

## A Timely Tip

(A Message From Jude)

Iverna Tompkins

As transcribed by Jane Vaughn

We are, in deed, living in trying times today. And yet, happily over the past number of years, we have been privileged to watch the power of God literally explode in various selected meetings and locations. Revival seems to have begun in places near and far as the people were “prayed up,” ready to receive from God and really opened their hearts to Him. But too soon, it was as if it all came to an end. It seemed as if God withdrew and the excitement, enthusiasm and fervor of the meetings waned or faded away. **Why is that?** In each location, we felt we were “doing it right” only to be left wondering “what did we do wrong?”

I believe we are living in a moment of church history, a “season” if you will, that is *between* moves of God. We are *in between* the last great move of God and the next one. Such a time is, historically, when the voice of the prophet comes back to the church, and we are witnessing that as well. We could trace a pattern throughout church history – actually from Old Testament to New and far beyond that through the centuries of time to the present. Interim periods of time have existed when God was preparing to do something great, but He had His people in a *waiting mode*. The truth is God is always “busy” preparing the people, the setting, and the circumstances for His next outpouring of Grace. Think of David. Samuel physically anointed him King of Israel when he was a youth, a mere shepherd, but it took many years (13?) for God to prepare him sufficiently to be able to actually reign as king. He had some personal growth issues to deal with and other things to learn. So do we.

While God is setting the unseen stage, the voice of the prophet returns to the church. But – watch for this: the enemy equally sends his counterfeits! We must be discerning in these interim moments, listening for the voice of God’s true prophets and identifying the phonies. False prophets never sound like their evil origins, they mask themselves as “real.” They say, “Thus saith the Lord” but He does not so say through them – they are imposters. If the devil can get the church to listen to enough of his messengers, enough of his counterfeits, it will sour us or disgust us or scare us and we will eventually reject the real, perhaps afraid of being fooled into error. We reject it all trying to avoid being deceived. It is a contemporary danger!

Today, we are in an interim, a moment between seasons, which I believe is a *moment of judgment*. The judgment of God begins in the house of the Lord (1Pet.4:17), and therefore, with believers – especially with leaders. It will always be so. Would you agree? We have been experiencing God’s judgment of sin in many places and I believe what is now hidden from view will soon be exposed (Mt.10:26; Mk.4:22; Lk.12:2,3; 1Cor.4:5) – for the purpose of cleansing and restoration. God’s purpose in correction and judgment is always to cause us to return to Him, be restored and move on in obedience (see Jer.3:6-10;22).

So, let’s remember this moment between God’s sovereign outpourings is a time filled with the truth and prophetic word of God, but it is also filled with Satan’s counterfeit prophetic. That counterfeit prophecy is rising in such a variety of ways that we could focus on exposing it and miss God’s theme for this message. I would much prefer to preach on the excitement of His pending Revival, but believe we must look at **AVOIDING APOSTASY**. This message is particularly for pastors and leaders, but every member of the Body of Christ should be aware of the potential problems.

The text is the entire Book of Jude. Read it (below) with a heart to comprehend what He is saying through Jude. We will look for and at 3 major points in this message: words of **consolation** (or comfort), **concern**, and **counsel**.

Jude 1-25 KJV – “*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: 2Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be*

multiplied. <sup>3</sup>Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. <sup>4</sup>For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>5</sup>I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. <sup>6</sup>And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. <sup>7</sup>Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. <sup>8</sup>Likewise, also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. <sup>9</sup>Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. <sup>10</sup>But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. <sup>11</sup>Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Ba-laam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Cor-e. <sup>12</sup>These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; <sup>13</sup>Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. <sup>14</sup>And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, <sup>15</sup>To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. <sup>16</sup>These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. <sup>17</sup>But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>18</sup>How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. <sup>19</sup>These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, <sup>21</sup>Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. <sup>22</sup>And of some have compassion, making a difference: <sup>23</sup>And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. <sup>24</sup>Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup>To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

This man, Jude, brings us a very heavy word from the Lord. We are living in difficult days today, and it was somewhat challenging for me to focus on this message as I was musing before the Lord trying to discover His heart and direction. It was difficult to come to this because we are going to be seeing some individuals in the universal church fall – people we have admired and respected in the pulpit. We will come to this position: “I don’t know who to respect of even who to believe! I hardly know what positions to align myself with.”

In the name of *Christian unity*, there are many new and different kinds of things commencing today where people are getting together across denominations and promising to commit to one another – even with formal covenants. And that can be very frustrating because it sounds so reasonable and like forward movement toward uniting the Body of Christ. However, not every idea comes from God. It is often hard to determine what is of God and what is not. That, by the way, is an excellent reason for us to press into God for more intimacy so that we can recognize His voice above all others. We must be alert to watch and pray (Lk.22:46; Mk.14:38), embracing His plans, and His ways, and rejecting what comes solely from the mind and heart of man.

“God, why is all this happening? What’s going on? It seems so confusing!” And many leaders declare something akin to: “I don’t want to talk about it. I can’t explain God’s methods. Let’s just praise the Lord!” Gone are the days for that kind of simplicity. We hate confrontation on doctrinal issues because it so often causes disunity and mistrust among believers. But we must admit that those feelings are purely from our human nature and egos being attacked and reacting rather than responding. True biblical doctrine is where we will find our agreement, not in the manmade traditions of denominations. And so, I offer “*a timely tip.*”

This timely advice comes from the Epistle of Jude. I'd like to spend time talking about who wrote the book. It's my personal belief that the author is Jude, the brother of Christ (see Mt.13:55). Theologians cannot find definitive evidence for identifying him at all as there are legitimate, positive points of proof for each suggestion of exactly who he is. But I'd just like to think of him as being Jude, the brother of Christ, because he claimed, "*Jude the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James*" (vs.1).

