



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

## Clear Faith in a Blurry World

Jude 1:1–4

Tim Badal | November 12, 2023

I want you to grab God's Word and go to the end of the New Testament, to the second to the last book of the Bible, the little one-page letter called the book of Jude. For the next four weeks, we are going to study what many Bible scholars say is the most neglected book in all the Scriptures.



I believe that while it is short on words—only 461—it is full of awesome truth that I think is so vitally important to us as a contemporary congregation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today we'll read the first four verses of this book as we look at it under the heading "Clear Faith in a Blurry World."

<sup>1</sup> Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,

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

<sup>2</sup> May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For certain people have crept in unnoticed 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.

Growing up, I had a vision problem. Many of you did not know me as a child, but I had difficulty seeing. All the way up to third grade, I tried to keep this secret to myself, especially in school. I had these little things I would do to make sure I could see. I mentioned a chalkboard in an earlier service and saw a teenager ask, "What's a chalkboard?" It's this black thing in the front of a classroom, what they had before white boards.

I would sit in front of the class, take notes from my friends, anything I could do to keep my little secret, because I did not want glasses. I remember in third grade class, my teacher, Mrs. Lynn, pulled me aside right before recess. "Tim, I need to talk with you. I think you've got an eyesight issue and might need glasses. I'm going to call your mom and dad and have them make an appointment for you because it's starting to impact things." Maybe I thought I was sneaky enough, but she could see me squinting all the time. I even do it sometimes to this day, probably because I needed glasses much sooner than I actually got them.

When I got home that night, my mom said, "Mrs. Lynn called and said she thinks you need glasses. We're going to make an appointment for you." I remember sitting in the chair and looking at that eye chart. I could see the E at the top, but everything else was really hard to see. I knew that was a problem. The doctor said, "What about the second line? What about the third line?" I admitted, "No, I can't see it." He said, "I'm going to talk with your mom about our options." It's never good when a doctor talks to your mom and dad outside the room, then brings them back into the room. But that day, it was decided that I needed glasses.

At first I thought, "Well, this isn't that bad. I'm a 'glass half full' type of guy. I've seen some really great glasses on TV. I'm going to get these designer glasses." Then the doctor said, "Listen, your eye problem is a pretty big issue." So we went to LensCrafters, which again marks me at a certain age. I remember standing before these third-grade designer glasses and the guy came over and said, "Son, those aren't the glasses you're going to wear. These glasses over here are what you're getting." My heart sank.

I hated wearing glasses and it seemed like they always created issues. I was an athlete. I was an active kid. The glasses would break, I would get in trouble, we'd have to get new ones, but they were always like the old glasses. That went on until I was married in my 20s.

When I was preaching here, I had an odd eye injury that sent me to an eye specialist. It required surgery to fix my eye issue. But then the doctor said, "Hey, we've had huge advancements in eye surgery and we can make you see clearly again." I said, "Hallelujah—sign me up!" That's exactly what they did. They gave me what's called LASIK surgery which is pretty amazing. They take a chain saw, open your eye and cut the lens of that eye open, then a laser does the procedure. I remember seeing a light and kind of a cool sensation in my eye. It reshaped my eye and only took about 15 seconds in each eye. They put the eye flap back in place, covered it up with some kind of goop and gauze, then they gave me an eye patch to wear. After I got home, everything was still blurry, but they said the next day I would see clearly. And brothers and sisters, that next morning I was ecstatic. I could see things I had never seen before, even with my glasses or later the brutal contacts I had to wear. I was so very thankful.

I remember driving in the car with Amanda and I would say, "Can you read that sign? I can read it!" I was like a little kid on Christmas day. I was so excited. Even to this day, 24 years after having that surgery, I still have incredible eyesight. I am thrilled, because I knew what it was like to live in a blurry world and now what it's like to see clearly.

