



LifeStone

AMPLIFY CHRIST

VOLUME 3

False Teachers

Disciples avoid false teaching by knowing the truth and looking to Christ's return

Christ's Return

In fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus will return to bring judgment and receive worship

A New Heaven and Earth

Disciples will live forever with Christ in heaven

The End of Time



AMPLIFY CHRIST

VOLUME 3

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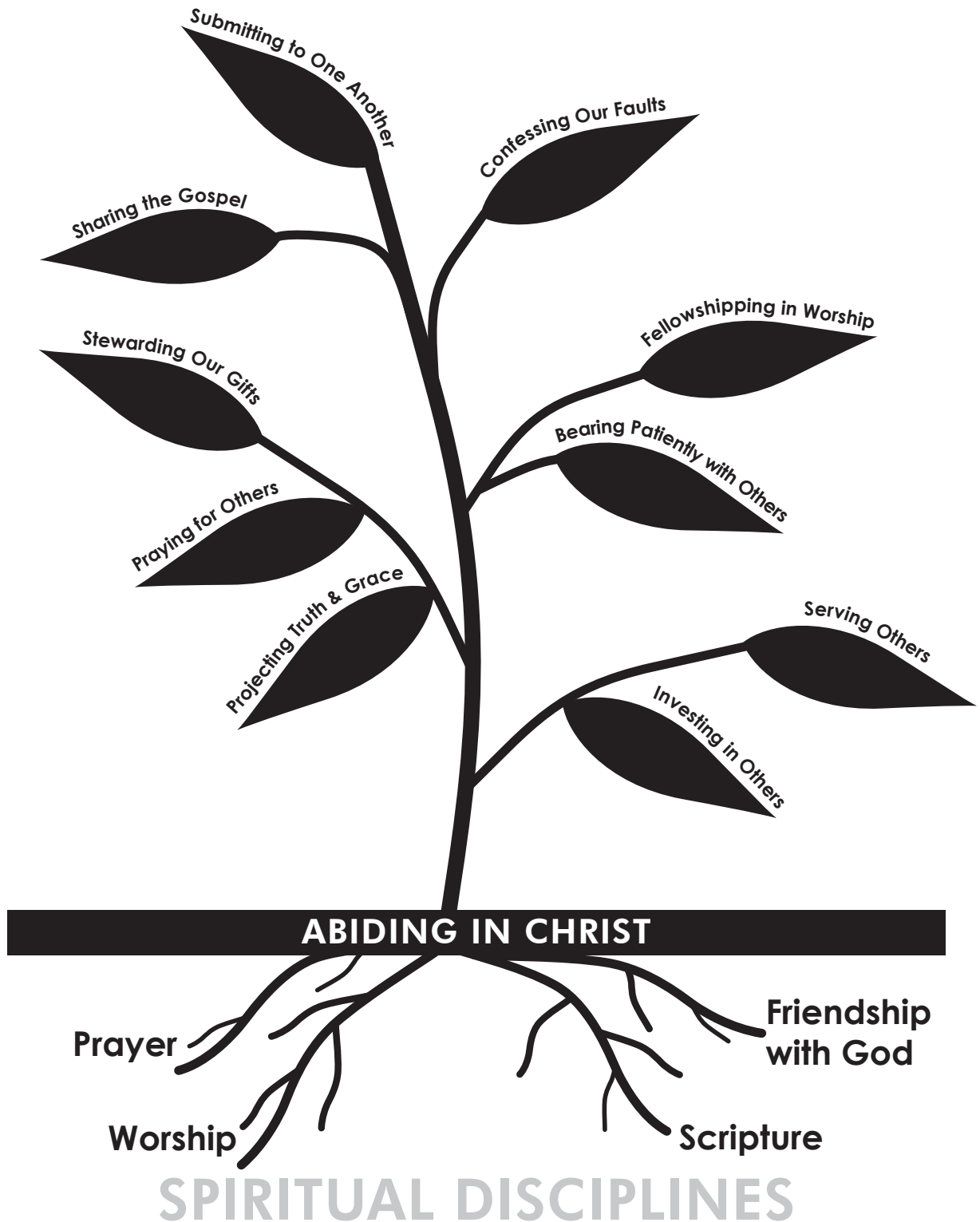
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OUR MISSION