If indeed it is the brother of Christ, what a wonderful position he had come to at this point in his life (see Mk.6:3b; Jn.7:5). Instead of trying to have some claim to fame, he simply is saying, "I have seen Him. I've met Him. He is the Son of the living God and I am but His servant." What is actually more important here is that Jude begins with this next **word of consolation**: "*Mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you*" (vs.2). I'd like to begin with that same comfort spoken to *you*. It would be so calming for us in light of the church-wide dilemma we are facing as I have described above.

What is our hope? How will we make it through this seemingly precarious period of time between seasons? How will we be able to discover the difference between truth and error? How can we sift through everything we read and hear, even through Christian media – broadcast or print? What hope have I that I would not fall into the same kinds of problems I see in these others?

Our answer, our only hope, begins with the word *mercy* – God's mercy. I think what I like most about mercy is that it is so universal – even the "good" need God's mercy, not just those of us who have made shams of our lives at certain times. Anyone who looks at or tries to claim their own righteousness must hear the word of the Lord – all my righteousness is as "filthy rags" (Is.64:6). Every believer, and most certainly leaders, must never lose sight of this awareness! We are what we are because of mercy – *the mercy of God* – and only when we recognize that truth is there any hope for *peace*.

We can be sincere, true and loyal to God, and yet completely stressed out if we lose sight of mercy. If we somehow come to a position in our own thought-life that we have attained certain things by our own wonderful doings and therefore must walk a certain way to maintain what we have attained, we've missed the whole point of mercy. We are – because of His mercy! We have not earned, nor do we deserve any of the good that comes our way. We are and have because of Him and Him alone. The person at *peace* is the one who knows the truth: "I didn't *attain* it in the first place – I *obtained* it by the grace and mercy of God. I can lead the choir in singing: 'Amazing Grace how sweet the sound.'"

Jude continues, "*Love be multiplied*" (vs.2b). I have never needed love in my life more than I do today. And the same is true for you! Pastors, there has never been a time when we have needed more to show and "shed abroad the love of God" (Rom.5:5) in our churches, to our people, than we need to today. So many people hop and skip from one church to another looking for the "ideal" landing place. They vote on everything said or ministered and find fault wherever they can. Suddenly, they may even decide to be *your* judge. They wish you were famous So-and-So instead of who you are. What is our hope in ministering to these people?

It's the *same hope* that Jesus had when He ministered to His critics – even to death on the cross (see 1Jn.3:16). It's the *same reality* that personified itself in Christ when He could look at those assembled below Him, taking His last breath on the cross and saying, "Father, forgive them" (Lk.23:34). It is *love*. Our only hope is "*love multiplied*."

We have lost that kind of love in the church. In recent years we have tended to make people *earn* our love and attention. If they want our acceptance, if they want us to use them in the church, if they want us to smile at them when we minister from the pulpit, they had better toe the mark. We are a lot better at marking those who cause dissension among us than we are at loving our enemies (Mt.5:44).

The glorious calculation is that *His love* is available – in abundance – "*multiplied*" (see 1Jn.2:5; 4:9,16). God didn't put us, or call us into ministry and then say "You had better be able to love them!" On the

contrary. He put us here knowing everything He knew about us and them ahead of time and said, “I’ll love them through you. ‘My grace is sufficient for you’ (2Cor.12:9) and I will give you a love that will couple itself with My faith for the least stable person over whom you hold influence.” Oh, how we need that in the church today!

Not only do I see a **word of consolation** in this marvelous, tiny but powerful, Book of Jude, I also see a **word of concern**. Jude cries out to his readers, “*I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation*” (vs.3). What he says is, “I am so *concerned* for you I have written to explain some basic things.” This surely prompts *my* question: How concerned are you? To those of you who travel in ministry I ask – how concerned are you about the Body of Christ at large? Pastors and leaders in the local church – how concerned are you about your own congregations? Brothers and sisters in Christ – how concerned are you about your church family?

“Oh, I’m very concerned about them. I lift them before God regularly.” Look at this: Jude explains, “I am so concerned that I **exhort** – I *expose*, I *explain* and I *exercise*. This whole letter is full of **exhortations**. The word “exhort” in the Bible means “to advise.” Jude offers sound, Godly advice.

The letter also shows how Jude was involved in **exposing** sin and apostasy in the early church, as well as the behaviors that follow such error. He **explains** what people were doing if they were away from God and why they did that. Finally, this is a book of training – to **exercise** (*/askeo/*) means “to train” (see Ac.24:16 – “I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God”). Jude’s letter tells us exactly what to do to keep from falling. He was **concerned** about the Body of Christ – then and now.

I know my reputation (concerning those under my training) is that I seem a little harsh in correction. ☺ My critics consider me to be *unique* in this and that amazes me. I care so deeply for my “kids.” As a mentor, I risk confronting touchy, personal issues with them that if left unchecked could lead them into serious error. Loving correction, even confrontation, ought NOT to be *unique* in leaders. How much do *you* care? Do you care enough to label sin “sin?” To expose error? To take the time necessary to **train** those under your influence? How do you define “exhortation?”

Here is a **vital key** when you find yourself in a position of exposing error. What enables me, or gives me the right, to gather my staff together and lay it on the line with them is, first, I have laid on my face before God in tears for them. That is the *key foundation*. I don’t confront something in someone else that I have not carefully taken in prayer before our Father. Timing is so important for God must be allowed to prepare people not only to hear the truth but to receive it – and so they will hear *Him* and not the human speaker.

