

ADVICE FROM JUDE: 1. DON'T BE SHOCKED.

The Book of Jude in the Bible is a short letter written to Christians. In the 25 verses he offers three pieces of advice, the first I am writing about here.

Early in his letter, Jude jumps into the concern that has him writing in the first place:

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”
Jude 3-4

He goes on and on about these godless men, describing their evil:

“...these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings” – vs 8

“...these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.” – vs 10

“...These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves.” – vs 12

“...These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.” – vs 16

So you might ask, “Where is he going with this? What is his point?” Certainly he wants to elicit fear and cause us to be more alert. This is appropriate when there is a danger near that not everyone seems to notice. But notice what comes next:

“But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts.’ It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions.”
Jude 17-19

After getting us all worked up about the mess that is all around us, he reminds us that this is nothing new. I take this as an admonition not to be shocked by what we see in our world. After all, Jesus Himself told us to expect trouble (*Matthew 24:9-12, Mark 13:9-13, Luke 22:12-17, John 15:18-25, 16:1-4, 33*). In John 16:4 He says “*I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.*”

In the late 80s, one of my church members volunteered at a clinic where his job was to tell people the results of their HIV test. As you may recall, at that time HIV would always lead to fatal AIDS within a couple of years, and so you can imagine that no one envied his job. He told me about how people would share personal information about the strange “practices” they engaged in, many that made them high risk for HIV, often in graphic detail. He thought that they said it deliberately to shock him. “I think they wanted to see that sign of fear or disgust, because on the one level it just confirmed that I, a church person, was out-of-touch and hypocritical, and

on a deeper level it confirmed that nobody who really knew them could love them. So it was important to not allow the shock to get to me.”

I believe my brother points to two realities about the people around us, especially those who are outside the church: that they believe the church and its people to be out-of-touch and hypocritical, and that they believe no one could truly love them. I know that at times people have come to me expecting that look of shock or disgust, and I suspect that some have come to you with that in mind. To those who want my shock or disgust, I pray that I never give it to them.

When Jude says to remember what Jesus and the apostles have told us, he is suggesting that none of this should be a surprise. There is almost no limit to what humans can do to be self-destructive (and destructive to others in the process). If I am to be a help in a hurting, broken world I can't waste too much time being in shock over what the Lord has already told me to expect. And for those of us who can work past the shock, we can go on to Jude's other two pieces of advice (in the next article).

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Kevin', written in a cursive style.