LifeStone exists to empower **DISCIPLES** to make **DISCIPLES**. We seek to fulfill our mission by publishing Bible study and **DISCIPLESHIP** curriculum as well as offering real-life application training. We equip **DISCIPLES** as they journey through the various stages of life. As **DISCIPLES** grow in Christ, we continue to partner with them and their churches through training and other resources to empower **DISCIPLES** to make **DISCIPLES**.

DISCIPLE MAKING



FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND EDITOR IN CHIEF

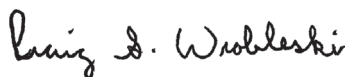
Dear Almighty Father,

Thank You for Your unconditional grace and mercy bestowed on LifeStone Ministries for 120 years. We are humbled by Your Son, the Master-Servant, who became the Living Stone rejected by men. You love us and build us up to be spiritual storehouses. We pray for Your strength and courage to be the living stones in our culture. We pray for perseverance to sacrifice ourselves to live wholly in subjection to Jesus Christ. May we glorify You in all our words and deeds as we strive to grow Your flock to spiritual maturity. We pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit as we engage Your flock.

Lord, we pray that this exposition of Your Word meets 2 Timothy 3:16. May the lessons contained in this labor of love emulate profitable teaching, graceful correction, and righteous training. We pray for all those who will be receiving instruction from these lessons. We pray for the teachers to approach this inspirational work with humility and meekness. May Your holy character and love for us leap from the pages and bring us all to our knees in thanksgiving.

Our glorious King, may we build the confidence and convictions of Christian leaders in our homes, churches, and missional fields to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us be renewed with strength and peace to empower Christian disciples to make disciples.

Under truth and grace,



Craig S. Wroblewski, M.Div., D.Min.
President & CEO
LifeStone Ministries

Dear Christ follower,

Our mission at LifeStone Ministries is to empower Christians to make disciples. We desire to partner with churches in this discipleship process. We have created a discipleship tool to help churches fulfill their calling. This new publication—*Amplify Christ*, as we call it—features a simple yet comprehensive five-step Bible study method that focuses on robust Bible learning and biblical application in a world that is often hostile to Christ's teaching.

Amplify Christ is not just another Bible curriculum. Discipleship requires a significant level of commitment from both teacher and student. Our discipleship tool likewise requires serious commitment. Leaders will need to inspire a group of people—maybe as few as one or two—to commit to spiritual formation and discipleship by investing their time and being willing to share their successes and failures. Group members can expect to read the lesson each week for an hour. Above all, group members will need to be honest with and encourage one another every week.

We have published this new discipleship tool and now prayerfully entrust it to you. We pray with all our hearts that the Holy Spirit will use it mightily to transform your lives and the lives of your group members, churches, and communities.

Sincerely,



James M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Editor in Chief
LifeStone Ministries

HOW TO USE AMPLIFY CHRIST

Christian discipleship is a matter of following the Master's footprints. The first disciples did just that—they followed Jesus from place to place, shared the same meals, slept at the same campsites, celebrated the same special occasions, and met the same people. In all these experiences, Jesus taught them verbally and through His actions. The disciples saw Jesus react to different people in different situations. They examined His work habits, observed His demeanor, and scrutinized how He practiced what He preached.

Even though we moderns can't follow Jesus physically, we are nonetheless called to be like Him in word and deed, conformed to His image. This is our calling, and we dare not ignore it. The only way we can know how to follow in Jesus' footprints is to learn about Him in the Bible. In the New Testament, eyewitnesses and other early disciples detail Jesus' life, ministry, and teaching. Similarly, the Old Testament helps us understand God's intentions for us through stories, worship materials, prophetic messages, and the Mosaic Law. God has given us His precious Scriptures to know how we should live. For this reason, disciples should have an intense thirst and hunger for God's Word.

