Small Group Guide: Jude 1:1-4 -- Celebrating to Combat

Background and Context

This guide is based on a sermon from the opening four verses of the book of Jude. As you work through this guide, read the entire letter of Jude before your group meets. Read it in more than one translation and take notes on what stands out to you. This short letter works as a whole, and understanding its full scope will enrich your discussion.

Key Takeaways

1. We share something worth celebrating. Every believer stands on equal ground before God. We have all been invited out of darkness into life through Jesus Christ. This salvation -- marked by mercy, peace, and love in abundance -- is a gift worth proclaiming and celebrating together.

2. There is a secret intrusion. False teaching is not a new problem. Just as Jude warned the early church, deception continues to work its way into the lives of believers today. Jesus himself warned that false teachers would appear outwardly convincing but be inwardly destructive. Knowing God's word is the primary defense against being misled.

3. There is an urgent call. The salvation we celebrate is also a message we are entrusted to carry. As God's holy people, we are called out and sent out. People around us are spiritually lost and in need of hope. Contending for the faith means standing firm in truth, loving others with gentleness and respect, and actively sharing the message of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Lee encouraged the group to be learners -- to keep digging into God's word throughout the week, not just on Sundays. How consistent is your personal engagement with Scripture right now? What gets in the way?

2. Before this sermon, how familiar were you with the book of Jude? What did you already know, and what surprised you?

We Share Something Worth Celebrating

3. Jude introduces himself not as the brother of Jesus, but as a servant of Jesus Christ. What does that kind of humility look like in practice? Where do you find it hardest to adopt a servant's posture?

4. The word translated "called" in verse 1 carries the meaning of being invited -- called out of where you were and into something new. How would you describe the moment or season when you accepted that invitation? How does remembering that moment shape how you live today?

5. The pastor described the process of spiritual maturity as one in which we become increasingly aware of how far we are from God, rather than feeling like we have arrived. Have you experienced that? How does that awareness affect your relationship with God?

6. Hebrews 10:14 describes believers as made perfect forever while also being in the ongoing process of being made holy. How do you hold those two realities together in your daily life?

There Is a Secret Intrusion

7. Jesus warned in Matthew 7:15 that false teachers come dressed in a way that looks acceptable on the outside. What makes false teaching difficult to recognize? What has helped you develop discernment?

8. The pastor pointed to two tests Jude and other New Testament writers use to evaluate teachers: look at their lives and listen to their message. How do you apply those tests practically -- whether to what you hear on Sunday, what you consume online, or what you encounter in conversation?

9. The pastor challenged the group to stop using the world's measurements for what a mature disciple looks like and instead use what God's word describes. What worldly measurements do you find yourself defaulting to? What does Scripture offer as a corrective?

10. Galatians 5 contrasts life lived by the flesh with life lived by the Spirit. Read through the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Which of those characteristics do you see growing in your life? Which do you sense God is currently working on?

There Is an Urgent Call

11. The pastor shared a personal story about making a hard decision regarding his brother's lifestyle -- a decision he described as motivated by love for his family and love for his brother. Have you ever had to make a similarly difficult stand with someone you care about? What did that experience teach you?

12. The pastor noted that contending for the faith does not mean physical confrontation or hostility. First Peter 3:15 instructs believers to always be prepared to give a reason for their hope, but to do so with gentleness and respect. How prepared do you feel to do that? What would help you grow in that area?

13. The pastor described people around us as spiritually dead and in need of life. Who in your life comes to mind when you hear that? What has held you back from sharing the message of Jesus with them?

14. The sermon ended with an image of someone being dragged across a lake because they would not let go of the rope -- and a challenge to let go of what the world promises and hold on to Jesus instead. What does "holding on to Jesus" look like practically in your current season of life?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

- **Read Jude in full** at least three times this week, in different translations. Write down questions, observations, and anything that challenges or encourages you.

- **Start or return to a journaling practice.** After reading Jude or spending time in prayer, write down what you are learning about God, what you are struggling with, and what you sense him saying to you.

- **Identify one person in your life** who does not know Jesus. Pray for them by name every day this week. Ask God to open a door for a conversation and give you the words to speak with gentleness and respect.

- **Examine your sources.** Take an honest look at the teachers, podcasts, videos, or voices you regularly listen to. Apply the two tests from the sermon -- their lives and their message. Do they point clearly to Jesus as the only sovereign and Lord?

- **Memorize 1 Peter 3:15.** Commit the verse's instruction to be prepared to give a reason for your hope, with gentleness and respect, to memory. Reflect on how ready you are to do that.

- **Have a hard conversation.** If there is someone in your life whose choices are leading them toward destruction, pray about whether God is calling you to speak truth to them in love. Ask a trusted believer to help you think through how to do that well.

Closing Prayer Focus

As you close your group time, pray together with these themes in mind:

- Gratitude for the salvation you share and the mercy, peace, and love God continues to multiply in your lives
- Discernment to recognize false teaching and the courage to stand for the truth
- A renewed sense of urgency and compassion for those around you who do not yet know Jesus
- Humility to see yourselves as servants, not as those who have arrived