

Making the Most of Every Opportunity to Contend for the Faith (Part 2)

Message 5 of 6 in the series: "Kairos"

kairos = a God-given moment, season, or window of opportunity to do something.

"Make good use of every opportunity (kairos) you have, because these are evil days." Ephesians 5:16 (GNT)

A. Jude, an early church leader, encouraged first-century Christians to make the most of every opportunity to contend for the faith against ungodly people teaching false things.

1. Jude was Jesus' half-brother, and he did not believe Jesus was the Messiah until after His resurrection.

"This letter is from Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." Jude 1:1a (NLT)

"He returned to Nazareth, his hometown. When he taught there in the synagogue, everyone was amazed and said, 'Where does he get this wisdom and the power to do miracles?' Then they scoffed, 'He's just the carpenter's son, and we know Mary, his mother, and his brothers—James, Joseph, Simon, and **Judas**. All his sisters live right here among us. Where did he learn all these things?' And they were deeply offended and refused to believe in him." Matthew 13:54-57 (NLT)

"But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, and Jesus' brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!' **For even his brothers didn't believe in him.**" John 7:2-5 (NLT)

2. Jude was writing to believers who knew that God loved them, had sent Jesus to rescue them from sin and death, and called them to live new lives. This is the salvation we all share.

"I am writing to all who have been called by God the Father, who loves you and keeps you safe in the care of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more mercy, peace, and love. Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share." Jude 1:1b-3a (NLT)

"You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **All of us used to live that way**, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. **(It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)** Ephesians 2:2-5 (NLT)

"Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. **But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**" 1 Corinthians 6:9b-11 (NLT)

3. Jude encouraged believers to contend for the faith against false teachers who had slipped in among them.

"But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to **defend** (contend for) **the faith** that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. I say this because **some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches...**" Jude 1:3b-4a (NLT)

Note: Apostasy = refusing to continue to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith. "...I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and **following their own desires.**"

2 Peter 3:3 (NLT)

Note: When we contend for the faith, the Bible is our guide in all matters of faith and practice. "**All Scripture is inspired by God** and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

Note: It's very possible for false teachers to work their way into Christian churches because they disguise themselves. "They are **deceitful workers who disguise themselves** as apostles of Christ. But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also **disguise themselves as servants of righteousness**. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve." 2 Corinthians 11:13b-15 (NLT)

4. Jude encouraged believers to contend for the faith against the false teaching that God's grace gives us license to sin.

"...saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Jude 1:4b (NLT)

"Well then, **should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not!** Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives." Romans 6:1-4 (NLT)

B. While making the most of every opportunity to contend for the faith, we must be careful not to fall into temptation ourselves.

"And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. **Rescue others** by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but **do so with great caution**, hating the sins that contaminate their lives." Jude 1:22-23 (NLT)

"Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And **be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.**" Galatians 6:1 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 08-06-23 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Questions:

Read Ephesians 5:16-17 & Jude 1:1-4. Then discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think Jude, a half-brother of Jesus, had a hard time believing his big brother was the Messiah until after His resurrection? (Matthew 13:54-57, John 7:2-5)
2. Read Ephesians 2:2-5, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, & Romans 6:1-4. If Jesus forgives all of our sins, why can't I just say, "I believe in Jesus" and run up my tab?
3. Read the Apostles' Creed together. How does it change the gospel message if any of the statements within the creed are removed? (i.e. Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, or virgin birth)

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen." (*Note: catholic = universal*)

4. Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 & 2 Peter 3:3. How do false teachers worm their way into Christian churches?
5. Discuss the following quotation comparing "cheap" grace and "costly" grace.

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him... Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'you were bought at a price,' and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*