

Jerry Gillis: So if you were to ask any current or former military service member, they would tell you that for every mission that they took or for every exercise that they did, military exercise that they did, they would need a strategic plan, a battle plan so to speak, to be able to carry it out. Just by the way, given it's Veterans Day, if you have served in the military, just stay on your feet for a moment, here on this campus, anywhere on our other campuses, just stay on your feet.

Great, thank you. These men and women know what it means to have to have a plan of action in terms of what they do. Certainly that's true about a number of things, like sporting events, so if you're a visiting soccer team who's gonna be playing for a championship and [inaudible 00:00:52] College who's with us today, then you also have to have a plan going into what you're doing. You have to know the opponent, you have to know what you're doing, you have to be able to execute that, and you gotta be ready to do it. And if you're a weekend warrior like this dude is, you have to be able to figure out what you're doing and why you're doing it.

A couple of summers ago, summer 2016, I was in a hotel room. My wife and I were in a hotel room, and we were watching TV. I can't remember exactly where we were or why we were there, but we were watching TV and we were watching one of those Spartan adventure races, have you ever seen those on TV? It's like American Ninja Warrior except in a real race kinda thing, you know? So I'm watching these things, and I'm getting fired up, like I'm thinking to myself, "This is awesome. Edie, look at this, this is super cool." And she's like, "Yeah, but you're old." And I was like, "What?" And she said, "and they're in shape." And I was like, "What?" No, she didn't say any of that. I said, "These things look awesome. I don't know if I could ever do it."

So I got fired up and I texted my buddy Kemper, and I said "Hey Kemper, these Spartan races I'm watching on TV, these things are awesome. Would you ever do one of those?" Of course, he's already done one, and I haven't. So I'm just texting him, and he's like, "Are you serious?" Probably like, "I'm looking out for your best interests, 'cause I'm in shape, you're not, and I don't want you to die. I'm friends of your family and I take responsibility for you, so I don't want you to die." And I was like, "Yeah, yeah, no, let's think about this."

So anyway, we finally find one of those adventure races that was coming to Buffalo, or at least two hours from here, two hours south of here, called Tough Mudder. Some of you have seen that before, maybe some of you have participated in it. It is what you think it is. It's 10 to 12 miles of all uphill, I don't even know how they do that. The entire thing is uphill. I don't know how you do that. It's not possible, but it felt that way, and it's all mud, and it's got all these obstacles on it that Navy SEALs devised, who were angry and apparently drunk

when they did it, 'cause I'm like, whoa, what're these people thinking? This is insane. Here's some of the things they're called: electric shock therapy. Thank you for that. Wires hanging down with 12,000 volts, and you run through them and get shocked, for fun. You pay to do this. You pay money to do this. They've got another one called Arctic Enema, like the water's like 40 degrees or 38 degrees or something and you go into it and you just, nothing makes sense in your world when that happens, when you go underwater. You just can't breathe, you can't see, you just want to leave and suck your thumb and call your mom.

It's got all that stuff in it, right? So I'm thinking, how do I gear up for this thing? So I'm talking to Kemper and I'm like, "you gotta help prepare me a little bit," so he's explaining to me how some of these particular obstacles work and what they are. Now, I didn't necessarily know all the obstacles that were gonna be there on race day, but I kind of understood some of what they were, and then he's like, "You know, you're gonna have to get strong. You gotta prepare." So there's me, man, I go back and I'm training. I'm working out. I'm running track and I'm running bleachers and I'm throwing burpees in there in between, doing a few miles and then throwing burpees out and then running stairs again. I'm trying to get strong.

But then, as I'm talking to him, he's saying, "Hey, here's the good news of this, it's not just on you. This is something that you do as a community." And I'm like, "What do you mean?" He's like, "Well, you've gotta be able to get over the obstacles and deal with those, but then when you do, you've gotta be able to help other people coming behind you." I was like, "Oh, okay, I get it." So not only do I have to be strong enough to get myself across the finish line, but I've gotta be strong enough to help other people get across the finish line. He's like, "Yeah." I'm like, "I'm going back to running." So I had to go strengthen myself, why? Because ultimately, this was about preparing my mind for what was coming, understanding what it was, getting strong enough to deal with it, so that I could end up helping others cross the finish line as well.

