Matt got called out. That's what happened to us except, of course, some of the details of our story are very different. God's choice of us wasn't random, and he didn't call us out because of our great abilities. We were utterly unable when he called us, but he made us valuable players on his team. He doesn't call the equipped, we say; he equips the called. *Which brings me to the next word in our triad:*

Beloved: God chose to set his love on us, not because we were worthy, but simply because he loved us. He didn't love us because we're worthy; his love for us makes us worthy.

I remember years ago, a couple connected to our church was in line to adopt a child but found out just before the child was born that the child was going to be born with severe spina bifida, and the agency said, "We'll understand if you want to back out, because for the rest of this child's life they were going to have significant challenges." The couple was really struggling with the decision, but one night the wife had a dream, and in her dream she was in a big stadium where beautiful babies were being brought up on stage for adoption. As each beautiful baby was brought forward, the host would say, "Who wants this one?" and various parents in the stands would volunteer to take that particular child. But then the host brought forward one child who was disfigured and maimed and ugly, and the host said, "Who wants this one?" and the crowd, she said, went silent; no one spoke, and no one stepped forward to take the baby. "Finally," she said, "someone in the crowd stood up and said, 'I'll take that one,' and she said, "in my dream, I looked, and it was Jesus. He walked forward to take the child." At that point in the story, I said, "Wow, that is so powerful," but she said, "I'm not done yet. She said, "In my dream, when Jesus went down to get the baby, I got a glimpse of the baby's face—this baby that was all

marred and disfigured, and it was my face. The truth is that Jesus adopted me when I was disfigured and wrecked by sin, and I know he now wants us to take in this child as he took in us.” Now, hear me—I’m not saying there’s never a time for an adopting parent to choose not to go forward—those are complex and difficult decisions; I’m just saying it is true that when we were at our lowest, Jesus loved us and took us in. *And that brings me to our last word:*

Kept: The other day I was looking through some old pics, getting ready for my dad’s 80th birthday party, and for about half an hour I got sucked down memory lane. You know how that works—looking at old pictures. And so I’m just going through all these years of pictures. I love old pictures where I’m holding one of my kids in the pool: I’m standing there with them in my arms in water that is way above their heads, and they are holding on to me for dear life. But they look so happy. Or we’re wading out into the waves at the beach, and they are holding onto one of my hands for all they’re worth so that the waves don’t sweep them away. Truth is, of course, in both those situations, they’re secure not because they’re holding onto me, but because I’m holding onto them. It’s the strength of my grip, not theirs, keeping them safe.

Jude says, “This is us, church. In the midst of all these attacks, there is a church—chosen, beloved, and kept by Jesus. And at the end of the day, it’s his strength, not ours, that keeps us from going astray.” That’s the anchor point he carries through all these warnings he’s about to give. And to those warnings we now turn!

3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed (like termites) who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

This was an unplanned, emergency letter. Jude was like, “Listen, I had every intention of writing you this amazing, encouraging letter that was gonna lift you up, inspire you; for 2,000 years, Christians would be putting little quotes from my letter up on their Instagram stories with a picture of a deer drinking beside a brook and a sappy worship song playing in the background ... But instead, you people have forced me into writing a salty letter that people are going to basically ignore for the next 2,000 years because it’s so unpleasant.” But see, hear me—that’s sometimes what it means to be a Christian leader—you have to put aside the warm fuzzies and say hard things out of love for the church.

False teachers, Jude says, like termites, have infiltrated the church. And it’s no surprise, he says, because basically that’s happened in every generation of God’s people since the dawn of man—that’s what the whole middle part of his letter is about—giving you illustrations of that. It’s also, he says, what Jesus and the apostles predicted would happen in the church. Check out vs [17] But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. [18] They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.”

Jesus and all the apostles told us this would happen.⁴ And so

Vs 3, “I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith...”

⁴ See, for example, 2 Pet 2:1-3; 1 Jn 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-9; Matt 7:15 - 19.

