



**ENTER** God's presence

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

— Philippians 4:8-9

Heavenly Father, as we gather around your word, help us to lay aside the cares and worries of our day and those things that weigh us down. Help us instead, focus on you promises and the good things which you have for us in your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen



**SHARE** life together

1. Share your highs and lows with each other?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. Have you ever found yourself in a position where you have had to defend your faith or Christian beliefs? Share some of your experience.



**LISTEN** attentively

Read Jude 1:1-4

5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?
6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?
7. Have you ever read the book of Jude before? What do you know about the book and about Jude, the writer of the letter?

Week beginning:  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Worship series:

**Faith Matters**



**VERSE** for the week  
**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 1:3



**REMEMBER** this week

**We have identity, purpose  
and security in Jesus.  
That is the one truth  
worth fighting for.  
Anything that seeks to  
erode, diminish, dilute or  
rob people of the freedom  
and joy this Gospel  
brings needs to be called  
out and fought against.**

Jude identifies himself as a servant of Christ and brother of John. Most scholars believe that this refers to John the brother of Jesus and therefore makes Jude also a brother (or half-brother) of Jesus. While most of Paul's letters were written and addressed to specific faith communities, Jude's letter is more of an open letter to all Christians, addressed to all those who are called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. His opening introduction addresses all Christians and the contents of his letter address an issue which is a perpetual one for Christians in all times and places but perhaps is relevant to us more now than ever. Jude's overriding theme is that as people of faith, there are times when we must 'contend for the faith' which we have received. The idea of contending for our faith is not unique to Jude. It refers to taking part in a contest in order to win the prize. Paul uses similar imagery in 1 Corinthians and in Galatians when he compares the life of faith to running a race. He says run in such a way as to win the prize.

- 8. Do you think the world at large is better or worse at listening to various ideas and alternative beliefs? What attitudes to Christianity have you encountered in your daily life that inform your opinion?**
- 9. What happens when the gospel is distorted, even by people who perhaps mean well (which it seems these did not)? Why is it important to constantly remind ourselves about the message of the Gospel?**

Jude appears to have set out to write a letter very different to the one he eventually writes. It seems from verse 3 he had planned to simply write and share some encouragement and to share the joy of salvation in Christ. Instead he feels compelled to urge his readers to 'contend for the faith which they have received'. It seems that some false teaching had crept in among the Christians and some were being persuaded to indulge in lives of immoral behaviour. In some ways, it is something like Martin Luther asking his 95 questions of the church of his time and addressing those teachings that had crept in which were not consistent with the message of the Gospel. The historical accounts of Luther and his supporters tells the tale of men and women who were harassed and hounded for standing for the truth. As a Lutheran Church, born from a movement of contending for the Gospel, we should constantly be reminded of this duty to 'contend for the faith'. Yet even Luther and his friends sometimes had difficulty discerning the places where differences could be overlooked and the places where they needed to make a stand.

- 10. What are the key points of your faith that you would never compromise?**
- 11. Have you ever spent times with other Christians and discovered they hold some beliefs that you disagree with and what effect did that have on your relationship with them? Were you able to reconcile the differences between you? Share.**



Jude knows that when we enter the fray to contend for the faith, we are bound to fail unless we are sure of the truth before we begin. He addresses his readers as those who have been called, who are loved in the Heavenly Father and kept for (or possibly 'by' or 'in') Jesus. He only urges those to whom these three criteria fit to contend because only when our purpose (calling), identity or belonging (where we are loved) and our security (being kept or guarded) are sure, can we hope to stand against falsehood.

- 12. What do you perceive as the purpose or calling that God has placed on your life?**
- 13. How does your identity as a loved child of God give you confidence in who you are?**
- 14. What does it mean to you to be kept, or guarded in Jesus?**

These three things are fundamental truths of who we are and what we have in Christ Jesus. Any ideas, thinking or teaching that diminishes our confidence in that reality is something that we are called to stand against. These things are ours as followers of Jesus and he will help us to hold onto them and to defend them if the situation calls for it. Often though, we can be guilty of allowing new ideas and thoughts to simply slip in unnoticed; ideas which undermine the truth and significance of all that God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Ideas which the rest of the world think are great leaps forward and which might cost us something to stand against. That's why Jude urgently tells us to keep vigilant and contend for the faith.

- 15. Have you ever heard someone sharing a version of Christianity which doesn't sound quite right to you? How did you handle that situation?**
- 16. In what places do you feel your Christian faith put you at odds with the majority opinions of our developed Western society and culture?**



## LIVE purposefully

Contending for the faith and brandishing the truth of the gospel like a machette, cutting down all who stand in our way, are two very different things. One of the ways we contend for the faith is by living with integrity. God calls his people to love one another just as Jesus loves us. When we show love like Jesus, we bear witness to his love alive and at work within us. If we take the path of superiority and judgement as the holders of the ultimate truth, then we can often obscure the love and grace of Jesus.

**17. Sometimes what begins as a cool and innocent conversation about faith can quickly descend into a series of personal attacks and insults. Take some time as a group to decide on one objection or obstacle that you think many people have about faith. Spend some time reading God's word and praying this week and write your own answer to that question or objection. Bring them to share at your next LifeGroup.**

**REMEMBER: Preparation promotes peak performance.**



## PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for all his goodness and gifts to you.
- Thank Jesus for revealing the truth that you are loved, called and kept safe.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you and prepare you for your calling to contend for the gospel.
- Pray for those who have accepted less than the fullness of the love and grace of the gospel of Jesus. Ask that they might come to know the whole truth of their purpose, identity and security in Him.



## BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], may the mercy, peace, and love of Christ abound in your life. Amen.**