Now, we've been studying the book of Jude and now we're starting to come to the back end of the book of Jude, this one chapter book, and I would tell you that what we're gonna look at, the verses that we heard read just a few moments ago, the verses that we're looking at today, I can tell you that they kinda line up with that illustration I just gave you about that Tough Mudder, and by the way, just to confirm that I actually did this, here's a couple of pictures.

So that's me in the electric shock thing, right before I was about to get shocked. This is me preparing, going "This is gonna be ugly," 'cause there were grown dudes, I'm talking about men's men that were doing this thing. We watched them afterwards, that were like studs, I mean studs, very similar to me. They were just studs, right? And they would go through this thing and they'd get hit with one of those 12,000 volt thing and just fall face first in the mud, like duhuh, you know? And I'd be like, no. Here's me getting shocked. Bam. That is not a good look. Not a good look. But I did not go down. Come on with that. I did not

go down. No sir. I got hit four times, four. One in the head. That is not cool, 'cause when you're going through that bad boy, you kinda do this. You're kinda running like this, and I got hit right in the head, and it made me angry. I was so angry. I didn't do anything. I didn't say anything bad, nothing like that. But I just wanted to get done, 'cause it was ugly. Kemper only got hit once, and I tried to follow his line, but when I got hit in the head, I was just all jacked up, and I'm running all over the place at that point. It didn't work. Four times.

But here's the thing, here's what I did. I prepared, I got strong, and I was able through the course of this thing to finish it and help others to do the same. You see, ultimately what we're gonna read in Jude today, here's what I'll summarize it for you. Here's the big idea. Get ready, get strong, get others. That's what we're gonna see in the text today. Get ready, get strong, get others. I'm gonna take those one at a time as we look into the text. Let's start with the first one. Get ready.

I want you to begin with me in verse number 17, 18 and 19. Look at what it says. It says, "But dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, in the last times, there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts, and do not have the spirit." You see, what Jude is doing here is he's kind of calling back our attention to remind us that "Hey, here's what I was writing about." When he uses that phrase, "Dear friends," he's calling us back to verse number three. I'm not gonna show it to you, I'm gonna skip that, but he calls us back to verse number three because in verse three he says, "Dear friends, here's why I'm writing to you. I wanted to write about the salvation we share, but really, there's these false teachers that have crept in and now I'm gonna tell you, you need to contend for the faith that was once and for all entrusted to all of God's people." That's what he's saying that we need to do.

And then he tells us all about these false teachers in the verses after that, and now he's getting back to why he was writing. Because what Jude is doing, he's not just gonna write this letter to complain about these false teachers and tell us about what they're like, he's actually gonna give us a plan of action at the very end of the letter, so that we've got some things we can act on, and the first thing we have to do is we have to get ourselves ready, because what he says is he says, "Dear friends, I want you to remember what the apostles told you was going to happen." Well, what was that? It says in verse number 18. Here's what it says. "They said to you in the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires."

Now I've already told you that when we study the book of Jude, we also have to understand that Jude and Peter's writings, first and second Peter, kinda go like this. In other words, many scholars kind of think this to be the case, and I'm kind of in agreement with them, that Jude was borrowing at times language from what Peter was saying in first and second Peter. He was reiterating some of the language that the apostle used. In fact, when Jude is saying "Hey, it was told to you that scoffers are gonna come in the last times," I think he's saying what

Peter said in second Peter, chapter number three. "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you," Peter says. "I've written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. Above all, you must understand that in these last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires." In other words, what Peter's saying is this, is they're coming. These false teachers, they're gonna show up. They're gonna try and infiltrate in the church. They're gonna try and teach you things that are different than the reality of the revealed truth of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what they're gonna do, and they're coming.

Now Peter's not the only one who's said this, by the way. If you remember when the apostle Paul was on one of his missionary journeys, after he planted the church in Ephesus, he ended up after being there with them for some time, he ended up having to say a really, really sad goodbye to them. He knew this was the last time he was gonna see them. He knew he was headed off and he was gonna end up dying for the faith, and so it was a really moving scene when you read about it in Acts Chapter 20, it's a very moving scene. Paul's crying and the Ephesian elders are crying, and they're hugging one another, because he knows this is it.