Christians, I want you to know today that Jude wants to do spiritual eye surgery on us. He wants us to see clearly in this blurry world in which we find ourselves. Let's be honest—this world is blurrier now than it's been for some time. The lines are blurred. What once used to be a sin we now call love. What once was murder we now call a woman's choice. We can go on and on down the road, declaring what used to be one thing is now something else. Things are moving from truth to error. Jude addresses this in the second to the last book of the Bible. He's saying, "Church, if you're not careful, you will fall prey to these blurred lines. You'll be deceived into accepting the knowledge of the world and the view of life it lays out, if you're not looking closely at God's Word. God has spiritual lenses He wants us to wear, and if we don't, our world will remain blurry. We'll say and do things the Bible speaks against, denying things about our Lord and Savior that the Bible says are true.

What do we know about Jude? We're told up front that he's a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. Well, that doesn't help that much, so we need to look at other places in the New Testament. We know that he follows Jesus, but when he says he's the brother of James, that tells us more. James was one of the leaders of the early church. We read about him in Acts 15, where he seems to hold a more prominent position than Peter, James and John, who were Jesus' closest associates. He came to believe in Jesus later than some and eventually he died a terrible death as one of the first Christian martyrs.

Jude describes himself as a brother. The Scriptures confirm this in Matthew 13:55 where the three brothers are named, with Jude being one of them. Chronologically, it seems that James was the oldest of those brothers and Jude was the youngest. One thing we learn from Matthew 13 is they had an older half-brother, who was Jesus Christ Himself. Now, I know that seems odd to some of us, to think that Jesus had brothers and sisters, but the Bible clearly communicates that in a couple ways. We know that Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married, then the Holy Spirit of God came upon Mary, so what was conceived in her was from the Holy Spirit, rather than from Joseph. That baby was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was born of the virgin Mary, then made His dwelling among us.

Then after this, Luke 2 tells us Joseph took Mary to be his wife and they lived a natural life together, which included the procreation of children. We read about them in Mark 3, where it tells a time when Jesus' brothers were asking to see Him.

Imagine for a moment that you, James and Jude, are half brothers of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That means you lose every fight because Mom and Dad always take His side. Maybe your brother is telling you He's the way, the truth and the life, but you just want to wring His neck. It drives you nuts. Nothing is ever His fault. He was perfect in all ways. So we shouldn't be surprised that when Jude and James were young, they hated their brother.

As we read in Mark 3, the reason they came for Jesus, Who was preaching at the time, was because they thought He was crazy. They're afraid His popularity and craziness are going to get Him killed. Well, eventually that became true. We have no reason to think James and Jude were not fully aware of Jesus' crucifixion. They probably knew He was also put into a grave. Friday night went by, then Saturday night. But on the third glorious day, Jesus was raised from the dead!

I have a dead brother. If he came back alive, you'd better believe I'll believe there's something special about him. And if he had told me before he died that he was the savior of the world, that he would die and then live again on the third day, I would

call him my only master and lord. That's exactly what Jude and James did. They came to call Jesus Master and Lord. Now we see that Jude is a deeply spiritual man.

Can I just tell you what I would do if Jesus was my brother? I'd go around the world wearing this t-shirt. "I'm an important guy. Jesus is my brother." Being close to Jesus, I would promote myself. "Call me for your conferences. Have me speak on your talk shows because I'm someone important." But notice what Jude says about his relationship with Jesus Christ: "I am a servant—a *doulos*—a slave of my older half-brother Jesus Christ. Verse four says, "He is my Lord; He is my Master."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are told in Hebrews 2:11 that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Like Jude, like James, we are siblings to Jesus. That can cause you to become arrogant, to become filled with pride. But as Jude and James remind us, we should instead realize that our only view of our relationship with Christ is that He is Master and we are His slaves. That's where we must start.

What else do we know about Jude now that we understand his family? We actually know very little. We believe this book was written about 30 years after Jesus ascended into heaven. There are some important things we learn from what he wrote here. First, we see that he is a man who has great knowledge of the Scriptures. He quotes the Old Testament nine times in 25 verses. He also is very aware of the apostles' teachings. There are passages in 1 John and 2 Peter that are eerily similar to what Jude writes, which tells us he also knew the gospel Jesus had declared to His disciples.

