SESSION 5
LEAD IT: COLLEGE AGE

GOALS

As students experience this session in Jude, they will...

- explore Jude's instructions concerning our behavior toward those who keep God at a distance.
- identify people in their lives who need the mercy Jude describes.
- be challenged to imitate God's heart toward those who don't walk with Him.

MATERIALS: Group

- Whiteboard and markers
- A computer or ability to show a video from Vimeo
- Video Pre-Watch: Before your session you'll want to watch the video in "Digging In" called "Big But" at http://tinyurl.com/BUTIDONT (Note: This video looks at all the excuses we make for coming up short in our spiritual disciplines and outward obedience.)

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Jude Scripture sheets
- the student journal pages for Session 5
- a Bible and pen (Students should bring their own Bibles. You can decide if you would like them to use a physical Bible or a Bible app like "YouVersion")

INTRO

Welcome to week five in Jude! Each week we have been unpacking his words to us as believers and learning how this applies to our lives today. In week four we focused on the negative influences in our lives. This week we will be looking specifically at how Jude desires Christ followers to treat those who are not close to the Lord.

Prayer

Spend a few minutes praying that your students will glimpse the compassion and mercy of Jesus in this session.

Review

To help your group keep track of the major themes in Jude, ask a few review questions:

What was Jude's purpose in writing his letter?
-To urge his readers to contend for the faith.

Who were the "certain men" Jude talked about? What were they like?
-They were ungodly men who rejected authority and rebelled against truth.

What were Jude's three instructions that relate to the inner spiritual life?
-Build yourselves up in your most holy faith.
-Pray in the Holy Spirit.
-Keep yourselves in God's love.

Bonus Question: What three dangers could Jude's readers (including us!) avoid by following these instructions?
-Changing God's grace into a license for immorality (v. 4)
-Denying Jesus as Lord (v. 4)
-Causing division (v. 19)

DIGGING IN

Remind your group that in the last session, they looked at Jude's instructions—particularly those that dealt with our hearts and inner spiritual life. Now ask them to look back at the instructions they marked on their Jude Scripture sheet (in Session 4), particularly in verses 22-25.

What common theme do you see in the other instructions Jude gave?
After some discussion, help your students conclude that these instructions deal with how believers should act toward nonbelievers or those who struggle with the Christian faith. You might say that these instructions deal with the outer spiritual life.

Write the instructions directed toward the "outer" spiritual life on the board, leaving space to write beneath each entry. Invite students to write these in the space provided on their journal pages.

The Outer Spiritual Life

-Be merciful to those who doubt. (v. 22)
-Snatch others from the fire and save them. (v. 23)
-To others, show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. (v. 23)

Share in your own words:

In a moment we're going to dig into Jude's instructions for how those of us who are believers are supposed to act towards those who are non-believers. In other words this is a way we talk about "sharing our faith." To get us thinking about this, we're are going to watch a video that highlights the idea of telling people about Jesus.

Show the video: "Big But" http://tinyurl.com/BUTIDONT by Churpedia.

Last week we looked at our own hearts and this week we are looking to how we are called to treat those who are non-believers. However, if we are making excuses for the way we get closer to the Lord, we will make excuses in the way we interact with others. Debrief on the video with these questions:

Have you have ever made these kinds of excuses?

What were you thinking as you watched this video? Does this guy have a point? Is it a fair assessment?

How does this relate to interacting with doubters and non-believers in our lives?

Now work through the instructions from Jude as a group, asking your students what types of people are being described with each category. Possible questions:

What kind of people would "those who doubt" be? Describe the kinds of questions that doubters in your life have about the Christian faith. What is their view of the Christian faith?

What kind of people would we need to "snatch from the fire"? Describe the kinds of rough situations that people get themselves into that might call for intervention or urgent actions. What can we do to "save" people in these situations?

What people would we need to "show mercy, mixed with fear"? How do you show mercy mixed with fear? What's being said here?

***The Message* version of the Bible expresses Jude 1:22-23 like this:**
22-23 Go easy on those who hesitate in the faith. Go after those who take the wrong way. Be tender with sinners, but not soft on sin. The sin itself stinks to high heaven.

Does that give any insight on how to "show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh"?

Record their thoughts beneath the instructions on the board. (You may need to prompt them with a few ideas of your own.) Below are some suggestions that might help picture today the kind of people Jude was referring to.

Be merciful to those who doubt. (v. 22)
-People who have lots of questions about Christianity.
-People who want all their questions answered before they commit.

(Note: You may have students in your group who are actually struggling with some deep doubts of their own when it comes to Christ; they might even be acting like they "get it." Point out there is a reason why this passage talks about being merciful to those who doubt. It is not a sin to have questions. Sometimes this presses us to move closer to Christ. The sin comes when we use our questions as an excuse to not get to know Jesus better. Take time to answer questions about who the "doubters" are and what God thinks of them.)

Snatch others from the fire and save them. (v. 23)
-People who've walked away from the faith completely.
-Those who've rejected God.