But listen to what he warns them about when he's leaving in Acts Chapter 20. He says, "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again." He knows this is it. "Therefore I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you, for I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you, and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, they will come in and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard, and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." You see, Paul said, this is coming, right?

By the way, a little bit later after that, when Timothy was now pastoring the church of Ephesus and Paul was trying to encourage Timothy, remember what he told Timothy. He reiterated in second Timothy three. He said, "But mark this, Timothy, there are gonna be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They have a form of godliness, but they deny its power. Have nothing to do with such people." Paul was effectively describing some of those who were infiltrating the church, because they had a form of godliness like these false teachers Jude is dealing with, but they deny the power of God and deny the gospel of God.

And so what we're being reminded of is this, is that it shouldn't surprise us, and as Jude was saying to the early church, it shouldn't surprise you, they're going to show up. The apostles have said this is going to happen. This is going to happen, and it did happen in the early church. You not only had the gnostics who were teaching a very divergent view of what the reality of Christ was, but you had the montanists that followed them in the second century, teaching a heretical doctrine about Jesus and all of this stuff, and then through the course of church history you've seen it over and over and over again.

By the way, it shouldn't be a shock to us in our time, that we live in age where universalists, who just say "Oh, don't worry about sin, everybody, it's no big deal," and they just kinda cast off the reality of the judgment of God, which Jude reminds us you better not do. Or the new agers, who kinda just say "Ah, there's many roads to God, you just kinda have to pick your own truth." They're all infiltrating the churches. These are the kinds of ideas, or there's people that say "Yeah, as long as you continue to line my pockets with money, then you're gonna be wealthy yourself." All of that stuff, right? This is craziness, and it's not really the reality of the gospel as God's revealed it in his word, and so it shouldn't be a shock to us. That's why, ladies and gentlemen, what we've gotta make sure of is that we're ready. We know that that's here. We know that that's coming, and we've gotta be ready and prepared in our minds and our hearts for that, because this fight that we have, we're to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to all of God's people.

But we're not just contending with those false teachers. We're also contending with ourselves. Our temptation to be deceived. Our temptation to live inconsistent with the reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why, not only, ladies and gentlemen, do we need to be ready, but we need to get strong. That's the second piece that we're talking about here. We not only get ready, but we've gotta get strong. Now how do we do that? Well, here's the good news. Jude actually gives us four exhortations about what we need to do to get ourselves strong. Here's the first thing that we see that he says. We gotta build ourselves up. Now, when you see that, I'm not talking about those of you who are a little older and remember Saturday Night Live when Al Franken was on there doing the Stuart Smalley thing, when he'd stand in front of the mirror and he'd be like, "I'm smart enough, I'm good enough, and doggone it, people like me." Now some of you that are older remember that. Some of you that are younger are going "You're old, dude, stop doing that. Stop talking." That's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about just giving yourself a pep talk and just saying I'm great. That's not what I'm talking about. Jude is very specific. Listen to what he says in verse number 20.

"But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith," now what he's doing is he's reminding us of what he said from the very beginning, when he said "You've got the faith that has been once for all entrusted to God's people, and you've got to build yourself up in the faith, this objective set of truths, that God has revealed through the apostles and the prophets for us to be able to know God rightly. You've gotta be able to hold onto that and grow

yourself and strengthen yourself in that." Really, what that amounts to is we've gotta strengthen ourselves for the reality of the word of God. We've gotta know the word. We've gotta let it wash over us. We've gotta let it pour through our lives so that we understand who God is, and by the way, who God isn't, because we're going to have people that are gonna infiltrate and they're gonna try and take us into destructive pathways, the scripture tells us. We're warned about that, and so we have to strengthen ourselves and build ourselves up in our most holy faith.

Now I told you about Paul when he was leaving Ephesus, and the sad goodbye that he had with the Ephesian elders, but do you know what he said a little bit later on after he warned them about the savage wolves that were gonna come into their midst? Listen to what he said.