Modern-day disciples, however, sometimes get discouraged about reading the Bible because of its antiquity and foreign culture. Sometimes they get so enthralled by the Bible's antiquity and alien culture that they fail to apply its teaching. Modern-day disciples may segment a familiar verse from its context and fail to understand its intended meaning, and sometimes they fail to integrate Scripture into theology.

For all these reasons, our new discipleship tool emphasizes five key elements for Scripture study. We hope *Amplify Christ* helps you become more like Christ.

THE METHOD

FIVE KEY ELEMENTS

- 1. Amplify the Background.** Because the Bible was written long ago in a culture different from ours, we investigate rigorously to bridge the gap separating us moderns from the biblical writers. We present to our readers those backgrounds that help them understand the biblical passage.
- 2. Amplify the Text.** One of the legacy features of our publications is the exposition of the text. We focus on the original author's intended message to his original audience, addressing the question, What was the author conveying to them back then? We hone in on the verse-by-verse details to explain the passage's big picture.
- 3. Amplify the Context.** Many Christians see Scripture as piecemeal. We want disciples to see how individual stories and texts are connected to the whole biblical story. We read the text as sentences within a paragraph and paragraphs within a larger text unit. This is basic exegesis. But our readers should also understand how the entirety of a book fits into the whole of Scripture and the larger biblical history. We write to show how each text interconnects to form a majestic and awe-inspiring picture of God's plan.
- 4. Amplify the Faith.** Christians need to allow Scripture to inform their thinking and basic Christian doctrine. We believe that God inspired His Word and that we should accept it as the rule of our lives as we seek to follow the Spirit's guidance. To this end, we spell out how the biblical text informs Bible doctrines and how we should think.
- 5. Amplify Your Life.** Our goal is not to create a bunch of smart, brainiac Christians. Yes, we want Christians to be competent readers of the Bible, but this is not enough. We do everything we can to help disciples apply the text to their lives so that they grow in Christ's likeness. We think deeply about the text, explicitly seeking ways to articulate the principles of the ancient text to us today and to the specific individual. We are most urgent about the Christian formation of Christ followers.

TIMELINE

Unknown	Adam and Eve
Unknown	Noah
Unknown	Tower of Babel
2166-1991 B.C.	Life of Abraham
1916-1806 B.C.	Life of Joseph
1876-1446 B.C.	Israelites in Egypt
1446 B.C.	Exodus
1446 B.C.	Law at Sinai
1446-1406 B.C.	Wilderness wandering
1406-1399 B.C.	Joshua leads the conquest
1360-1075 B.C.	Judges Period
1051-931 B.C.	United monarchy
1011-971 B.C.	David reigns
959 B.C.	Solomon builds the temple
931-586 B.C.	Divided monarchy
722 B.C.	Assyria conquers Israel
605 B.C.	Babylon conquers Assyria
586 B.C.	Babylon conquers Judah/temple destroyed
539 B.C.	Persia conquers Babylon
538 B.C.	Exiles return to Judah
515 B.C.	Temple rebuilt
458 B.C.	Ezra returns to Israel from Babylon
445 B.C.	Nehemiah rebuilds the wall
331 B.C.	Greece conquers Persia
175-164 B.C.	Seleucid rule over Israel by Antiochus IV Epiphanes
63 B.C.	Rome captures Jerusalem
7 to 4 B.C.	Birth of Jesus
A.D. 26-30	Jesus' ministry
A.D. 30	Jesus' death and resurrection
A.D. 45-56	Paul's missionary journeys
A.D. 70	Rome destroys the temple

IMPORTANT DATES

A Warning about False Teachers

Written by Glenn Weaver

READ AND TAKE NOTE

Read Jude 1:1-13. Look for:

- descriptions of the false teachers
- reasons for God's judgment of the false teachers

FIND IT

1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

Who: Jude
false teachers
a church in an unknown location

What: a call for the church to stand for the truth of the gospel against false teachers who had crept into the church

When: between A.D. 50 and 61

Where: unknown

Why: to warn about false teachers who had infiltrated the church

How: by describing the false teachers' sinful character and behavior and God's judgment upon them

Spiritual Formation: Knowledge of the truth should influence the disciple's character.