**Secondly**, I don’t just pray – “God, I see this problem; now *You* talk to them, and *You* tell them to get their homes in order, and *You* tell them this... and *You* tell them that...” That’s not ministry; that’s prayer. I offer myself to be used by Him for bringing revelation and enlightenment where it is needed. I’m a part of the solution. We must not verbally flay or figuratively fillet someone open in exposure and walk away feeling we have performed the responsibility to correct. As we shall see in a moment, Jude confronts and exposes serious issues, but also offers the **counsel of God** in bringing about restoration.

I believe I’m speaking to those who declare they have a call of God upon their lives to be a tool in His hands. I’m also talking to those that God has entrusted sufficiently to place before a group of people. The truth is, all believers are to be ministers in the name of Jesus, so I’m talking to all believers – all “ministers.”

Churches are comprised of all sorts of people. Many pastors think their churches have an over-abundance of down-and-outers, complainers, or church hoppers. If that is true, it’s because God trusts you with them! From time to time, I have heard a brother or sister say, “I just figured we have this motley congregation until we learn a lesson, whatever we’re supposed to learn, and then the Lord will give us the

doctors, lawyers, and corporate execs.” He never did that with Jesus! In fact, the only trouble Jesus really had was with the doctors and lawyers, merchants and political chiefs! The “motley crew” believed in Him. Oh Church, we’ve lost sight of the privilege of ministry! And we’ve lost sight of *His* goal!

Ministry is not sermonizing. Or, is it? Dear Pastors, I’m going to ask you, as of this day, to never again preach a “sermon.” Start *ministering to lives!* I’m not against good homiletics and iteration and all the other things that enable us to be better at what we do – communicate. But my Friends, that is not my goal – to stand behind a pulpit and impress an audience with any kind of homiletic outline. That designation only fits a professional speech writer or speaker! If indeed you sincerely sense the cry that was on the heart of Jude, looking at the contemporary scene and situations of life in his time and say along with him, “I’ve got to warn them! I’ve got to teach them! I’ve got to train them!” then *these* are days of frustration for you.

The next is the third point that will help you minister as God desires. It’s one thing to *console* people. It’s another thing to show *concern*, and yet quite another to *counsel*. *All true ministry should involve Godly counsel.* I’m not talking about an hour-long appointment in the office. I’m talking about analyzing your own messages. What is the content? And why? Is there the *counsel of God?*

Jude goes on writing to the people: “I’m bringing these things to your attention so that first of all, you may learn to “*contend for the faith*” (vs.3). That is Jude’s first piece of counsel. If I have one last cry on my lips as I go to my reward and the Lord says, “Name it, Iverna,” I believe I’d breathe this into the life of every minister: “Teach them to ‘contend for the faith.’” *The Faith.* It does not say, “Teach them to contend for faith.” It’s the *faith* of the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ. A holy life is the obvious and expected result of one having received Jesus’ provision in Salvation. How did we get so far removed from that? Oh, I can tell you what has interfered: success patterns – church growth – peer-pressure – just to name a few. Unfortunately, leaders are always comparing: “How many do you have in your congregation?” “What’s your budget?” “What programs have been working for you?” Church growth has precluded personal, individual spiritual growth in too many places.

“Teach them to ‘*contend for the faith.*’” What’s important to God is that men and women come to recognize that salvation is by divine grace alone, and it is through faith we can reach out for His grace – then our lives change as a result of embracing what He has to offer. We should be able to see a difference developing or growing in the lives of our people. They ought to be growing in their own understanding of the Word. They ought to be growing in their outreach to others. They ought to be growing in the ministry of worship unto the Lord. What are we teaching them to reach for? What are they contending for?

My question, in all honesty, is: Would you be able to measure *growth* if it happened? Do you know what’s going on in the homes of your people? What kinds of relationships do your husbands and wives have with each other? And how do parents relate to, teach and train their children? Would you be shocked if the IRS confiscated the home of someone in your church because they have not reported or paid their taxes in years? It happens, and too often, the pastor or church leadership is the last to know, and they’d go to the mat defending such a person (scoundrel?) simply because they were part of the “church family.” Too many leaders figure that all is well in a person’s private life if that person is sitting in the pew. Moreover, we have been tricked into thinking it is none of our business to inquire or to demand Godly character be developed in supposed-believers’ lives.

It is my belief that one pastor alone is not capable of pastoring thousands of people. There is no way he can know what he needs to know in order to rightly relate to individuals in his flock. It doesn’t matter who he or she is or the greatness of the anointing. It’s time for us to look at people and discover them – to know where they truly are with the Lord. We must train lay-leaders to help care for one another and come to the place of trusting them in their delegated positions. We need to put people (who *already have their lives in order*) in charge of people who are in charge of other people.

This is Discipleship Training. It is all about teaching people to rely on Jesus. It's about teaching them how to turn to God for themselves and how not to rely or be so dependent on another person. Discipling our people involves teaching them the content of the God's Word and how that applies to their daily lives. It's teaching them to "*contend for the faith!*"

The second thing that Jude counseled is – *consider some of the ungodly leaders*. The phrase in verse 4 we address here is: "*certain men that crept in unawares.*" Please hear what I'm NOT suggesting. I am not saying, "Get up in your pulpit and expose difficult people by name." Please understand – Jude doesn't do that here. What he does say is that "some crept in unawares" and what they have done is taken the grace of God and made it a covering for their crimes. "How do they do that?"

When we first read this, we tend to scan through the text and think, "Oh, boy, this is big! It's about the angels and Sodom and Gomorrah and all of those things, and God destroyed them – because they '*turned the grace of God into lasciviousness*'" (vss.4-7). Then we wonder, "What was their problem? How did they do that, 'turn the grace of God...?'" The same way we do it! ☺ The end of verse 4 tells you. The moment we "*deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ*" in our lives, we turn His grace into whatever it is we want it to be. We rationalize our behaviors. In fact, we are so brazen today in *unholiness* that we go so far as to ask God to bless it!