- “Contend” is the Greek word *epagonidzo*, from which we get our word “agonize.” It was a term taken from the world of wrestling in those days. Jude says we gotta wrestle—fight for—the faith.
- Listen, the church is a place of warmth and acceptance and grace, but Christian leadership is more than simply providing a nice guy, touchy-feely, shoulder-to-shoulder presence. Sometimes, Christian leadership means standing up for, fighting for—*agonizedly contending* for—the integrity of faith. Speaking out against error and abuse. Making enemies. Getting savaged on social media. If you’re not up for that, Christian leadership may not be for you.

We have to fight to preserve, Jude says, still in **vs 3**, *“the faith that was once-for-all delivered to the saints.”*

- Which is a really interesting phrase: There was a message—one central, basic message—given to us by Jesus through the earliest apostles, that we still hold onto today.
- A faith delivered once-for-all to the saints, recorded for us in **THE BIBLE**. Not a faith delivered piece by piece over the centuries.
- Some of our Roman Catholic friends say that the way God preserves the integrity of his church is through a succession of popes who get to rule with his authority and write new canon law into the church. But that’s not how God ever promises in the Scriptures that he’ll preserve his church. He said there was a faith delivered once-for-all to the saints—a reference to **THE BIBLE**—and anything new that pops up—any new idea, any new question we haven’t considered—we measure against that one rule of faith.
- Sometimes, a Roman Catholic friend will say to me, “Well, you wouldn’t have a Bible unless the early Catholic authorities decided what got put into it.”
 - To which I always say, “Yeah, but the early church fathers did not make anything the Word of God, as in, it wasn’t the Word of God until they declared it to be so.”
 - Rather, the early church fathers *recognized* the books that had been authored by God. They knew there was a faith delivered once-for-all to the saints through the apostles, and so they recognized which books had been written either by an apostle or within the apostolic community,⁵ and they recognized that as the fulfillment of Jesus’ promises, and all future iterations of the church were to go back and compare what the apostles had recorded here.
 - So at this church, the final and ultimate authority for what we believe is what is recorded here, the faith delivered once-for-all to the saints. Yes, we’re informed and influenced by traditions—those are important, but our final authority is these Scriptures, delivered once-for-all to the saints.
- This is also, by the way, why we don’t accept revelations by supposed later prophets who attempt to add something to the Scriptures they think is missing, like Muslims claim about Mohammad or Mormons claim about Joseph Smith. This was a faith delivered *“once for all”* to the saints, not a faith delivered in installments over the years. Plus, a lot of what these guys attempted to add contradicts what is written in this book.

⁵ Some books in our New Testament were not written directly by an apostle, but came out of the apostolic community. Mark, for example, traveled with Peter; and Luke traveled with Paul. Their authority covered these books. Something similar could be said for James and Jude. They were not authored by, but validated by, the apostolic community. For more on this, see R.C. Sproul on the development of the canon!

So that's a small little phrase there in Jude, but it's really important. And then from there, Jude goes on to build his claim that there are termites in the church in the form of false teachers seeking to eat away at this foundation. Again, vs 4 **For certain people have crept in unnoticed... ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

These false teachers, Jude says, do two things:

- They **"pervert the grace of our God into sensuality..."**
 - In other words, they take God's grace—which is meant to produce holiness and a love for God—and they turn it into something that gratifies fleshly desires.
- And then, secondly, they **"deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."**
 - In other words, they stop submitting to Jesus' authority as expressed in his words, and they become their own authority.

In Jude's day, some were saying that God's forgiveness of our sins and his freeing us from the Old Testament Jewish Law meant that we were now free to engage in sexual immorality on our own terms. All the rules were off—love is love—and all kinds of sexual variations were permissible.

We also know from Paul's letters that there were a lot of Jewish believers saying that being faithful to God meant embracing Jewish culture and Jewish traditions as the foundation of the church, and that part of the mission of God was working to establish a global Jewish kingdom on earth.