He said "Now I commit you to God, and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who were sanctified." Here's what Paul says. Paul says the word of his grace is what is going to build you up. Ladies and gentlemen, here's the thing. We have the word of his grace, spoken to us through the apostles and prophets, that we now have governed by the holy Spirit in our lives, and when we, listen to this, when we continue to feed on the word, we are going to build ourselves up in the strength of God. Now, ultimately, what this means is that we've gotta be a people who's willing to commit ourselves to that. I'll talk to you about that in just a second, but let me show you the other exhortations here. He not only says you gotta build yourself up, but then he says you gotta pray in the spirit. Notice what the text actually says in verse number 20. "But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the holy spirit."

Now for some, they have taken that and they've made it mean maybe some things that it doesn't mean, but what it certainly could mean to the original audience is the fullness of the canon of scripture was not put together at that time, and there were certainly those that were gifted with the gift of speaking in other languages at that time, and they certainly needed to be interpreted, because that was another gift in the church, why? Because God was speaking to his people in that way before the full compilation of what we call the canon of scripture. So it certainly does not discount that in any way, but ultimately, what the scripture gets at when it talks about praying in the holy spirit, is that for us to make sure that our hearts and our minds are webbed together with the will of God, and how do we do that? By his word. Now listen, my friend, Dr. Daniel Henderson, who leads the 6:4 Fellowship, it's kind of an evangelistic prayer movement in the United States, he actually says it this way. He says, if you want to know that your praying is spirit-led, make sure it's scripture-fed. If you want to know your praying is spirit-led, make sure it's scripture-fed.

You see, ladies and gentlemen, I want to remind you of something. When I spend time with the Lord myself, I spend time with him in studying his word and listening to his voice speak to me, and then, when I'm praying, I don't ever pray without an open Bible. When I'm spending time with God, I pray with an open

Bible. Do you know why? Because I want to pray God's word back to him. I want to be able to talk to God about what God has revealed about himself. That way, I can know, I can know that I am in a spirit-led context when I am in a scripture-fed context. When I'm praying his word.

So, we've gotta be people who pray in the spirit. But then it goes on to say, third exhortation, is that we need to keep ourselves in God's love. Notice what he says in verses 20 and 21, "But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the holy spirit, keep yourselves in God's love." Now for Jude, keep or kept is a word that he likes to use. You see it in a few places in Jude's writing and because it's such a small book, you kinda go, "Oh, that word pops out to me a couple times." In fact, it calls our attention back to verse number one, where Jude said this. "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who've been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept by or for Jesus Christ." And then he goes on to tell us a little bit later, which we just read a moment ago, that we are to keep ourselves in God's love.

Now some of you, let me call a time out real quick. Some of you are going "Hang on a second." So in the beginning, he says we are kept by Jesus Christ, and now he tells us to keep ourselves in God's love. Aren't those things incompatible? We're kept in the love of God, but we've gotta keep ourselves in the love of God. No, they're not incompatible. If you remember who Jude is, half-brother of Jesus, brother of James, all Jude is doing is just repeating to us the teaching of Jesus. That's what he's doing. If you remember what Jesus said in John chapter 15, you'll pick it up. He said "As the father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my father's commands and remain in his love." So let me ask you a quick question. Do you think that Jesus was ever outside the Father's love. I'm gonna give you the answer. Say no. No. Jesus was never outside of the Father's love. Jesus was kept within the Father's love, but what Jesus says to us is this. "Just as I have obeyed the Father and kept his commands, demonstrating that I am kept by his love, that's what I want you to do."

You see, the greatest way, ladies and gentlemen, that we demonstrate that we are loved by God, is when we begin to obey him. Jesus said, the world will kinda know that you love me, not only by your love for one another, but Jesus says in John 15, "by obeying what I've told you to do." You see, this is where those that are legalists get it really wrong. They think that if we make enough rules for people, that they have to do all of these things, right? We can just rule them to death. The reality is, is that when we are loved in an overwhelming way, and we begin to understand the grace of God in Jesus Christ and what he's done for us, the love of God compels us into places of obedience, because we desire that. That's what we want to do, because we recognize what God in Christ has done on our behalf. We are now compelled by love to obey him and to live that out. You see, ultimately, this is talking about our willingness to obey. Keep yourselves in God's love. How do you do that? You demonstrate that you're in God's love by being obedient to what God's called you to do.