How do we deny the Lordship of Christ? One way of replacing His Lordship with man's lordship is done in the name of "church authority." There is a trend today for church leadership (i.e. professional clergy, home fellowship leaders, church ministry directors, etc.) to exercise a power of oversight and authority over individual parishioners. That can be a good or bad experience. For some of us, it would bring welcome relief to the stress of making a myriad of decisions. I would love to have someone else be responsible for all the decisions concerning my books and tapes and itinerary. They could decide where I go and when. The *main problem* here is that I don't find it modeled for us like that in the Book! God's idea is for each one of us to be responsible for hearing Him for ourselves.

I surely hope and pray no one suddenly came to you and said "You are called to the ministry." I know a few people who sadly are in the ministry because someone else called them there – perhaps "mother" – or even a Prophet who picked them out of an audience and said, "The Lord has called you to the ministry." That may be well-intended, but I don't believe that's God's way. I don't see that in the Word of God. We need to be very careful because if God didn't call you, you won't make it through the storm down the way!

"Now, wait a minute, Iverna. The Bible says the Holy Spirit came and said, 'Separate unto Me...'" (Ac.13:20). Read that again, it says, "Separate unto Me Paul and Barnabas *whom I have called.*" They already had the call. This is a *confirming word* for them – and the church – that comes through the prophetic voice. It is not The Call of God. I know this is tough counsel because it challenges a few "programs" concerning church government being espoused in various settings today. It is vital for us to read carefully the instructions in the Book and resist the temptation to superimpose man's contemporary understanding or interpretations on God's words. Remember, we are discussing here the *Lordship of Christ*.

We must minister in the power and model of Jude – encouraging the Body of Christ to "*contend for the faith.*" By and large, we have become far too lax in our pursuit of the things of God, settling for a few counterfeits concerning the Lordship of Christ. If we ignore the cry and need for training, the church will not be ready for the coming Revival. And it is coming – soon. The next great move of God is on its way!

What a travesty if we fail as we did in the last outpouring of God! The Spirit of God will be released, drawing countless seekers from the streets into our churches to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. This will happen on a large scale. *If we do not now train disciples to actually follow Christ, there will be thousands of newborn babies and no one mature enough to nurture them.* This period is a moment of

separation, a time of judgment. It is now, between Revivals, that we must get the church, believers, ready for the harvest (see Mt. 9:37,38; Lk. 10:2; Jn. 4:35).

If believers (even leaders!) are still filled with prejudice, bitterness, hostility and/or resentments that is what we will pass on to the new baby Christians. It will be the milk of our mother's-breast. Does that make sense to you? When you look at your own little church today, the thought may come to you, "Oh, God, we need many more people." And God says, "No, you don't need more. *I want you to make leaders out of the ones you have!*" Get their lives straightened up – teach them, train them, order them in the ways of God. Increasing numbers in attendance is not at all difficult. We watched churches literally explode in numbers following the Charismatic Renewal. Unfortunately, it was more like the blind leading the blind. We simply were not ready for what they needed for growth.

We could understand Jude to be saying, in this second point of concern, "**Consider the cost of apostasy faith.** Look at Israel (vs.5). Look at the angels (vs.6). Look at Sodom and Gomorra (vs.7). Look at Cain and Balaam and Korah (vs.11)." It's all there, Church. And God will not have it!

*Apostasy, the turning away from God and embracing a substitute, is so subtle that it usually only evidences itself when it's being judged.*

It is a slow, gradual process – *man taking over in his own carnal wisdom* – and not until God steps in on the scene, exacting judgment, do we recognize the unholiness that we have been living with, embracing, and even blessing. God says through Jude, "I also want to counsel you about this **condition.**" This is a metaphoric last step of apostasy.

He says, "*Can't you see that what we have here are **clouds without water***" (vs.12a) – Yes, I can see it and I'll tell you what that means. Clouds are properly positioned and properly capacitated to contain and bring forth all the rain that is necessary for any place over which they hover. Those of us who live in the desert of the Southwest perhaps appreciate this more than others. A long season of dryness takes place there and then in the news comes a word of hope: "There is a 24% chance of rain." We're a bit like Elijah, aren't we, looking for a cloud? A sign? Then, sure enough, 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the sky gets dark, the clouds appear and we say, "It's going to rain." Then comes the wind and – ::POOF!:: the clouds are gone and the ground remains dry. There was no water in those clouds.

Never has there been a time in history when there are so many qualified (in the natural and anointed by God) men and women ministers as exist on the face of the earth today (*clouds filled with water*), but they are not placed, and not functioning (*raining*) in the Body of Christ. Never before. You can check it out historically. This is a bonus time when women have been equipped to minister and many of them released to do so.

At the same time, there has never been a time in our country when the ground has been more – dry! Why is that? It's like a spiritual drought. No water – of the Word. The Bible declares that God is the giver of rain (Jb.5:8-10) – and the Word of the Lord is spoken of as rain (Ps.72:6; Hos.6:3). Deuteronomy 32, verses 1 and 2 say, "the words of My mouth, My doctrine, shall drop as the rain... as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Why isn't He giving the rain? We cry out, "Let the rain come!" But it doesn't.