To others, show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. (v. 23)
-People like the "certain men" in Jude, who've walked away from the faith and want to take others with them.

CROSS CHECKING

This is an exercise you can do with your group or if you would rather, send it home as an "extra" activity that students can work on at home to go deeper. If you choose to skip this exercise, move to "Taking It Inward."

Share with your students that Zechariah 3:1-7 sheds light on Jude's instructions and they'll be looking at this passage in a minute. But first, explain in your own words the setting of Zechariah. You can refer to your Prep It or share these bullet points:

- **The book of Zechariah came at a time in history when God's people had been in captivity because of their sin.**
- **Now they're returning to the Promised Land and to the Lord. As they begin rebuilding the temple and the city, they're trying to restore themselves as God's treasured people.**
- **Zechariah was a prophet. (Make sure they understand what a prophet is, and how that is different than a psychic.) He was sent to give these people hope about returning to the Lord. He had eight visions of hope, and we'll be reading the fourth one. It deals with hope for getting rid of the inner dirt the people had accumulated because of their disobedience.**
- **The priest in the vision, Joshua, represents all the people of Judah.**
- **Jude knew the Old Testament well, so he was probably thinking about this vision when he wrote his letter.**

Have your students find a place where they can get alone with God—like a corner of the room, a hallway, or an empty room nearby. Make sure they have their journal pages, Bibles, and pens. The Cross Checking exercise is printed on their journal page. Questions and possible responses are printed below for the leader's reference.

Look at verse 2. Why do you think God called him "a burning stick snatched from the fire?"
God's people were in captivity, on a course to never see the Promised Land again! God snatched them from peril.

Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. (See verse 3.) What do you think his filthy clothes represented?
Sin. The filthy clothes represented the past sins and disobedience of the people.

Why do you think the angel said "Take off his filthy clothes"? (Look at verse 4.)
God wanted to take away the sins—the filthy clothes—of the people.

Notice that when God took away Joshua's sin, he put rich garments on him. (See verses 4–5.) What does this tell you about God?
Not only are sins forgotten with God; they're replaced with something rich!

Finally, what's the big point God is getting across with this vision?
God wants to show mercy to people who've been disobedient. He wants to clean up their "dirt"—and He promises them a place of honor if they'll learn to walk in His ways.

Words from Jesus
Now read the following words from Jesus, listing anything He said about mercy. (If you read the verses right before and after these, you'll get a better feel for when and where Jesus was speaking.)

Matthew 5:7
If you're merciful, you'll be shown mercy. You'll also be blessed.

Matthew 9:13
Jesus desires mercy, not sacrifice. He came to call sinners, not the righteous.

Luke 6:35–36
We're to love our enemies and do good to them. Our Father is merciful, and we're to be merciful. He's even kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

TAKING IT INWARD

After a few minutes, call your group back together. Referring to the list of instructions you should still have on the board, discuss the following questions in light of each instruction. Add any new insights to the board.

Does Zechariah's vision help you understand Jude's instructions? In what ways?
God is ready to show mercy to those who've disobeyed Him. We may be the vessels of this mercy!

You'll want to elicit the following points about the three specific instructions:

Be merciful to those who doubt. (v. 22)
In Zechariah 3 we saw that God extends mercy to those who are in willful disobedience, as well as to those who doubt (Jude 22). We should be quick to extend mercy to doubters.

Snatch others from the fire and save them. (v. 23)
Those who've moved beyond doubt into willful disobedience can still be rescued.

To others, show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. (v. 23)
Even the worst person can receive mercy, and as Zechariah shows, the stained clothing can be replaced by rich garments.

What are some ways we don't show mercy to those who doubt or who walk away from Jesus?
-We try to win discussions or arguments.
-Avoid them.
-Bug them about it.
-Boycott them.

How do you tend to respond to a questioner or doubter of the Christian faith? Would you describe your response as "showing mercy" or something else?

Point out the chart on their journal pages entitled "Mercy Action Plan." Explain that the left column describes the stages of the faith journey Jude mentioned in his letter. Ask them to think about people in their lives who might be at each stage. They should write these (or their initials) in the right column.

(If you need to take some extra time to talk about how we interact with those who are in a different stage of faith than we are. It might be necessary to be honest about where we are in our own faith journey.)

Mercy Action Plan:

Stage of Faith	Names
Be merciful to those who doubt. *These could be people who have questions about faith in God. They may be confused and wanting all their questions answered before committing to Christ.*	
Snatch others from the fire and save them. *These could be people who've made a decision to reject the faith completely.*	
To others, show mercy, mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. *These could be people like the "certain men" in Jude, who've walked away from the faith and are trying to take others with them.*	

After a few minutes, discuss ways you could show mercy to those who doubt. Encourage your students to write down any ideas that could help them show mercy to the people they've listed. Take a few moments to let them express any concerns about the people they noted.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

For their Jude Takeaway, have your students record a thought that will challenge them to imitate the behavior God desires toward those who doubt. Close with some silent prayer for the people who've come to mind during the session.