That was then. What I want to ask is where we see **these two things** (**"pervert(ing) the grace of our God into sensuality ..."** and **"deny(ing) our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."**) happening in the church *now*. Remember, Jesus and the apostles predicted this kind of corruption would happen in every generation—so, the most important question to consider when reading this letter is how we see this corruption manifesting in our day.

How do we keep our termite inspection up-to-date?

Honestly, I'm a little nervous about this because it might get a little offensive—but I care about you, and like Jude says, Christian leadership means sometimes calling these things out. **So here we go.**

1. Therapeutic Christianity

In "Therapeutic Christianity," personal flourishing becomes the main point of the gospel. Christianity becomes primarily about us achieving happier, healthier, more successful, and more emotionally fulfilled lives.

To be clear, I'm not against therapy—it can be really helpful, and God wants us to flourish. He created us to thrive. Doing things his way always leads to us thriving. But when you make Jesus primarily a means to becoming happier and healthier rather than seeing him as a treasure greater than anything else in life, you've swapped out a heavenly agenda for an earthly one. The cross is not primarily a tool for self-fulfillment; it's a sacrifice that reconciles us to God.

In **Therapeutic Christianity**, grace itself gets perverted. Instead of, “God accepts me by his grace but then works to make me holy,” grace becomes, “God accepts me exactly as I am and celebrates me that way.”

In Therapeutic Christianity, there’s not usually a lot of talk about sin and repentance or giving yourself away for the gospel of Jesus; there’s a lot of talk about a happier, healthier you; finding healing to your brokenness; finding balance; achieving the good life, discovering the beautiful you, you snowflake, you unique color in the rainbow, you one-of-a-kind Skittle in God’s great candy jar.

I’ve noticed that in a lot of the big college and young adult Christian conferences around the country, the talk used to be about the urgency of the Great Commission and laying your life down for the gospel. Now the bulk of the talks are about your brokenness and your anxiety and why you’re beautiful and how God makes you whole. And hear me—that’s an important message. I preach it sometimes—it’s a beautiful part of our message. But Therapeutic Christianity can very quickly become a counterfeit for real discipleship because it switches out Jesus’ primary agenda for a different one. In Therapeutic Christianity, self-improvement, rather than knowing and serving Jesus, becomes the center of the mission.

2. Build-a-Bear Christianity

Does anybody remember the whole **Build-a-Bear** thing when you were a kid? Do they even have that anymore? Basically, you’d take your kid to the “Build-a-Bear Store,” and they’d go in and build the bear that they wanted to snuggle with at night, and then you’d pay for it. They got to choose the color, the features, the size—you want a bear with two different color eyes? Fine. You want a bear with both eyes on the left side of his face? Go ahead, Picasso, you do you.

And I guess that’s fine when it comes to assembling a fake bear you can cuddle with at night, but that’s not how we can approach God, and yet, that’s exactly what many people do with Jesus. They learn about Jesus and say, “Ooh, I like this,” and “I like that ...” and “Ooh, I don’t like this.” But the Bible is not a salad bar where you take the ingredients you like and leave the ones you don’t. This is not Burger King, where you can have your Jesus your way.

I remember being on campus one time, talking to a young lady about Jesus, and I’d show her something the Bible said and she’d say, “*Well, my Jesus wouldn’t say that ...*” and “*My Jesus would think like that ...*” and eventually I told her, “*You don’t get your own personal Jesus! There’s one Jesus, and you either submit to his Lordship or reject him. He made us in his image; we don’t get to remake him in ours.*”

The place “Build-a-Bear Theology” shows up most often is with sexual issues—both in Jude’s day and now. He addresses sexual issues several times in the next few verses. Hear me: Sexual perversions are the Enemy’s prime battleground in every generation. **Just as in Jude’s day, we’re told by some today, “Hey, love is love. The Christian way is not about adhering to archaic sexual mores but discovering and living in love.”** And so we see a lot of sectors of the church where:

- Homosexuality is affirmed. They literally call themselves “affirming churches”—because they proudly and brazenly affirm what Christ and his apostles forbid.
- There are churches where marriage is redefined from God’s prescription of one man with one woman for life.