People sit in our churches and listen to preachers speak day in and day out, but they don't grow – *because they are not watered* (1Cor.3:6). Why? Because the *winds* (adversities) are tearing the clouds apart – God's rain clouds. Every wind of doctrine (Jude12b, see Eph.4:14). That's man's solution to the problem. Interesting, isn't it? It's much easier to pick up the phone, call a buddy, tell him about the problem you're going through and get *his* idea of a solution than it is to hit your knees in your own prayer closet and say, "Father, what would You have me do?" Every wind of doctrine. We're always looking for something "new" – "It worked for him, I'll try it." "It worked for her, I'll try that." Hello??

Jude is not finished: there are trees who have fruit but it's "**withered fruit**" (vs.12c). The only kind of tree that produces withered fruit is a *diseased tree* – or a tree that has never had healing brought to it. It is true that we all have been hurt. I don't believe there is a person in the church who has not been hurt by someone else in the Body of Christ. You are not unique in being hurt or damaged. The thing that makes a person a diseased tree is never having been healed, or never receiving the healing. "Oh, I'm never getting out there in front again. I'm not going to be that bold one in leadership. I tried that and it was devastating! I got nothing but criticism, and no one to help!" That's disease, my Friend, and sadly it means that your fruit will never come to maturity; it will wither and drop off before it ever reaches ripeness.

Think about where you are today in your Christian walk – in your spiritual growth. How does today's level compare with where you were two years ago? If you are not reaching beyond your living level of two years ago, you're a dried up tree that can only produce withered fruit. If you are a pastor, and at the same old level of maturity, you can assume your people are bored! ☺ Even leaders – no, especially leaders – must be actively growing in their experience with, knowledge of, and over-all growth in the Lord.

The next phrase Jude uses to describe the "trees" is "**twice dead**" (vs.12d). We can see this in Ephesians 2:1: "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Verses 4 and 5 continue that thought – "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (see also Col.2:13). God is saying, "they were once dead ('in trespasses and sins') and I brought them to life ('by grace are ye saved through faith,' Eph.2:8), but they died again. They were hurt, damaged, and their fruit withered. They refused My healing for their hurts and that rendered them as if dead again."

God gave us life, eternal life, and then in the Charismatic Renewal, He came again and *renewed life* in the Spirit within the old-time Pentecostal believers. In the same outpouring, He brought *new life* (Rom.6:4) into non-pentecostals. *There came life from the Source of life*. He quickened us (Jn.6:63). He taught us about His Holy Spirit and poured out His wonderful gifts (1Cor.12) and taught us how to operate in them. He taught us how to rejoice (Phil.4:4) and to praise the Lord. That was in the 1960's and 70's. And so I must inquire, what are we teaching in the church today? Mostly, we're still teaching that same thing: "praise the Lord" and "speak in tongues with interpretation."

Jude says, "**the raging waves**" with lots of **foam** (vs.13a). That indicates a lot of vigorous action. I'm not accusing churches of doing nothing at all. We sort of build up like a wave and then roll in on the shore. Many go to meetings to "tank up," get filled or re-filled. But then there is a basic problem with that practice. These people never have an opportunity to be *rained on (clouds without water)* for their fruit to mature.

When the *leadership* goes from meeting to meeting or conference to conference, to receive their new or fresh direction, a great mistake is often made. Adopting another person's "foolproof program" is far easier than pressing into God for His creativity for your specific church. Successful programs are often trendy. They come and go and may or may not be successful in different church settings. In addition, if there is a dynamic program that bears fruit in your church, the tendency is to begin another one, looking for more successes.

The people never have a chance to see the *seed* come to full maturity because things are always changing. Just about the time their interest is piqued – and you know how we present a new thing – we always do it with "God said..." or "I feel the Lord is leading us to do this..." – and we map out a new plan. Then we motivate the people with sometimes contrived enthusiasm. What follows is one program after another – cell groups – visitation teams – recovery groups for everything imaginable – this part of your map here and another part there. The dissenters come to the pastor and mockingly say, "Okay, if that's what *you feel* God wants us to do." In the meantime, we go to another meeting and discover God isn't saying "this and this" anymore but it's something else "new." And it goes on and on. We introduce the next "latest



great program” until the people of God don’t believe us anymore. They really don’t. They have seen the *foam* resultant from a lot of *wave activity* – “*foaming out their own shame*” (va.13b).

Jude continues: “*wandering star... in darkness*” (vs.13c). What does that mean? To me it says “being in light that cannot give direction.” The stars themselves contain lots of light but it’s always moving from this darkness to the next darkness and to another darkness – from night to night to night. They shine at night, but the light given directs no one’s course. The Body of Christ today has never been so long on information yet so void of direction.

There are young people who say, “Well, I don’t know how...” or “I don’t know what...” And their leaders give a nebulous response: “Just pray about it.” If they could “just pray about it,” they wouldn’t need you, Pastor. These are days when we must give them something substantive: “I don’t know if I have your answer, but you and I are going to find it. WE will pray about it together.” These are days when our messages need to be filled with the **counseling** and the governing of God. Our position should be: “I don’t care what man says is acceptable, God’s Word says ‘*contend for the faith!*’”

Jude reminds the readers of what Enoch prophesied, saying that the Lord was coming with judgment on His mind for all ungodliness (vss.14-16). And that there had been further prophecy that “in the last times” there would be more ungodliness (vss.17-19). I believe the implication for them, and for us, is that leaders, or those with greater spiritual maturity, have a responsibility to *care enough to confront apostasy and error and misdirected activities* in an effort to help, or **counsel**, these apostates to change their ways back to the Lord.