We also know Jude can pack a lot into a little letter. There are 460 words and not one of them is wasted. He uses both prose and amazing imagery. He is also pastoral, calling his readers "beloved" three different times. He tells them they are loved by God and by him. He's a pastor who is a defender of the faith. He has courage and calls out things that need to be called out. Jude also shares with his readers the truths they need to have. Over the course of these four weeks, we're going to unpack these great truths. However, I'm doing something a little different this week. I'm going to start at the end of the passage, then move our way back to the beginning.

## **We are in danger. Are we noticing it?**

The first thing Jude wants us to know is that we are in danger. He asks us, "Are we noticing it?" We read in verse four, *"For certain people have crept in unnoticed 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."*

Jude says in verse three, "I was wanting to write you about our common salvation, but I can't. The reason is that circumstances are keeping me from doing this." While he doesn't name any names—or perhaps he doesn't even know their names—he is aware that there are people who are bringing bad teachings. He describes them as having *"crept in."* I might call these people creepers. My kids used to tell me, "Dad, don't be a creeper." I never knew what that meant, but it never sounded good.

We're also told that these creepers *"crept in unnoticed."* The Greek word for 'unnoticed' is *pareisduno*, which literally means to enter stealthily. They came in when no one was watching. It speaks of something that took place slowly, so when you look back, you don't know exactly how it happened. One writer put it this way: "They were like great chess masters. With every benign moving of a pawn, little by little they were positioning themselves to defeat you." But their entry is no surprise to God. God says, "I am aware of them and I have actually long ago condemned them." Jude says they were *"designated for condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."*

Right away we're thinking, "This book was written to a church, we're in a church, so we need to be on the lookout for people like you, Tim—people who are behind a pulpit." But notice that these ungodly people "crept in." That means they were originally outside of the church. They were outsiders; they weren't preachers. They were ungodly people who were living in His world, experiencing His goodness. But they had perverted these good things into sensuality because that's what made them feel good. In other words, their gospel was, "Do what makes you feel good," and their doctrine was, "Jesus is not God."

Where do we find people like this? I want you to know that these creepers in Jude have a different name today. They're the influencers and pundits, to use words in our vernacular. Because of social media, our world has "preachers" who preach without pulpits. Their sermons are messages to a massive church audience. In fact, I found a graph that shows the influencers in our day:

- The number one social influencer according to this is Cristiano Ronaldo. Some of you have never heard of him. He's a Portuguese soccer player. His following stands at 517 million people. That many people would make up the third largest nation in the world. Every time he posts a picture, every time he speaks on any subject, that's how many people know about him. People want to know who he is, what he does and what his perspective is on things. We want his opinions, his commentary. We want to wear what he wears, date people like he dates, do the things he does. He's a major influencer in our world.
- Another person listed is Justin Bieber, who has a following of 455 million.
- Then Ariana Grande, 429 million.
- Selina Goldmann, 425 million.
- Taylor Swift, 361 million.
- Katy Perry, Rihanna, Kim Kardashian, Kylie Jenner, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Shakira, J.Lo, Ellen DeGeneres, Barack Obama, Will Smith, Nicki Minaj, Lady Gaga, Miley Cyrus. We can go on and on and on. Millions of people are being influenced by these 'preachers.'

Not everything they say is evil, nor is it wrong. Some of what they say and do might be benign. But I need to ask you this: in light of Jude's writings, have their teachings, their lifestyles, their opinions, and their worldviews influenced you in ways you may not be aware of? The problem with social media—and media as a whole—is that it inundates us with its messaging, its lifestyles, its opinions. For 167 hours of our week we are inundated this way. Then you as a Christ follower come into this place and for one hour I teach God's Word to you. Now are we going to win in this endeavor when it's one hour with me versus 167 hours with them?