AMPLIFY THE BACKGROUND

Jude, a brother of James and a half brother of Jesus Christ, wrote his letter to a group of Christians under threat from false teachers who had snuck into the church. The false teachers were attacking the gospel through their wicked lives. By their ungodly character, they showed that they did not truly believe the gospel and did not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the one who transforms people into His own image.

The church (or perhaps a group of churches) knew Jude. And Jude knew of the false teachers who were infecting the church. They were a real threat that was affecting people who were dear to Jude. We do not know where the church or churches were located, but we can surmise some information about the congregation from Jude's letter. They knew the Lord and the gospel. They had an accurate understanding of the gospel message and of the proper Christian character that the gospel produces in the life of a believer.

The congregation had a good knowledge of the Old Testament and of Jewish extra-biblical writings that were influential during this time. Jude used this knowledge to his advantage as he listed examples of disobedience and God's judgment on the disobedient. The modern church knows the Old Testament and its accounts, but we are unfamiliar with extra-biblical Jewish writings. Since Jude used some of these materials in his letter, we will better understand Jude's message if we become familiar with these Jewish writings.

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After the Old Testament was completed around 400 B.C., God and His prophets were silent until the time of Christ. It was an unstable time in Israel. Various groups controlled Israel, such as Alexander the Great, followed by his generals and their administrations. Israel obtained its freedom during the time of the Maccabean Revolt (roughly 167-142 B.C.) and the Hasmonean Period (142-63 B.C.), but in 63 B.C., the Romans came and remained in charge.

During this time of instability and God's silence, there developed different Jewish groups with unique writings. The Pharisees and Sadducees are two groups that are mentioned in the New Testament. Another group are the Essenes, a separatist community developed at Qumran (the location where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found).

Each group had writings that were important to them. The Sadducees only used the first five books of Moses, while the Pharisees used the entire Old Testament. The community at Qumran used the entire Old Testament (except perhaps for Esther since no copies of this book were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls), plus some additional writings, including some that they wrote. Other groups also wrote materials that influenced Jewish thought.

Extra-biblical Jewish writings often focused on famous or unique people from the Old Testament. Melchizedek and the patriarchs were popular characters in the writings. Especially influential was literature written about or supposedly by Enoch.

One popular book, now known as 1 Enoch, is a compilation of chapters written between the fourth and first centuries B.C. It is written as an apocalypse and has features similar to the book of Revelation, with angelic interactions, heavenly visions, and pronouncements of judgment on the wicked. Given the turmoil of the years when God was silent, it is no wonder that 1 Enoch was popular. It explained why the world was evil and asserted God's coming judgment on the wicked and His protection of the righteous. It provided hope of God's intervention in the world. First Enoch remained popular with Christians for the first few centuries A.D.

First Enoch is important for our study because Jude quotes from it (Jude 1:14-15) and alludes to its teachings elsewhere in his letter. (Jude does not imply that 1 Enoch is Scripture; it is not.) Jude used the content of 1 Enoch as one of his tools to motivate the congregation to affirm truth and reject error. While many may not have read 1 Enoch, we desperately need Jude's warnings and exhortations. Error and evil are as dangerous today as in Jude's time.

AMPLIFY THE TEXT

Jude's letter is short but contains important information for the church today. False teachers crept into a local church in Jude's day, bringing a sinful lifestyle that God condemns. Jude's concern for the church led him to write his letter. He does not say much about the false teachers' doctrinal beliefs. Instead, he described their practices that were contrary to the gospel. While believers continue to sin, the wicked, unrepentant actions of the false teachers showed that they were not believers and had no loyalty to Jesus Christ. Jude wrote to

the church to make believers aware of such deceivers and their character and to guard against them.