Why don’t we want to accept such responsibility? Everything in verses 20-23 talks about how to do it. First, we must accept responsibility for our own selves. “***But ye, beloved***” (vs.20). “*But ye, beloved.*” This is God mandating through His inspired writer: “Don’t talk to Me about being able to compare yourself with all of the other apostates and therefore your ‘minor infractions’ look better.” Paul said to the church at Corinth, “We are not as they who compare themselves with themselves” (2Cor.10:12). We do not have a right to look around and compare ourselves with all the ministers or believers we know and then conclude, “Maybe I’m not what I ought to be, but I’m a step ahead of them!” We dare not do that. What Jude says here is, “It shall come to pass in the last days that men shall be lovers of themselves (see 2Tim.3:1-5), boasters all of the evil things you have read about and preached against. *But not you, Beloved.* Don’t you do that!”

Why do we spend so much of our time acting like we’re amazed at what’s happening in our world today? It was foretold to us by the prophets. This is not “new” news! It **is** going to happen in the last days. Listen – the truth is this **has** happened *in the last days* – of every generation! It’s a poor excuse to say: “That’s been in the Book for 2000 years and has not yet happened.” That is correct. The “last days” spoken of as such in the scripture are yet to come – unless, of course, you believe we are in them now! ☺ But the prophecy actually has come to fruition in *every* generation. Is that comprehensible? Moreover, it is presently active in **this** generation!

God ministers the admonition through Jude: “***But ye, beloved***” – “I’m talking to *you*. I set you aside for this time – for such a time as this! You are to accept responsibility for yourself, regardless of what anyone else does.” “What do You want me to do, Lord?” “I want you to ***build yourself up on your most holy faith***” (vs.20a). “Wait a minute, Iverna. You started out saying it was ‘grace, grace – it’s the mercy of God and nothing we can do,’ and now you end up by saying we have to build up *ourselves?*” That’s right, dear one, and it is totally consistent with Scripture. Cooperating with God – co-workers together with Jesus Christ (1Cor.3:9) – builders together on the holy foundation of the apostles (Eph.2:20). That’s consistent all through the New Testament.

There is God’s part which only He can do – and there is our part – as in “working out your own salvation” (Phil.2:12). We have to “work it out,” applying what we know, from His Word and Spirit, to our individual circumstances of life, but He does not leave us alone and helpless in that endeavor (Jn.14:18).

We each have His Holy Spirit within as a product of our redemption. He empowers us to do all God calls and mandates us to do.

Would you like to know why our ministry hasn't changed over the past number of decades? It's because we haven't changed! We sing the chorus: "Change me Lord, don't let me stay the same. Lord, I want to be more like Thee. Change my life. Make my life just what you want it to be." We have neglected our part. If we would actually pray that kind of prayer, our whole ministry would change dramatically. We'd no longer offer great idealistic patterns or empty platitudes for people to reach. We would be able to look out at the congregation and testify: "Folks, this week God pointed to some things in my life I didn't even know were there; things that I would have even denied if He had asked me. But He didn't ask. ☺ He squeezed, as it were, the corner of a boil in my life and I saw some filthy, festering attitudes. Please forgive me. And I want you to know we are moving on with God *together!*" That's the kind of honesty to which people can relate. "They'll think less of me if I publicly admit those failings." Maybe they need to – then you won't fall so far from your lofty pedestal! Building up yourselves? We do a lot of that – build up ourselves – but often in the wrong way and not on our "*most holy faith!*" May we be careful not to think more highly of ourselves than He does (Rom.12:3).

To build is to make progress. I know a little bit about building. I have had years of training. When we first acquired property for the Training Center in the 1980's, we worked hard constructing the Chapel. It may not have looked like much to others, but we saw it as a Cathedral! The little Bunk House was first a meager workshop for the previous owner and the whole house-turned-office was rundown in the front when we bought it. I looked at it, however, and could see the vision – the plan – a dream – a direction – even a mandate from God. I looked at it with natural eyes but saw what it *could be*. All I had to do then was acquire enough money to carry out the plan.

When we finally started the building process, weeks would go by and I could see very little progress except for a few more sticks creating the external form. Crews of men came in at night, volunteer carpenters – working, laboring long and hard – yet I couldn't see much of anything happening.

Building programs – you know what I mean. It takes time and energy to lay out the "invisible" infrastructure (Selah!). We had to get the pipes down – digging – digging – digging – and then the electrical. I just wanted to plug into the neighbor's and run with it! I was eager and always seem to have a better idea for how to do it quicker! ☺ And, unfortunately, I tend to do the same thing with God! When I'm in the mood to be "building up myself" with Him, I come in prayer and say, "Lord, here I am. You can do anything You want to with me. Take anything, I'm Yours. Hallelujah! Do it, Lord, but HURRY! while I'm still in the mood." ☺

Weeks go by and we hit dry spells when nothing works right. Problems come and we say, "God, this isn't what I had in mind. Where's the 'building?'" And He responds, "**The higher the building, the deeper the foundation!**" "*Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.*" It means working and cooperating on a daily basis with God. The foundation is *faith* – holy faith. But there is another base upon which to build...

We said that the first foundation upon which we are to build our lives in Christ is *faith*: "*building up yourselves on your most holy faith.*" Here, then, is the other foundation upon which to build, according to Jude:

"***Praying in the Holy Ghost***" (vs.20b). It's popular to "pray" today, corporately, just as it was to speak in tongues in the early Charismatic days. No longer is there a negative stigma to prayer. Everyone prays – well, mostly everyone. ☺ In the church, you'll hear, "How many people were at prayer this morning?" "Well, we had 17 men and 12..." "Wonderful. Wonderful." And it **is** wonderful that we are once again praying – but are we *praying in the Spirit?* Or are we praying just to pray?