Jude is asking us this. Have those other opinions, lifestyles, habits, thoughts, doctrines and gospels crept into your life? Are you not even aware of it? I'll answer for you: Yes. You and I are influenced by these people in more ways than we realize.

Here's the thing. The most popular and followed people in our world are entertainers, musicians or actors. They're not deep thinkers. They're not well read. They don't have any working theology. The most listened to person in the world today on podcast is Joe Rogan, a goofball guy who got rich on anime fighting. He is listened to as a deep thinker and a prominent voice in our world. If you've ever listened to him, you know that many times he's shooting off the cuff. He's just telling you what he's thinking and we gravitate toward it.

What about in politics? We turn on our TVs to find out what the world is saying. We have our preferred social commentators, "My guy, my gal. They're going to tell me what to believe. They're going to tell me how I should respond." For hours on end, we sit in front of a TV. If you're older, you might say, "Well, I'm not scrolling through a tablet." But you're sitting in front of your television, taking it in. You're absorbing their ideas and opinions, until those become your ideas and thoughts. You wonder why we are where we are? Well, seven hours of television watching each day is what gets us there.

So little by little it impacts us. This happens in music. It happens in movies. It happens in the arts. We need to be discerning people. We have to face the reality that these things are influencing us, especially if we never turn it off. For most of us, as followers of Jesus Christ, the first thing we do in the morning and the last thing we do at night is look at our phones. It's how we start our day and it's how we finish it. I can assure you you're not looking at the emails you've received; you're going to social media. You're going to newsfeeds. You're getting information and don't realize how it's affecting you.

Can I tell you something? That which entertains one generation will be what the next generation embraces. So my word isn't to young people, saying, "How dare you do these things?" It's for my generation because much of what is now being embraced used to entertain us. We laughed about it. We scoffed at it. We made jokes about it. Now all of a sudden, it's serious. It's in our world and people really believe this is how we should live. We're thinking, "Wait a minute; what happened?"

Well, little by little, the influencers crept in and changed the viewpoints and thinking of the world. So what was entertaining for one generation has become embraced by the next. We're in danger, Christians. Are we noticing it?

## **We have a duty. Are we doing it?**

So, what are we to do? Are we to get on social media, screaming and yelling like our hair's on fire, telling everybody how sinful they are and how holy we are? Right? Wrong. Don't do that. That's not what we're called to do. What we're called to do, first

and foremost, is what Jude says in verse three. We have a duty. We're in danger. What's our duty? Our duty is to do something and God wants us to do it right now.

Jude says, *"Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing..."*—urging, coercing, anything I can do to get your attention; this is important stuff." He goes on appealing to them *"to contend..."* That word literally is to agonize, to give it your all. It was spoken of a runner who would run to the finish line with every ounce of energy he had left, until he was completely spent. Exert all your energy on this, Jude says. This word was also applied to soldiers who knew that on the battlefield, it was life or death. They would exert everything they had. They knew if they didn't, they would be dead. This is why we honored our veterans this past week, realizing they put it all out there for us. We respect and celebrate them because they contended. It was an agonizing thing. It was a grueling task they undertook.

This is what God is calling us to through Jude. He's telling us we need to contend, to fight, *"...for the faith."* Notice it's not for your faith. Not for my faith. It's the faith. It's the corporate faith, the totality of what we hold dear, the totality of all Jesus said and did. It's the totality of all that God is and all that has brought us together in the family of God. We are to contend, to fight, to agonize *"...for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."*

What is Jude talking about? He's talking about this Book. He's saying, "We have to fight for this Book and it's going to be in a way you don't think." We don't need to fight for this Book to be in every hotel room. We don't need to fight for this Book to be in our schools. We don't need to fight for this Book to be in the hands of sinners. That's not what Jude says. Jude says we need to contend for this Book to become our glasses in a blurry world. We need this Book to be what we funnel everything through. Our problem is our world doesn't view this Book that way. So as we look to the world, we find all these influencers telling us we're god. When Jude says they deny the Lord Jesus Christ—the only Master—well then, who becomes master? Who becomes lord? We do.