Let me give you a fourth exhortation here that he says. Here's how we get strong. We also anticipate Jesus' return. Here's what he says in verse number 21. He says, "Dear friends, build yourselves up, keep yourselves in God's love," and then in verse 21 he says this. "As you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life." You see, what Jude was ultimately doing here is he was focusing our attention, saying this, that when we live in such a way that we are waiting on the return of Jesus, when we live in that way, it will change the way we live. In fact, Jude is actually talking about what Peter brought up in his letter. Listen to what Peter said about the return of Jesus in second Peter chapter number three. He said, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."

You see, if we really are serious about looking for the return of Jesus, and if you just let that sit with you for a little while, it's overwhelming to think about. It kind of is a motivation to live a holy and godly life. Not on our own strength, but in the power of his spirit, because we know that he's going to return, and that we're gonna stand before him and there's not gonna be any condemnation for those who were in Christ Jesus, but we are gonna be called to account for the life that we've led, for the things that we've done, not in a condemning way in any stretch, not our sins being dragged around, because Jesus has taken care of those at the cross through his death and his resurrection. But we should be living holy and godly lives as we anticipate the coming of Jesus.

Now, these statements, these exhortations are how we get strong, right? We get strong by building ourselves up, by praying in the spirit, by keeping ourselves by obedience in God's love, and by anticipating Jesus' return, and so there's individual application for all of us in those things, but Jude is actually writing communally. In other words, he's talking to all of us. He says, "dear friends, this is what I want you all to do." Now here's the thing. We've gotta commit to the disciplines of being in the word of God, individually. We've gotta commit to that. Some of you are saying, "you know what, I don't really read and process really well." Well, you can listen, and they do make the Bible on CD and mp3. You can download it, you can listen, you need the word planted in your heart. You need it, because it's what's giving you a true revelation of who God is. It helps you discern right from wrong. It helps you discern those things. You need that.

And the truth is, here's the thing. Listen carefully to this. Some of us don't know how starving we are for the word. We don't know, because we haven't been eating. In my life, sometimes as a discipline, I will fast from time to time just to listen to God's voice and just to kinda push aside everything including food for a season, where I can just listen to the Lord and spend time with the Lord, and in most cases, that's for a day or a meal or something like that where I just spend some time with the Lord, but in some cases in my life that has been for longer term, for days and for weeks, and in that season, when you're doing that, here's what I've found. After day one and two, I'm just hungry and irritable and have a headache.



That's usually what happens, if I'm being honest. But I'm just pressing into the Lord, that's what happens after a couple of days. I'm starving. But after day four or five, I'm not hungry anymore. I'm just drinking, whatever, some fruit juice or something to get some nutrients in me or whatever, water, generally, but I'm not hungry anymore. After a week, I'm not hungry, and here's the thing, it's almost like my body's convinced that it's not hungry anymore, but then when I break the fast, and I come out of it, which you should do so carefully if it's been many days, small, don't like just go "I want a steak," bad idea, bad idea, I start to eat and as soon as that hits my stomach, my stomach starts going "Where have you been? I am starving." Right? It's like my body for awhile didn't know it was starving until it started eating. That is a great illustration of where we are in many of our lives spiritually. You don't even know that you're starving 'cause you haven't really been eating, but when you start, all of the sudden you start going "Oh, I didn't realize how hungry I was. I had no idea." And now you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness like Jesus taught.

So, we've gotta commit ourselves to that personally. Time in the word, time in prayer, where we're listening to God's voice, praying his word back to him, listening to what he has to say to us. All of those things, we've gotta commit to, but listen carefully. Our life in Jesus is not just about our individual understanding. You see, here's what I found out when I was doing the Tough Mudder. I did my training, and I tried to get up to coming close to, I never got to a place where I was just running 10 or 12 miles. I got where I was running about eight and doing some stuff, 'cause I needed to save some. I only had a little bit in the tank. I'm old and I had to just save some, so I saved a bit. But you know what I found out on race day? Because I was with my buddy, and because we were with other people, I was stronger. I was stronger on race day because I was with other people, not just by myself.