What does it mean to “pray in the Holy Ghost?” Let me assure you, and perhaps challenge you – it means a great deal more than simply speaking in tongues. It means to be assisted in prayerful thought by the very nature of God Himself. The Spirit literally assists us in praying. What a privilege! He knows what is the perfect will of God, so with His assistance, His inspiration, we always are praying according to God’s will when we “pray in the Spirit” (Rom.8:26). Our responsibility in this is to set aside our own ideas and seek His revelation, even if what we have in mind to pray for seems worthy. We can count on Him doing His part! Can we yield our lofty intellect to Him?

We must always have His will in focus when we pray, and never want to pray attempting to bypass His Word. When we pray in the Spirit, we pray with the “judgment” of God. And His is perfect. Do you know how many hours Iverna has probably wasted in prayer, praying with the judgment of my own eyes? I hope that makes sense. It’s like trying to tell God about things as though He had no knowledge of the situation apart from my own perspective. Can I possibly give Him “unknown information?” ☺ And if He is aware of all the circumstances, which He is, shall I try to pray for my solution or His? Praying in the Spirit assures that we are praying according to His will (see 1Jn.5:14,15).

I do not need to tell Him what I think about a matter – “God, you need to tell this person...” When I judge (we say “evaluate” or “weigh” ☺ ) another person’s predicament, I will soon discover the Lord turns His searchlight on *me* to reveal my own judgmental attitude and wrong spirit. I could expect Him to say, “Now, let Me show you how this situation you have been praying for looks to Me.”

*Praying in the Holy Ghost* – assisted by His Spirit, praying in accordance with His will, bringing His will into focus, praying for perfect judgment, never desiring anything He doesn’t desire for me. Whew! That is power!

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” (vs.21). That sounds so easy, but it is **not** always easy. How do I do that – “*keep myself in the love of God?*” By recognizing that God **is** love (1Jn.4:7,8). It isn’t that God *has* love. For years, I would come to Him and say, “Fill me with Your love, Lord. You have lots of love. Give me love; give me love.” One day, His simple response was: “Read The Book. I **am** love – and you *have* Me!”

But, how do I *keep* myself in that love? The answer is rather simple: I just *stay with Him*. Do you want to be light – illuminating your little world? He **is** Light – *stay in the Light*. Stay in love with Him. We can soak Him up as we walk in the Light of His Presence just as we soak up the natural sunshine. We fellowship the same way – *where God is*.

Have you ever tried to remain mad at someone when you’ve just emerged from prayer fellowship with the Lord? There’s no way. ☺ We sing this: “And He walks with me and He talks with me.” Whoever wrote that song had learned *the power of His Presence*, not the secret of an hour of prayer! There is such a difference between the two – like night from day. You can spot it – people who know one hour with God are like Moses. The glory fades by the end of the day. At 9 o’clock in the morning, following an hour in their prayer closets, you can just see the glory of God on their faces. You can observe love and light and see purpose revealed in their lives. Catch them again at 5 o’clock that evening... and note what you see, but don’t be surprised that the “glow” is waning. By contrast, the people who have learned to walk in *continual fellowship with God*, remaining aware of His Presence as the day progresses, turning to His wisdom for each new event of the day, are unchanged at 3 o’clock or at 4 o’clock or 5 or 7 or 9, because they have never left that glorious Presence of God! That’s a mandate for us if we are going to make it in this life without joining those of the apostates. “*Keep yourselves...*” It is a covenant commitment with our lips that will keep us from falling.

My deepest longing, my greatest desire, is to please Him. That is my daily reality. And I believe that’s your desire as well, or you wouldn’t have read this far! ☺ I am totally incapable of succeeding in fulfilling that goal without Him, without His intervention in my day, without His *frequent* intervention

every day. Every time His glory starts to fade from me, I must recognize I am the one who pulled down the shade.

“*Keep ourselves*” – in His joy instead of my gloom – in His growth instead of stagnation – in **His** life instead of mine – and in His guidance and fellowship. Each is a choice we make. In fact, we make many choices every day. We are in control of our perspective on how life flows. If we can *keep ourselves in the love of God* there will be no more extreme highs and lows, as if life was a roller coaster – up one day and down the next. We’re not supposed to be spiritually bi-polar! Those intense ups and downs will be a thing of the past when we can *learn to walk in close fellowship with Him*, following in His footsteps.

It’s the last of this little Book (Jude) that helps us be concerned for someone else – “***looking for the mercy***” (Jude 21b) – “***have compassion, making a difference***” (vs.22). If there is a key to ministering that I could impart to you from a single verse of scripture, I would take you to the communion or Eucharist service, in 1 Corinthians 11:23. Hear what Paul says there: “*For I have received of the Lord that which also I deliver to you.*” That’s **the key** to ministry! **Receive from the Lord and pass that on to others.**

If you dig out revelation from a commentator’s exposition, or if you copy someone else’s message outline, and either way *the truth has not been actualized in your own life*, you are not giving forth fresh bread. By the same token, you can take everything out of the commentary or copy another’s taped message or outline, and *if it has been activated within you by the power of God’s Spirit*, if it has become a reality for you deep in your own soul, it is then yours and you can say, “I have received of the Lord.” Give it forth freely.

Now – after we have taken a look at the whole reason for ministry, it can be summed up as: “***contend for the faith***” (vs.3). Then, after you have seen the devastation of apostates, after you have recognized the symptoms and signs of such error, start “***building up yourselves in your most holy faith***” (vs.20b). One way to do that is to get to know who God is, who you are in Him, and recognize that He has called you. His Word is in your life, a vital part of you, not only in your mouth! (see Deut.30:14; Rom.10:8) Determine this: “as for me and my house” (Josh.24:15) we will walk daily in fellowship with Him. Finally, “***pray in the Holy Spirit***” (vs.20c), in agreement with God’s will and Word. Every minute of my life, I want to be conscious of the Lord’s Presence. I desperately need that. The absolute truth is we all need that.