Today's church faces the same threat that the church in Jude's day faced. In fact, the problem is bigger than ever. There are many persuasive teachers trying to gain our attention. Books, television, and the Internet influence our congregations, leading people away from God and His truth. It is not always easy to evaluate the teachers since we often cannot meet them in person and consider their character as they interact with others. The threat of false teachers and their aftermath is too great for us not to evaluate teachers to see if their intentions and motives are honoring to God.

THOUGHTS

The problem of false teachers in the church is bigger than ever. We need to be watchful!

GREETINGS (Jude 1:1-2)

Jude began his letter by describing himself. He rightly placed himself under Christ's authority, proclaiming he was a servant to his Master, Jesus. Jude also listed his family; he was a brother to James. This James is none other than the leader of the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:13; 21:18), who is also the brother of Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 13:55). By his description, Jude demonstrates his humility and submission to authority. He did not claim privilege because he was Jesus' brother or even mention that fact. He was only a servant who was under authority. His humility and understanding of his rightful place before God set the stage for his accusations against the false teachers later in his letter.

Jude was writing to believers, as those loved by God and kept by Jesus Christ. Later in his letter, Jude described the judgment that would befall the false teachers. He assured the believers to whom he was writing that they were secure in the Father's love. It was important that he provided this assurance, for he would have harsh words of judgment to pronounce against the false teachers. Faithful followers of Jesus Christ should not fear God's wrath against them, for they are God's children.

Jude pronounced blessings upon the readers. Those blessings are reserved for those who have a relationship with the Lord (Jude 1:2). In contrast to the judgment that the Lord proclaims on the false teachers, God offers mercy. Instead of punishment, the Lord gives peace to His children. The Father provides love to His people instead of the punishment that is promised to the wicked.

WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS (Jude 1:3-4)

Jude wanted to write an uplifting letter to his fellow believers about the salvation he enjoyed with them, but the church needed a warning letter instead. Unless something was done, the fate of the congregation was at stake. The gospel message that the apostles preached and the church believed was under attack. Jude contended that God had entrusted the gospel message to the church and that believers must fight to defend it!

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The gospel message has many implications, including moral teachings about what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ. In this area of practical Christian living, the false teachers demonstrated their deviation from the gospel. As we will see in the book of Jude, contending for the faith includes both holding to Christian morality and standing firm against those who deviate from it.

Jude gave a summary statement of the problem the church faced (vs. 4). We do not know the congregation's location, but Jude knew the church and the situation they were facing. Certain individuals, likely itinerant teachers and their followers, snuck into the congregation. Enemies of the church, even today, may not be easy to spot. They may not make their intentions known. Sometimes their aberrant beliefs or practices may be hidden by the good things they share in common with the church.

Those individuals brought with them a distortion of the gospel message, claiming that God's grace permitted them to practice immoral behavior. Rather than submit to Jesus Christ as their Master, by their actions they denied they had any relationship with Him. Jude did not base his criticism of the false teachers on the accepted practices of a certain society or long-held traditions. God's judgment is based on His character and is taught by the Scriptures. God proclaimed long ago the judgment that would occur for such ungodly behavior.

EXAMPLES OF JUDGMENT (Jude 1:5-7)

Jude used examples of judgment from the Old Testament to illustrate the Lord's judgment that would fall upon false teachers. These examples were not new revelation to the church. They already knew how God dealt with these rebels and how He would judge the wicked in the future, but Jude reminded them so that they could apply this information appropriately in their situation with the false teachers who had come into their assembly.

The first example was the Israelites who left Egypt under Moses' leadership. God rescued them miraculously from Pharaoh and his army. The Lord sent the plagues and persuaded Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt. When the Israelites were trapped at the shores of the Red Sea, God parted the water so that Israel could travel on dry land and drowned Pharaoh's army when they pursued Israel. But when they came to the land that God promised them, the Israelites refused to trust God to give them victory over the giants who lived there. In response, the Lord condemned everyone twenty years old and over to die in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

The second example concerned rebellious angels (vs. 6). This may allude to angels in Genesis 6:1-4 that sinned by crossing the boundaries of the spiritual and earthly world in a way that God did not intend. In this interpretation, the angels (called sons of God in Genesis 6) took human wives, whose offspring were giants. Jude used a popular extra-biblical Jewish writing to describe the angel's rebellion. The book of 1 Enoch, quoted in Jude 1:14-15, discusses the events of Genesis 6 at length. While not Scripture (and not even written by Enoch), Jude used 1 Enoch as a background to explain the rebellion of the angels and their judgment.