Sometimes with yourself you have all this crazy talk in your head, you're just going "if you take one more step, Jerry, you're stupid. You should go home, have a donut, ask your wife for a massage that she will not give you. That's what you need to do. You just need to check out. This is ridiculous. You're even stupid for doing it. You know you're old, right?" That's what's going on in my head, but when I'm out there and I'm among others, I'm being encouraged, I'm being helped, I'm being helped over a wall, I'm helping other people over a wall, I was stronger with other people. Do not be a lone ranger in your faith. We are stronger together. We're a body for a reason.

The Bible doesn't say "Hey, live life like a nose." It says, live life like a body. We need all of the parts together, so I say this to you. The communal side of this is, if you've not gotten involved in some kind of small group environment, where you can study the word together, you can grow together, you can do life together, you can help one another together, do you know how many one another there are in the New Testament? Serve one another in love. Show compassion to one another. Comfort one another. Minister to one another. Show hospitality to one another. You have to do those with actual other human beings. You can't do those by yourself. That has to be communal. If you've never

gotten involved in some kind of small group environment, I want to encourage you to do that. If you need help with that, check in in the information center at any of our campuses. We'd love to help put you into those environments, because this is super important. We're helping one another grow together.

I've got a responsibility to help get us strong by trying to bring solid teaching of the word of God. That's a responsibility before the Lord I have. I have to bring solid teaching of the word of God. This is not just life lessons with Jerry. This is what did God say, and what do we do as a result of it? That's what we need to do, right? This isn't Jerry's opinions on life and everything, and isn't that neat, this is what does God say? And what do we do as a result? So I've got a responsibility to you, but listen, you've got a responsibility to others as well. You've got one another responsibilities. You've gotta minister to one another. You've gotta be able to be strong enough, why? Because we've got a job to do. There are others that need help, and you have to be strong enough not just to get yourself across the finish line by the power of God, but to help other people get across the finish line. That's a job you have, and you can't do that solo. You have to do that in community.

So I challenge you to get involved in the context of community in some way, why? Because it's gonna help strengthen you. You're gonna be stronger together, because what we have to do, what Jude's telling us, we have to get ready, we have to get strong, why? Because we gotta get some others. Now listen, not only does that kinda tell us "Hey, there's a world in need that we have around us that needs to know Jesus." Absolutely. But there's a world in the church that also has needs. You see, Jude's application here is about those in the church that have now come into this context that have been affected by false teaching in some way, and that the brothers and sisters in Christ in the church need to be strong enough to know how to help their brothers or sisters if they are in need and they're confused.

Now Jude gives us three different types of people as examples, and I've given each of them a name. They're a group. They're the doubters, they're the deceived, and they're the destructive. Now those are my names, okay, those are my titles that I've given to them, but I want to show you how I'm getting at that, because for each of those, we get some battle plan, some game plan, some plan of action instruction. Let me show you why we need to be strong, because we've gotta be able to help others. Here's what Jude says first. To the doubters, be merciful. This is what he says first. To the doubters, be merciful. Listen to how he says it in verse number 22. "Be merciful to those who doubt." Right? Not rocket science, people. It's pretty clear what he just said. Be merciful to those who doubt.

So what are we talking about here? Listen carefully. What we're talking about here is having compassion on people in the body of Christ who've embraced the gospel, who are following Jesus, but who have been affected by some bad teaching and are a little bit confused. We're to show patience and compassion and grace to them as we help point them to the reality of the gospel.

In other words, you can remember there was probably a time in your life where you were confused, where you didn't really know what side was up, maybe you got, I hear it all the time. Pastor Jerry, I was watching this teacher on the internet, which is automatically, I'm going "Oh, boy, here we go." 'Cause everybody can get on there, right? Even some dude in jean shorts in his basement, you know, can get on there and start talking about whatever he wants to talk about, right? And he's on the internet. Congratulations to you. So they'll tell me, "yeah, and they said something about this, and now I'm a little confused." My job isn't to go, "Wow, you're stupid." That's not the job. The job is to show compassion, the job is to show mercy and say "Yeah, you know, I've had to walk through that in my head before as well, but can we do this? Can we maybe take a look back at what the scripture actually teaches regarding that idea, and let's get a sense for that. Let's see if we can understand that a little better." This is about patient dialogue, walking alongside of them, and being a help to them, because their confusion is coming from a place of belief, not a place of disbelief or skepticism, it's coming from a place of belief, so to the doubters, you gotta be merciful.