To those of you who do all of the things in verse 20, Jude says, “Take a look around you and to some of the people you see ‘***have compassion***’ (vs.22), and for others ‘***save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garments spotted by the flesh***’ (vs.23). Jude is saying we are to be sensitive to the people to whom we minister – sensitive to where they are in life *as individuals*. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is that He didn’t minister to the multitude; He ministered to each individual in the multitude. We need to think about that as the model for us to follow.

Please remember what precedes the next verses. First it said, “***praying in the Holy Spirit.***” That means it is to be through the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we do anything we do, or say what we say. It’s loving with His love. That sensitivity comes from fellowship with Him regularly. As we develop our lives in Christ, “***building up ourselves on our most holy faith,***” we’ll soon discover a change as we minister in the church. There will rise a boldness from within that declares, “I don’t care what you think of me (my reputation could be at stake), but you’re headed straight for hell if you don’t hear the Word of God!”

Now, we certainly don’t do that with everyone we encounter. We respond to the Holy Spirit within as **He** prompts us to minister to specific individuals. It may not seem or sound like “compassion” because we may have to sound harsh, but it surely is “***pulling them out of the fire!***”

Are you able to find the balance and the courage to speak forth what He shows you? Only God can bring about the right combination of motivations, working in cooperation with and from within the believer – to minister with great compassion and at the same time, bring some hard things into the light of His revelation.

As you are ministering under the anointing of the Lord, you may hear yourself say to that same person, with deep, sincere concern (not you, ☺ but the Holy Spirit operating through you) “I know you’re hurting.” Or, “I know you’re confused. I know you don’t know which way to turn.” That’s Jesus – ministering through your heart, mouth, and life to every person in the congregation sitting before you, exactly what each one needs to perceive. Some people only need to hear: “**Woe unto you**” (vs.11) and that verbal warning will provoke a positive response to the wooing of the Spirit, drawing them back to Jesus. That’s all they need to hear. Others will hear a heart that throbs with compassion and they’ll respond to the tender call of His love. Still others may resist Him until they are confronted with words of absolute truth – “they’re in trouble without God.”

Woe to the preacher who only wants to give gentle words of compassion. Someone may, no, will be burned to death because he didn’t snatch them out of the fire! As a mother, I always preferred to speak a simple word of instruction to my children and have them respond with obedience. But there were many times when I needed to go beyond the gently spoken word. ☺ I so much would rather always give them praise. No one loves to do that more than I did while raising my two. But there were times when I had to reel them in. Why? Because I loved them; I cared enough to pull them away from danger. There are certain times when a parent must stand (take a stand) in the way of the child’s destructive path.

Do you really care about those to whom you minister? Jude cared enough to come on the scene as a “nobody preacher.” This is not famous Paul talking; this is Jude. We don’t really know Jude. Don’t you love that anonymity? God doesn’t always choose the “famous” to bring a powerful message to His people. Sometimes He chooses to use a yielded vessel that no one knows. But it is still God and it is still His Word and it is still effective (Is.55:11).

I see some powerful things in these last few verses. Let me share them and we will conclude. This is a beautiful ending. I would title this portion: “**Release and Responsibility**.” First, *you cannot release what you never have picked up*, what you never had in your grasp. I am responsible for my own life – to build up myself in God and cooperate with Him. I am mandated, obligated and responsible to minister, to exhort and cause change to come into other lives. And, I am obligated to **release** that responsibility. An enigma? No, not two opposite things. Not at all. The only reason I have a right to say to you, “Don’t apostatize – don’t exalt anyone or anything above God,” “Don’t you dare let go of God,” or “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (1Jn.1:7), is because I know how to release that responsibility.

I can unequivocally say to you, through personal experience, “**He is able to keep you from falling!**” (vs.24a). It is through the personal empowerment of Almighty God and through His power alone, that we can accomplish any of the things He calls us to do. I am not responsible for what you do with what you hear. I *release that responsibility* back to God. He is the only One who can keep you – or me – from falling. My responsibility is to communicate the Truth of His Word to you as clearly as I can. **He** keeps you. That’s what you can say to those to whom you minister. *That* is great encouragement – **He keeps you!** How do I positively know that? Because I have lived it! – for years. I am not capable of walking without falling, but He is able to keep me. And God does keep me, day by day.

We also have a promise here, that “*He shall **present me faultless** before the Father*” (vs.24b) – because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Is that not exciting? Christ literally gives us **His** righteousness (see 1Cor.1:30; 2Cor.5:21) because we have none of our own, nor can we produce any without Him.

Many of you have sons who are grown and have found a bride, and in that moment when they wanted you to meet her, they picked what they wanted her to wear, told her what to say and what not to say, instructed her how to act, and she came all primed because he knew how to present her to you. Do you see it?

There is such a spiritual parallel here. We don't know what to do in God's presence. We don't know what He wants. It's okay. Jesus knows! "I'll tell you what to do and what to wear, how to act, when to speak and when to be silent, and what fork to use at the table. ☺ Don't worry." And He says, "I'm going to do all this with 'exceeding joy'" (vs.24c), because He is the only one wise (vs.25a).

"To the only wise God and Savior, be glory, majesty." "You are Lord! Rule and reign over me, O God!"

What's the good news? What's the very **bottom line** of this message? The attributes of God are "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps.90:2), not just for the season. It's not just for this moment between moves of God. It is not "just enough" to carry us through to the next season. But unto Him "be glory and majesty and dominion and power" FOREVER AND FOREVER! And all the people said, "Amen."