The third example, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, is similar to the angels' sin (Jude 1:7). Jude explained that just as the angels disregarded the boundary of the spiritual and natural world and took human wives, the resi-

dents of Sodom and Gomorrah engaged in homosexual activity in violation of God's design for humanity. God condemned Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by fire. Jude pointed out that the false teachers' disregard for God's authority over their lives was worthy of His judgment.

CONDEMNATION OF FALSE TEACHERS (Jude 1:8-13)

Jude explained that the false teachers who entered the church were similar to the examples of disobedience in verses 5-7. Rather than following the teaching of the gospel that the apostles delivered, the false teachers claimed to have dreams that justified their sinful lifestyle. Because of the previous examples of the angels and Sodom and Gomorrah, Jude most likely had sexual immorality in mind when he charged that the false teachers defile the flesh. Angels were repeatedly accused of defiling themselves with women in 1 Enoch, using the same word Jude used to accuse the false teachers.

The false teachers also had a problem with authority. Rather than submit to the authorities placed over them by God, the false teachers despised authority. They did not submit to Christ's authority and spoke disrespectfully about angelic beings. God has established an authority structure in His creation, and angels are a higher order of beings than humans.

In Jude 1:9-10, Jude elaborated on disrespecting angelic beings. He used another extra-biblical account, a text now lost to us, of Michael the archangel's dispute with the devil concerning Moses' body. Even an angel of Michael's high-ranking authority recognized that the devil had a higher position than he did. He rightly chose to let the Lord rebuke Satan.

The false teachers did not show such restraint. They arrogantly spoke slanderously against the angels, but their viewpoint was not based on a correct understanding of the angels' role in God's hierarchy (vs. 10). In their ignorance, the false teachers acted like ignorant animals, with their sinfulness condemning them to destruction.

Like an Old Testament prophet, Jude proclaimed a woe against the false teachers and then accused them of following in the footsteps of some infamous Old Testament sinners (vs. 11). Cain is the first example of active human evil after the Fall and is a model that the false teachers followed. Balaam led the Israelites astray for personal gain (cf. Revelation 2:14), and Korah led a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 16). Similar to these Old Testament examples, the false teachers were motivated by greed and a desire for power.

Each of these Old Testament individuals' actions led to the destruction of other people. The false teachers were not practicing a private sin that did not affect anyone else. Their influence taught others to reject Christ's authority over their lives. Good parents teach their children to gather good friends around them and to avoid those whose character and lifestyle would lead them down the wrong paths. Adults are susceptible to peer pressure as well. We must be on our guard to gather the right friends and influences in our lives.

Jude offered a harsh accusation against the false teachers in Jude 1:12-13. They sat down to eat with believers as if they were fellow Christians, but they were dangerous deceivers. Their attitude did not reflect the character of Jesus Christ, who gave His life for others. Those false teachers were only interested in themselves and what they could get. Like reefs that can destroy a ship, those

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false teachers would lead people to destruction. Their teaching was as empty and useless as a waterless cloud or a dead tree with no fruit. They were merely pretenders that looked one way but acted another.

The shameful deeds and words of those impostors were like foam from a raging sea that brings scum to pollute the beach (vs. 13). They were as unreliable and useless as shooting stars are for navigating a ship at night, and just as the light given off by these celestial bodies is short-lived, so too would be the life and influence of the false teachers, for they faced a dismal end. Their judgment was certain.

