



ENTER God's presence

**Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For through wisdom your days will be many,
and years will be added to your life.**

— Proverbs 9:9-11

Heavenly Father, as we gather around your word, help us to understand more of the truth of who you are and all that you have done for us. Sanctify us by the truth; your word is truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Have you ever had a fraudulent online shopping experience where the item you received was clearly not what you had ordered?**

Counterfeits, fakes, knock-offs. To the unwary traveller or online shopper they can be a dangerous trap as they end up with cheap imitations of the real thing. But here's the truth - every good and valuable thing God has given to humanity has a knock off or cheap imitation. Jude says the same thing happens with the Gospel. So Jude, who knew the real thing and had spent a lot of time at the feet of Jesus who was the real thing, knows a counterfeit when he sees it. He can spot the fake, the knock-off in the Church, and calls out those who say they are Christian yet peddle a poor copy of the real Gospel. There's no substitute for the original and Jude reminds us today that Faith Matters as he points out what we're up against. Anything less than the real thing will leave you shipwrecked, dry, barren, dirty and wandering aimlessly through life.

Week beginning:
Sunday 27th September 2020

Worship series:

Faith Matters



VERSE for the week

For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Jude 1:4



REMEMBER this week

The better you get to know the real thing, the easier it is to spot the counterfeit!

Spend time with Jesus today.



LISTEN attentively

Read Jude 1:4-19

- 5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 7. What ways do you see the grace of God being twisted or abused today?**

Sometimes a counterfeit can be very difficult to identify. Those who go about making counterfeit currency, or fake ID's, or designer brand knock-offs do their very best to duplicate the real thing and are often very good at doing so. It is often only very minor details which give things away, and only a well trained eye that can spot the difference.

The same can be true when it comes to the gospel message of Jesus. Pastor and author, Tim Keller once said that there are two main ways that we often misunderstand grace. Firstly, we can believe that God owes it to us. That somehow either because of how 'good' we have been or maybe because of how 'bad' our current situation is, God is obliged to give us grace. This denies the undeserving part of the nature of grace and makes it not grace at all. Secondly, we can feel like we don't need it, that somehow we are not really as bad and sinful as the Bible tells us we are. Denying our need for grace, severely reduces its value and significance. Both of these lines of thinking have been an issue within the Church throughout its history. These same ideas keep popping up in slightly different forms time and time again.

- 8. Have you ever known Christians who have held beliefs like these? Which 'fake' grace do you think attracts people most today?**
- 9. Have you ever heard a preacher or a sermon, maybe online or on TV, that just didn't feel or sound quite like the truth? What felt wrong about it?**

Jude uses pretty strong language when he talks about the examples of God's judgement on those who have led people away from God's righteousness, into immorality. It would be easy to hear him saying that there is punishment in store for those who sin – this does not sound like grace and forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Jude's words here are an urgent plea for all Christians to hold onto the 'real thing', the true message of hope in Jesus. He wants to remind us that listening to the wrong message and living contrary to the will of God, ultimately leads us away from faith in Jesus and to the judgement and destruction awaiting those who refuse to acknowledge him as Lord and Saviour. The dangers of being led away from faith are real and significant. The danger of trading the real and full life that is ours through Jesus for a fake life filled with empty promises is a real and present danger.

- 10. Do you sometimes still feel like you have to 'be good' in order for God to love you? Where do you think that feeling comes from? Read Romans 5:8 to help you recognise the reality of God's love for you.**



GROW deeper

The most effective way to train to recognise a counterfeit, is to spend all your time studying the real thing. When you know the 'real deal' so intimately and perfectly that you can imagine every single detail in your mind, including how it feels and smells, then the moment you encounter a fake, you are likely to notice the minor inconsistencies. This is also true with faith. The more time we spend in the Bible, studying and internalising the truth of God's Word, the more easily we will recognise the errors or inconsistencies that we will inevitably hear coming from other places. However, Jude also gives us some images that might help us to notice when things are not right.

Read Jude 1:12-13 again.

- 11. How would you interpret or recognise a "shepherd who feeds only himself"?**
- 12. What would a person who is a "cloud without rain, blown about by the wind" look or sound like? How might it be different from an uprooted and unfruitful tree?**

13. What do you think Jude means when he says, “they are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame?”

Jude helps us to recognise fakes with these images. Jesus was a servant leader who always cared for those around him. Fake leaders will often serve only their own interest. Jesus, ministry bore fruit, it brought healing, life, and renewal, like rain on dry ground. God’s word testifies that it is alive and active and always achieves what God set out for it to accomplish. (Isaiah 55:11, 2 Tim 3:16). A false gospel is like a land without rain and an orchard without fruit, empty and lifeless. Jesus addressed wrongdoing with grace and forgiveness; a fake gospel often leads to increased guilt and shame. Jesus gives purpose and direction; wandering stars might burn brightly but you cannot navigate by them, they only lead to being lost and confused. Anything but the full grace of God offered freely through faith in Jesus, is going to leave you short changed and not living in the fullness of life which God wants for you. Anything but the 100% grace of God which gives meaning to your life is ultimately robbing you, and those around you of the joy of your salvation in Christ.

14. Sometimes it seems easier to listen to others tell us about God’s word rather than getting into it for ourselves. While good preaching can be helpful, what are some of the dangers in this?



LIVE purposefully

Whether we like it or not, as Christians we are called to share the gospel of Jesus and the grace of God to those who God places in our lives. How are we to do that effectively if we are not able to tell the fakes from the real thing? Our witness to the truth of the gospel message of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus may be the very thing that helps someone to avoid all those nasty judgements which Jude talks about. Being able to articulate the truth about Jesus and about ourselves and our brokenness is a significant task with eternal consequences. Jude is urging us to take this seriously.

15. Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Jesus’ love for us led him to die on a cross to contend for us and win us back from sin and death. This is the truth of the gospel. What difference is that going to make in your life this week?



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for revealing his truth to us in his Word.
- Thank Jesus for revealing the truth that you are loved, called and kept safe.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you connected to the truth of the gospel of grace through Jesus and to recognise and avoid the counterfeits.



BLESS one another

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

[Name], in Christ alone you can stand against every evil threat. Amen.