Now here's the thing, you have to be strong enough in the faith that you can even provide help, right? This is why this isn't just about you. You gotta be strong enough where you can provide some help, so to the doubters, be merciful. But then there's the second group I told you about, to the deceived, you gotta snatch them. To the deceived, you have to snatch them. Again, let me tell you what I mean when I say that. Here's what Jude says. "Save others by snatching them from the fire." Save others by snatching them from the fire. So he's ramped it up here. Listen. It's like a doctor that has three different patients that have to be dealt with in three different ways. Their health needs, their bodies, everything's different about them, so a doctor has to deal with each of them differently, and we have to have the discernment to be able to do the same when people have been affected by bad teaching, teaching that's leading them away from the gospel and leading them down roads of destruction like we've talked about already in Jude.

And so to the doubters, we show mercy. We come alongside, patiently leading them back to the scripture, leading them back to the gospel, helping them to understand their way. But to the deceived, we have to snatch them from the fire. This, now, is taking on kinda the idea of an addict who is now causing their life to start to swirl in a realm of destruction, and family members doing intervention, and they show up in that person's life and they say, "Hey. We're not letting you kill yourself with your addiction. We're showing up here to say you're not going down that way anymore. We are snatching your tail right out of that, and we're getting some help." That happens, sometimes in the life of addicts. I know people in our church who've had that happen in their lives, and as a result, not only was their life saved, but they came to know Jesus through the process of people loving them deeply.

For those that have been infected by some bad teaching, he gives us a picture. He says, "you've gotta snatch them from the fire." It's as if they are living in the

suburbs of hell. They haven't quite gotten there, but they're living in the suburbs, and he's saying, this is no time for patient dialogue, where you sit down and go "oh man, yeah I know," because this is wayleading down the pathway of destruction. He's saying you've got to snatch them.

Now that phrase, snatch them out of the fire, was a common phrase in the ancient world. In fact, the prophets would use that. Zachariah used it, so did Amos, in fact, when Amos used it in chapter four, here's what Amos said. "I overthrew," this is what God said through Amos. "I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me, declares the Lord." You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, and you know what Amos does? He actually uses the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you know what's interesting? So does Jude. Jude uses the same imagery earlier on of Sodom and Gomorrah. Why? Because it gives us a picture of snatching.

What are you talking about? Well, if you remember, when I talked to you about this, those of you who were here, in Sodom and Gomorrah, God was gonna deal with them in judgment because of the vast immorality that was there, that Jude talks about early in the letter. You remember the angels showed up and were telling Lot and his family, "Hey, you gotta get out of here, because God's gonna deal with this place," and then of course, all the men of the town showed up in Sodom and started yelling into Lot, hey bring those guests of yours outside, we want to have sex with them. That's literally what the scripture says, and then here's what happened. Here's what happened with Lot in Genesis chapter 19.

With the coming of the dawn the angels urged Lot, saying hurry, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you'll be swept away when the city is punished. And when they hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters, and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. You know what the angels did? They said "Lot, we gotta get out of here," and Lot was kinda hemming and hawing, and he went "Let's go." He snatched them. Why? Because they were in danger and God was showing them mercy by snatching them. This wasn't mean, this was loving. God's showing them mercy.

There are some people in our world that it is long past time for sitting and patiently talking to them. They're past the point of just doubting and being in a state of confusion. They're living now in a place that's leading them into deception, and if you love them, you're gonna reach out and grab them and pull them back in love, and say "this is not where we want to be. This is not the life you want to go down. This is not where you want to head."