- Or churches where transgender identities are affirmed and celebrated—as if gender were a choice and not something God wrote into our very DNA.
- Churches where pornography is treated casually or part of self-expression. And maybe you say, “Well, I don’t look at porn,” but I know Christians who seem unbelievably unbothered watching shows with graphic sex scenes—hello, *Game of Thrones*, which is basically soft porn—and Christians talk about these shows without even the slightest flush of embarrassment. Or they let their kids watch these shows.
- Churches where cohabitation before marriage is normalized and just accepted as a reality of our culture now.
- Churches where adultery is justified in some situations as a quest to find true happiness.

These things pervert the grace of God into sensuality and deny the Lordship of Christ.

3. Prosperity Theology

Again, this is another one Jude mentions specifically in **vv. 11 and 12**, and **16**. People who use the gospel for personal, earthly gain.

In prosperity theology, the core message becomes “Jesus exists to make you rich,” rather than “Jesus is himself your riches.”

In vs 12, Jude talks about churches being led by “shepherds who feed themselves rather than the flock.” When you look into prosperity gospel churches, this is often what you find. Leaders living at extravagant levels; manipulating congregants to give them money so they can live exorbitantly.

- I once got to know a pastor in this tradition, and I went to his office to have lunch with him, and in his parking lot was a 40-foot stretch limo, so I asked, “Is someone famous here? Did Matt Damon swing by for a visit?” And he said, “No, that’s just how we get around and how we pick up our guests.” I went into his bathroom, and he had these exotic colognes from around the world. I’m not like a fragrance guy but I recognize money when I see it.
- And here’s the thing, their church was not even that big. I thought, “Man, his congregation is way smaller than ours, and he seems to have way more money than we do.” So I asked him, “Do you, like, have a bunch of millionaires in your church?” And he said, “No ...” but he explained that basically the whole offering of their church went to him to spend as he saw fit, and what’s more, whenever their church planted a church, which, to their credit, they’d done a lot of, they taught that this new church was under his spiritual covering, and they needed to honor that by tithing 10 percent of their budget back to him personally throughout the rest of their existence. And I thought, “Man, am I doing this all wrong? I think, ‘If we had more money, I’d plant more churches.’ He thinks, ‘Mama wants a new Cadillac, I’ll go plant some more churches.’”
- Of course, I’m joking when I say that—I know we’re not doing it wrong, but suffice it to say that there are a lot of leaders who turn the church into their own personal piggy bank.

As Jude explains, bad doctrine leads to sinful living. Listen, I know there are scandals in the church everywhere, including churches that believe like ours. Wherever you have humans and money, you’re gonna have corruption and scandal if you’re not careful. But still, scandal seems to be particularly bad in prosperity theology churches. And that’s because **doctrinal and moral corruption** often go together.

4. Earthly Kingdom Christianity

In “earthly kingdom Christianity,” Christ’s spiritual, heavenly kingdom gets swapped out for an earthly, political kingdom.

- Now, I want to be careful here—Christians are supposed to be involved politically. It’s part of how we love our neighbor and part of our public witness.
- We are supposed to be salt and light in our communities, and when a nation’s constitution and its moral framework are built on God’s created order, the nation flourishes.
- So we should vote for candidates who we believe will rule and establish laws according to God’s vision of the world, and if neither one does it perfectly, vote for the one that will cause the least harm.