AMPLIFY THE CONTEXT

PLACE IN THE BIBLE

Jude began his letter by affirming the love that God has for His children and the eagerness Jude had to rejoice in the salvation that he shared in common with his fellow Christians. Sadly, he had to address a reality that is uncomfortable, which many Christians do not wish to acknowledge. Jude had to warn the church about false teachers and God's judgment that would come against false teachers.

Throughout history, God's people have faced threats from false prophets, lying teachers, and people who wanted possessions, power, and land. Even now that the promised Messiah has appeared and offers salvation for our sins, dangers abound for God's people.

Jude drew from the Old Testament to show that the dangers faced by the New Testament church were a continuation of the problems described throughout Israel's history. The danger of false teachers did not end with the coming of Christ, and it was not a new and unexpected problem. Until Christ returns, the church must be on guard against false teachers.

PLACE IN THE STORY OF SALVATION

The book of Jude reminds us that although God desires all to be saved, many will not be. Instead, they heap up destruction for themselves by their wicked actions that corrupt not only themselves but others as well. The Lord's love for all people does not undo His holiness and His just condemnation of those who do not repent.

PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Even while Jesus was on earth with His disciples, He warned them that they must not believe everyone who claimed to be on God's side. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and the experts in the law were common antagonists who earned Christ's condemnation. He told His disciples to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:5-12). He denounced the experts in the law for their character. He exposed their quest for praise from people and for seeking personal gain at the expense of the helpless in society (Luke 20:46-47).

Jesus condemned the Jewish leaders with some of the harshest wording in the Bible as He confronted their wickedness. The Jewish leaders were in a position to guide the Jewish nation in righteousness and the care of others, but

they only sought praise, power, and possessions. In the same way that the Old Testament prophets proclaimed great judgment upon the wicked, Jesus announced woes upon the Jewish leaders.

Jesus said they would not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 23:13). He called them hypocrites, for they knew the Old Testament teachings but did not follow them. The disciples of the Jewish leaders became twice as much children of hell as their teachers (vs. 15). He called them blind fools because they lacked spiritual discernment (vs. 18). They were experts in the law, but Jesus proclaimed that they were lawless (vs. 28). He even called them snakes, destined for hell, descendants of those who murdered the prophets, and those who will be held guilty of murdering the righteous (vss. 30-36).

Jude followed the same pattern of warning God's people that Jesus established. Evil seeks to corrupt, condemn, and destroy all that is good, especially concerning God's people. Jude understood that there is an appropriate time to speak of the gospel and God's love, but there are times when it is necessary to renounce evil and proclaim God's judgment on the actions of the wicked. Both messages are essential as we represent our Lord Jesus Christ.

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AMPLIFY THE FAITH

When we think of the danger of false teachers, the first thing that comes to mind is people who believe and teach doctrinal heresy. Perhaps they do not believe that Jesus is God, or they think that salvation can be obtained by good works.

But Jude's concern was not primarily about the content of teaching from false teachers that did not agree with an orthodox doctrinal statement. His concern was with character and practices that were contrary to the gospel and the transforming work that God accomplishes in a believer. Those who advocate sinful behavior are false teachers, just as those who teach false doctrine.

THOUGHTS

Those who advocate sinful behavior are false teachers, just as those who teach false doctrine.

Jude believed strongly in God's grace toward His children. It is this grace that enables believers to break free from sin's tyranny and respond positively to the sanctification offered through Christ. But the false teachers distorted God's grace and engaged in a sinful lifestyle that went contrary to their claim of following Christ.

The false teachers demonstrated that what a person believes shows itself in a person's actions. Or, in the way Jude argued, the actions advocated by the false teachers revealed their lack of allegiance to Christ and His gospel. Doctrine and practice are connected so completely that Jude was confident that he could evaluate the actions of the individuals in question and determine if their allegiance was with Christ or not.

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It was not a disagreement over Jewish and Gentile customs, the keeping of the Old Testament law, or some other cultural expressions Jude found disagreeable. The issue is fundamental—is Jesus Christ really Lord of one’s life, or does sin reign in place of Christ? It is an issue of being a genuine child of God or merely pretending to be a Christian.