But there's a third group of people, and here's what Jude says about them. To the destructive, be cautious. We've gotta be strong, ourselves, because it's not just about us. We've gotta know how to deal with those who maybe have been affected by really bad teaching that's inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus and maybe is making God or Christ or the spirit into things that are far, far away

from how God's revealed himself. We've gotta know how to deal with that, but now we get to this destructive people, and he says, with the doubters, you gotta be merciful. With the deceived, you've gotta be snatching them, but with the destructive, you better be cautious. Listen to what he says at the very end. He says "to others," this last group, "show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh." The mercy mixed with fear is a reminder that you better be careful that you don't fall into the same stuff. These people are well past just being deceived, they are living lives of destruction and they don't care. They don't care about the coming judgment, they don't care about what it's involving, they don't care about any of that, they are living in that way and that's where they're at.

And here's what Jude tells us. You better be cautious there. Certainly show mercy in terms of praying that God would show mercy to them, that God would use whatever circumstance that he can use to wake them up so that they can see the reality of the truth, but don't get entangled. Do not get entangled.

And in fact, Jude gives us a word picture that's kind of twofold, a twofold word picture. He talks about not being stained, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. Well, that first gives us this Levitical picture of the Old Testament, where if somebody was kind of, let's say, had leprosy, you couldn't touch their clothing for a number of different reasons, but the primary one is they didn't want you getting it, right? They didn't want you getting it. It can rub off on you, so you didn't want to do that, but the other picture is a bit even more graphic, that literal phrase, when it says, "clothing stained by corrupted flesh," do you know what the literal meaning of that is? It's soiled undergarments. That's what's being talked about here. In other words, some of those false teachers that were among them were living such immoral lifestyles that in their drunkenness and debauchery, they would soil themselves, not even caring, because they were still getting up teaching people about who they were and how spiritual they were and blah, blah, blah, doing all of that stuff, but you can see where their lives are headed.

Jude says, stay away. Be cautious, show mercy, but mix it with fear, because you don't want to be carried off into this pathway of destruction. Pray for them, ask God's mercy on them, and share with them as you have ability to, but don't get caught up in all of that. That's what he's saying. You see, that's why we've gotta be reminded that there are different approaches to different people who are facing different things, and we've gotta be strong enough ourselves in the faith to be able to know how we deal with those different instances. There are sometimes where we just have to patiently bear with people and walk alongside them and love them and help point them back to the gospel and the word of God and help them grow and develop and then there's other times we need to snatch them. "Hey, what are you doing? Man, get out of there. That's danger for you. Get out." And then there's other times where we'll pray and we'll ask God to show mercy, but we're not getting caught up in that. We're not heading down that pathway. We're not allowing that to corrupt us.

You see, I wonder how we're doing as a church, and I mean that broadly, not just the Chapel, but how we're doing as a church of strengthening ourselves to the point where we're prepared to be able to help other people. You see, in the individualistic culture that we live in, it always feels like everything is just about us, it's just about my faith, it's just about me and Jesus. Actually, it's not. It's a much bigger deal than that, because you've not been designed just to have these great experiences with Jesus and that's it, so you can feel good. It's actually so that you can be used by Jesus in the lives of people around you, that you're strong enough in the faith that you can help them.

You see, at the end of the day, ladies and gentlemen there's a number of things that we can do, I'm asking you how strong are you? Are you spending time in his word? Are you spending time with an open Bible as you pray and converse with God? Are you spending time in community with other people so that you're faithfully involved in that? Right now, I'm in between small groups right now, but for 15 years since I've been at the chapel, I have been in small groups for 15 years, and I'm the pastor guy, and I need to have that kind of accountability and life on life and serving with other people. I need that in my own world, and I want it in the world of my family. I'm not just talking out of both sides of my mouth here, this is something I've been engaged in for the time that I've been here. We need this, and so maybe when you leave, you've got an opportunity if you're not involved in something like that, stop by the information center. Talk with somebody about what it looks like to get involved in a small group, or they can contact you about that. Or maybe you want to be involved in serving and somehow being involved in community with people who are helping to foster, adopt kids. You can be able to do that.

At the very bottom line, at the bottom line, build yourself up in the word of grace by spending time in the word, so that you have an opportunity to get stronger in your faith so that you can be of help to others. You see, in the western church, I fear that we're becoming weaker and weaker instead of stronger and stronger, and we need to be strong in our faith. Get ready. Get strong, so you can get others.