At the same time, Jesus’ agenda, until Christ returns, is not to establish a political reign on earth. The apostles asked Jesus that very question just before he ascended—Are you gonna build your kingdom on earth now? and he said, “Your responsibility right now is not that; it’s to be my witnesses.”⁶ Our primary responsibility is the Great Commission, the proclamation of the gospel to every person in every nation on earth, creating a body of people who live here as exiles, waiting on their King to return from heaven with his kingdom.

Trying to build a theocratic Christian kingdom on earth is a swapping of Jesus’ agenda for a fleshly one. I love how theologian Michael Horton explains it, “Besides fulfilling the Great Commission, the church’s most important role in society is to render Caesar his temporal due while refusing to yield to him even a single jewel from Christ’s crown... Identifying Christ with any nation today risks blasphemy. Christ identifies himself (only) with the ‘holy nation’ of the church, which is comprised of peoples from every nation.”⁷

Any time we begin to believe that the primary mission of the church is winning elections—defeating progressives, or defeating conservative extremism, or saving Western civilization, or taking America back—we’ve subtly replaced Christ’s agenda with an earthly one.

Again, it’s not that we shouldn’t want to see Christian values influence our laws, or that we shouldn’t want to see society become more just and prosperity more accessible to everyone, but ideologies like Critical Theory, or Theocratic Christian Nationalism, or Cultural Marxism subtly redefine the mission of the church. They diagnose humanity’s fundamental problem as something other than sin, and thus say the primary solution we need is not the gospel but some political reorganization. Humanity’s primary problem is race, class, economics, or our cultural framework, and thus, the primary thing we should be working for is cultural or political revolution.

Mark my words, when someone starts to preach politics from the pulpit, they will very soon stop preaching the gospel, because they begin to assume that the preservation of their nation is more important than the salvation of souls. I love America. I want to see America renewed and reformed. But as a pastor, Jesus didn’t make my first assignment saving America, but saving Americans, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, black or white, rich or poor.

⁶ Acts 1:6–8.

⁷<https://www.9marks.org/article/culture-warriors-the-good-and-the-bad/>

Earthly kingdom Christianity swaps out Christ's mission for ours and appeals to fleshly desires—in this case, worldly power and comfort. The true gospel says that we are supposed to embrace the cross, love our enemies, and proclaim the gospel as we await the King. Of course, we are involved politically and seek to see righteousness and justice enthroned in our laws. But our primary assignment is building his holy nation, the church, not a geopolitical kingdom.

Last one ...

5. Consumer Christianity

In Consumer Christianity, Christians believe the church primarily exists to meet their preferences. So they approach their local church with the attitude, "I'll stay here as long as ..."

- I like the music.
- The people are cool and fun.
- My kids are entertained.
- The sermons inspire me.
- The programs serve me.
- No one annoys me.
- People anticipate my needs and meet them.
- The pastor never offends me or talks about money.

And I get it. Some of these things are part of why you choose a church. You liked it and it worked for your family. But in Consumer Christianity, these things all remain central to you rather than asking, "How can I lay down my life for Christ's church?"

I mentioned that the other night we celebrated my dad's 80th birthday with a small group of family and friends. And there was a point where a few of us said some grateful words about him, and one of the things I said was that I was so grateful now that watching him while I was growing up, he taught me the opposite of Consumer Christianity. He and my mom were members of the same church in Winston-Salem for 41 years until they left there to move to Raleigh-Durham to become members here, since he figured he had a good "in" with the pastor here.

That church they were part of for 41 years in Winston-Salem went through cycles, like every church does—seasons of growth; seasons of decline; hard times; boring spells; bad leadership, and yet my mom and dad stayed, because that's what you do when you're committed to something like family. Hear me, I'm not saying there's never a time to leave a church and find a new one. There is. But I also know our generation promotes a deep consumer mentality that makes us treat church like we do a fast food restaurant, and the moment my burger doesn't taste that good or my fries are not hot enough or the customer service is bad, I'm outta here for something else. And that's fine for fast food, but that's not how you treat a marriage, or a family—I hope none of you parents ever say to your kids, "You know, conversation around the dinner table is a little flat, and you kids are starting to annoy me, so I'm gonna go try out a different family." That's not how you are supposed to be with a family, and it's not how you're

supposed to be with the family of God. From my dad, I learned you stay—you stay during the hard times, you stay during the boring times, you stay through the problems and the challenges, because that’s what Jesus did for the church. You love them through the problems.