Sensuality is a word that says, "I'm god, therefore I should be pleased." When you see the word sensuality, it implies that I am master and king, so people should serve me and please me. As king and master of this world, I declare that I should have pleasure at all times, in all ways and in all things. That's what the unbelieving world holds as their doctrine. It's saying to us, "You're in charge, therefore the world is yours to do with what you will, when you will, how you will. It's all up to you."

You're thinking, "Wait a minute. What about truth? Isn't there something that's true?" Our world is saying, "Your truth is your truth, but my truth is my truth." This doesn't make any sense. How did this happen? When you take the Word of God out of the equation of how to find truth, your worldview changes dramatically.

Here's a shameless plug for my theology class: one of the things we've been talking about as we look at bad theology this year is how do we go about finding good theology? Over the years I've introduced this concept to our people, what I call "the stage of truth." It's a stage and in the drama world the things that happen in the front of the stage are what's most important. The things in the back are secondary in importance.

Everyone, believers and nonbelievers, have a stage of truth. The question is what do we funnel our thinking through, so that at the end of the process we determine that some things are true and some things are error? The world's stage of truth is emotion and experience. How does a person come to their truth? "How do I feel about it? Does it make me happy?"

When we consider the question of identity, the world says, "My emotions and my experiences are going to rule the day." When they talk about sexuality, they say, "My emotions and my experience are going to rule the day." When issues or struggles come, they reply, "My response is guided by experience and emotion." This is a lousy stage of truth. This doesn't make any sense. But this is how the world is determining what is right and what is not.

I've told the church that this Book is our stage of truth. Our stage of truth says, "Yes, emotions and experience are valid in some ways." But we need to determine what ways they're valid. The Bible says, "Tim's heart is deceitfully sick; who can understand it?" Right off the bat, my experience and my emotions are flawed. They are impacted by sin, so I'm not sure I can trust them. Just because I'm feeling something doesn't mean it's true. Instead, I need to look at general revelation—God's created order. You could even call it science. What does science tell us?

This whole idea of gender and identity is really earth-shattering because what they have said is they can't even trust science anymore. They say, "My DNA says..." No, it doesn't. "I'm saying it because I feel this way. I'm saying it because I've experienced

happiness by doing these things.” Who cares what DNA strands say? Who cares what chromosomes say? That’s irrelevant. Take that off the stage of truth. It’s not science.

So then, what does my brain say? What does reason say? What did the world say in the past? What does the church say? We have 2,000 years of Christianity—does it have anything to say about this? We need to add these things to the statement of truth. Whatever we believe, whatever we want to pursue, we need to start funneling through things God has put in order. And notice that at the front of the stage is the lens of all lenses: God’s Word.

What we must do is say, “What I’m experiencing, what I’m feeling, these emotions, this identity, these thoughts, these philosophies—I must funnel them through the Word of God. I need to ask at the very end of it all is what does God have to say?” Jude is telling us that it’s not our job to try to convince the world to pursue the Bible. It’s not our job to get on soap boxes and try to judge people into believing this Book. Our job is to contend by using this Book as our lens, our final authority, in every decision we make.

So, Christian, I’m talking to you. I’m asking are you on your phone more than in this Book? Are you watching TV more than reading this Book? Are you listening to podcasts more than listening to this Book? Are you listening to music more than listening to this Book? If that’s the case, good, bad or ugly, you’re being influenced by a great many things that are not in this Book. Then you wonder why that which we enjoy and are entertained by one day has come to the door of the church the next day. It’s because we’ve given up this Book and allowed ourselves to be god. We have believed the lies that deny Jesus Christ. For the sake of sensuality and our own good, we’ve said, “God, get off the throne. That’s my seat.”