Jude’s evaluation of these teachers is clear. He unambiguously called them ungodly and proclaimed that they were distorting God’s grace and denying the Lord by their actions (Jude 1:4). They would face the same judgment experienced by the unbelievers who came out of Egypt during the exodus (vs. 5), the angels who violated proper boundaries (vs. 6), and Sodom and Gomorrah with their sexual immorality (vs. 7).

Jude did not reach his conclusion based on one action but on many supporting proofs. He began by addressing their lack of respect for spiritual authorities in their lives. They rejected proper authority, instead following dreams that they claimed to have had (vs. 8). They blasphemed angels, who have greater authority than people in God’s created order (vss. 8-10).

Without going into detail, Jude proclaimed that the false teachers defiled their bodies through sin (vs. 8). They followed the rebellious path of Cain and Korah for the sake of their own greed (vs. 11). Rather than caring for the needs of the church, the false teachers were predators who had nothing beneficial to offer the congregation (vss. 12-13). These complainers followed their own desires to their own benefit (vs. 16). Such people would create divisions in the church (cf. vss. 18-19).

There can only be one Master to lead God’s people. By submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord, the church can gather in peace and harmony to the benefit of everyone. But when people in the church follow their own sinful desires, chaos will reign.

AMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

False teachers will be a constant threat to the church until Christ returns. They can come from anywhere, at any time. Threats can come from strangers, long-time acquaintances, and family members. Attacks can be direct assaults or subtle attempts to make sinful behavior more acceptable to the congregation. Sin does not fight fair. It has nothing to lose, and it has no rules to follow. It wants to win.

Notice that it is not to the church leadership that Jude directs his admonition to guard against false teachers. It is the responsibility of every believer to be watchful against infiltrators who would harm the church. We must look out for one another so that impostors cannot gain a foothold in the church and harm any of its members.

As Christians, we undertake this task not because we want to find evil but because we love our Lord and our family, the church. The church is a loving family where we rejoice in our common salvation. In the assembly of believers, we find refuge from wickedness and pain. It is up to us to protect one another against those who would harm the assembly.

This may be a difficult task to perform, but it is essential. If the infiltrators are successful, they may become trusted leaders and good friends of some in

the congregation. It may hurt relationships to remove false teachers, but preserving Christ's church is at stake. We must not allow false teachers to win.

But we must not become isolated or distrustful of outsiders in a quest to protect the church. The church is a place of love and compassion for all who enter there. We welcome everyone with the same love by which Christ gave of His own life to offer His gift of eternal salvation. Our goal is to reach sinners for Christ, not repel them. Jesus' admonition to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves is appropriate to our task (cf. Matthew 10:16).

The warning to watch out for false teachers should cause us to look at our Christian lives. Believers can adopt the same values and lifestyles as unbelievers. Our relationship with Jesus Christ is precious, and we do not want our lives to be a negative portrayal of Christianity to others.

The false teachers were accused of rejecting God-ordained authorities in their lives. We also have leaders that are placed over us for our well-being. Our culture, with its many platforms for news, is prone to complaining about civil leaders. Looking at the comment section of virtually any news article will prove this. But even governmental authorities are appointed by God.

The habits we develop over secular matters can easily impact how we handle disagreements in the church. There are legitimate reasons to disagree with church leaders, especially concerning acts of sin or doctrinal deviation. But if we are honest, many issues with church leadership are personality conflicts, not doctrinal problems or sinful behavior. Jesus Christ uses all types of people in His service. If we find ourselves complaining about a church leader, we may find ourselves complaining with Christ about His leadership choice.

NOTES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What steps would you take if you suspect someone of being a false teacher? What scriptural guidelines can you follow?

2. What qualities or attributes of false teachers make them so effective in infiltrating a church?

3. What steps can we take to make it harder for false teachers to gain a foothold in the church without squelching its friendliness toward visitors?

4. What differences exist between a false teacher and a believer involved in acts of sin? What is the proper approach to take with each type of person?

5. What steps can you take in your own life to avoid the behaviors that Jude condemns in the false teachers?