CONCLUSION

There—I’ve given you five ways Jude’s warning about termites in the church manifests today—**1. Therapeutic Christianity; 2. Build-a-Bear Christianity; 3. Prosperity Theology; 4. Earthly Kingdom Christianity; 5. Consumer Christianity.**

AND I’m sure there are more. But in every age, we have bad leaders reshaping Jesus’ message around fleshly desires, swapping out Christ’s agenda for theirs and perverting grace.

And, by the way, I think that phrase in vs 4 is really important—these termites **“pervert the grace of our God.”** That’s what unites all five of these corruptions I’ve given you today. They all pervert grace.

Notice, false teachers rarely deny grace; they just *redefine it*. They say,

- Grace means you don’t have to repent. Grace means God affirms you as you are.
- Grace means God wants you comfortable and rich.
- Grace means God exists to fulfill your dreams.
- Grace means God wants your tribe to thrive and your culture to prosper.

Jude says, “No. Grace brings you to God. Grace doesn’t feed your flesh; grace teaches you to deny it. Grace doesn’t diminish Jesus’ lordship; grace establishes it. Grace doesn’t fulfill your agenda; grace teaches you to surrender yours to his. Grace is not about pampering your flesh; it’s about restoring you to the greatest reality in the universe—fellowship with God.”

The genius and deceptiveness of false teaching—the reason it **“creeps in unnoticed,”** like termites, is that it almost never asks you to reject Jesus. It simply asks you to attach a different agenda to him: Sexual freedom. Politics. Money. Comfort. Power. Identity. Therapy. Success. False teaching usually doesn’t remove Jesus—it just rearranges him. It makes Jesus a useful means to an end rather than celebrating him as the beautiful end himself.

Notice that **all five of my examples** start out with something good.

- Emotional healing is good.
- Thriving is good.
- A fulfilling sex life in marriage is good.
- Money is a gift from God and is good.
- Loving your country is good.
- Enjoying your church is good.

The problem is not that we desire these things. The problem is when they stop orbiting Christ and Christ starts orbiting them.

Whenever that happens, termites are in the walls.

VAMP

So we have to be clear above all on **what the true gospel is**—what is the essence of the faith delivered once-for-all to the saints.

So let me define it for you with the words of Paul. “I delivered unto you as of first importance that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

The gospel is the good news that God sent his Son to suffer for our sin in our place so that we could be reconciled to him and live holy lives in fellowship with him. The gospel is that we couldn’t save ourselves, so God did it all by himself, and in response to that we owe him everything!

Knowing this, receiving it personally, embracing it, and then laying down your life to proclaim and spread it—this is what it looks like to be called, loved, and kept, and the thought of his church losing this is what provoked Jude to write this letter to urge us to cling to this truth that has been “delivered once for all to the saints.”

Have you received this gospel personally? It’s an individual offer made to you, personally, that you have to receive personally. That’s what this whole thing is about—you receiving this gospel and then joining this church so you can become a part of the family of God committed to spreading this gospel. You can receive that offer of salvation **TODAY**, if you never have. If that’s you, and you want to, or have questions ...

- Text **“Ready” to 33933**, and someone will follow up with you.
- Or **come talk to one of our pastors** or prayer team members down front after the service.
- Or maybe even better, come to our **Explore the Summit** time, which is happening after each service at each campus today. There, you can ask any questions about the church or Christianity that you have in a non-threatening environment.

Let’s stand to sing together, “O Praise the Name” of our great God and Savior Jesus who has given us this message and promises to preserve and keep us as we look to him ...