Some of you are unaware of this. You have me tuned out already. Because of the joy of having that phone there, maybe you’re thinking, “It looks like I’m studying the Bible.” But you’re scrolling through, looking at that Instagram feed, that X-file. You’re looking at Facebook. You’re being influenced by all sorts of things. You can’t even make it one hour to allow the Word of God to have an impact in your life. You are in danger and have a duty to fight, so this Book needs to become your everything.

The reason the Bible is to be our everything is because Jesus wrote it for us. He gave it to us as a way for us to know Who He is. He is the way, the truth and the life. We have to believe that; we have to pursue it; we have to fight for it. We have a choice to make and it comes down to this. We’re going to be one of two people as we approach this book of Jude. There’s a dichotomy, a contrasting of two things. Some of you are saying, “Pastor Tim, I can keep watching that. I can keep listening to that. These things are important. I’ll just cut back a little bit.. We’ve got another election coming up and need to make sure we’re in the know.” Or, “My friends listen to this, so I want to make sure I hear it too. Even though there’s garbage in it, I have to be somewhat relevant with my friends. So I’ll just tone it down a little bit.”

Jude says you can’t do that. He says, “You’re either with us or you’re against us. Either you are with God or you’re doing something that opposes God.” In verses one and eight, he’s saying, “You’re either with God or you’re with the devil.” He talks about the difference between angels and demons in verses six and 14. He talks about those in the church and those in the world in verses 19 and 20. He talks about people with the Spirit and people without the Spirit in verses 19 and 20 as well.

He separates the saints from the ungodly in verses three and four. He talks about loving God in verse ten and blaspheming God in verse 21. He talks about salvation in verse three and condemnation in verse four. Do you see? You cannot ride the fence. You’re either with Him or you’re not. You’re either following God or you’re following the influencers. Contending means, “I’m going to do the hard things to win the battle.

## **We have a definition. Are we living it?**

So in this dichotomy of being either in or out—with God or not—God closes this time by saying, “I want you to know who you are as a Christ follower.” He says we have definition. God has defined for us who we are, but are we living it? *“To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.”*

I know living in this world is hard. I know it’s difficult to be in the minority. I know it’s hard to have a different worldview. But I want to remind you who you are. You are called by God. Before the foundation of the world, God had His eyes on you. Before you were ever brought into this world, God placed His affection upon you. I can’t comprehend it, but if God says it, that settles it.

He called us into this relationship and I want you to know what this calling is. It's like Jesus Christ walking up to the grave of Lazarus and saying, "Come forth." Jesus came into this world and called you and me by name. We came out of the grave. Then do you know what He said when we came out of the grave? "You are beloved by God the Father. You are loved."

"But I sin." "It doesn't matter. I love you and demonstrated My love for you in that while you were a sinner, I died for you." Jesus has shown us His love and affection. It says that now we are kept. What happens when we take the glasses off? What happens when we fall into sin? We are kept by God Himself through Jesus Christ.

Here's this dichotomy. Jude says we are kept in Jesus Christ, then in verse six he says, "The demons are kept in the prison cells of hell." The same security we have—that the demons are behind lock and key—is the same keeping that Jesus does for us until the judgment day. Nothing can separate us from the hands of God. Nothing can move us away from the love of God. Nothing can snatch us out of God's hand. Why? Because as we live this life, church, mercy and peace and love are being multiplied to us. He is showering us with the mercy and peace and love that we need. So it is an invitation for us to be influenced by the One Who loves us, Who has shown us mercy, Who brings us peace.

Would you allow this Jesus Christ to influence you this week? Would you allow this Jesus Christ to show you your calling, to show you how much you're loved and kept? Would you allow this Jesus Christ to fill your time? Would you allow this Jesus Christ to be what you wake up to and what you go to bed to? Would you allow this Jesus Christ to form every decision, every thought and every response you have? Would you allow this Jesus to be the only influencer that matters?

This is what Jude wants to teach us. This is what he wants declared to us. And I pray that you and I will take what he says and apply it to our lives. Amen?

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