

# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## A POSTCARD TO PHILEMON

### PHILEMON



## The Heart of the Matter

The apostle Paul wrote thirteen letters which make up a large part of the New Testament. Paul wrote his letters during the course of approximately fifteen years, between AD 52 and AD 67. About six years before his execution in Rome, Paul sent a personal note to a man in Colossae named Philemon. This little letter—more like a postcard—is the shortest of all of Paul’s writings, but don’t let its size fool you. It contains a magnificent study in forgiveness. In brief, it is a warm appeal that Philemon, a slave owner, accept back into his household a runaway slave named Onesimus, who had become a Christ follower because of Paul’s preaching. Just as Jesus Christ acts as the advocate for Christians before God, Paul acted as Onesimus’s advocate before Philemon. Paul’s letter to Philemon has great practical value for us today. It teaches us about giving others second chances, the equality that believers have in Christ, and the power of the gospel to transcend cultural and socioeconomic boundaries. In short, Paul’s postcard to Philemon reminds us about grace.



## Discovering the Way

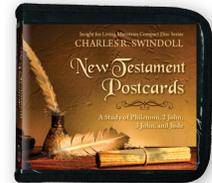
### 1. Historical Material of Slavery

In Paul’s day, about sixty million slaves lived in the Roman Empire. Slaves were considered property—like human tools in the hands of their owners. While some slave owners treated their slaves as valued parts of their families, others treated them like animals and abused them. Even some Christians owned slaves, but Paul instructed them in another letter to treat their slaves with respect and justice, unlike their pagan, slave-owning neighbors (Ephesians 6:9).

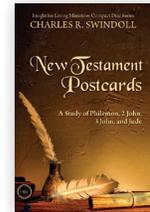
In his letter to Philemon, Paul addressed a serious conflict—Onesimus, Philemon’s former slave, had stolen from Philemon and run away to Rome. When slaves abandoned their masters, their crime was often punishable by death. While in Rome, Onesimus came to Christ through Paul’s preaching. So Paul encouraged Onesimus to go back to Philemon and make things right. Paul sent a compelling letter with Onesimus asking Philemon to receive Onesimus back, not just as a slave but as a brother in Christ.



## Tools for Digging Deeper



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### PHILEMON

## 2. Expository Study of the Letter (Philemon 1–25)

Paul's letter to Philemon follows a simple outline but contains a significant request. First, Paul greeted Philemon and the members of his family and reminded them of the grace and peace they had received through Christ. Second, Paul commended Philemon for his love for other Christians and thanked God for the joy and comfort Paul had received because of Philemon. Then, in verses 9 and 10, Paul revealed the heart of his message—Paul appealed to Philemon for Onesimus, Paul's son in the faith. Paul, an apostle with authority, could have *demand*ed that Philemon receive Onesimus and show him forgiveness. But instead, Paul *asked* Philemon to make the right choice on his own. Finally, Paul promised to repay all of Onesimus's debts, shared his desire to visit Philemon, and closed his letter.



### DOORWAY TO HISTORY

#### *The Benefits of Slavery*<sup>1</sup>

The Bible doesn't always say what we want it to say. When we stumble upon passages like Ephesians 6:5 or Colossians 3:22, which instruct slaves to obey their masters, or when we read Paul's plea to Philemon to accept and reconcile with the runaway slave Onesimus, we wonder why the Bible doesn't come straight out and condemn slavery. Look high and low throughout Scripture; you won't find a clear-cut condemnation of it anywhere. Not even the dreary description of slavery in Exodus 1 hints at moral outrage—to say nothing of a direct condemnation of the practice.

The Bible often speaks of freedom. But its concern is spiritual emancipation more than physical emancipation. This is frustrating for many modern-day believers because we view slavery in moral terms—as degrading and dehumanizing. However, the picture of slavery in the first century and in the New Testament was often quite different.

Under Roman law, masters had complete control over the lives of their slaves. While many slave owners treated their slaves brutally, others were not cruel. Besides the fact that slaves were expensive to purchase and keep, they also possessed most of the legal rights of a free citizen. Slaves in the Roman Empire had access to money, could marry and rear a family, and were tried in court according to the same laws as free men.<sup>2</sup>

Roman law did make running away an offense sometimes punishable by death. In those cases the master could register the runaway's name and description with local officials who would place him or her on a wanted list. In most cases, captured runaways were returned to their owners, who might fit the slave with a bronze collar. If the slave persisted in running away, the master might resort to branding the slave with the letter *F*, representing the word *fugitive*.

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NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS  
A POSTCARD TO PHILEMON  
PHILEMON

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Many slaves, however, chose never to run away—not because of possible punishment, but because they often fared better than free men. While many free men slept in the streets of Roman cities or in cheap rooms with their families, slaves usually lived within the homes of their masters—often in a top-floor room of the master’s city house or country villa. Slaves were also provided food and clothing and in some cases as much as “five denarii a month as spending money.”<sup>3</sup> (A denarii was the day wage of a free laborer [Matthew 20:2].) Their free counterparts who labored for a living had to live off what they earned without assistance.

For those slaves who wanted to gain their freedom and become Roman citizens, the empire during the first century freed slaves in great numbers. Some freed slaves, however, chose to remain in servitude to their masters. These were known as “bond slaves” and were identified by a ring or tag in a pierced ear (Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17).



## Starting Your Journey

So how does a first-century letter about a runaway slave relate to Christians today? Every Christian was once a fugitive who ran away from the One who bought us. Our guilt demanded a severe penalty. But God graciously provided an advocate and a substitute who paid our penalty and represents us—runaway slaves—before the Father. Because of Christ, God the Father not only accepts us, but has made us His sons and daughters.

**Are you still a runaway slave or have you been set free by Christ? Are you withholding forgiveness from anyone who has wronged you?**

### ENDNOTES

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, “Philemon,” in *Insight’s Handbook of New Testament Backgrounds: Key Customs from Each Book* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2012), 92–93.
2. Arthur A. Rupprecht, “Slave, Slavery,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, Q–Z, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1976), 459.
3. Rupprecht, “Slave, Slavery,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, Q–Z, 460.



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NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS  
A POSTCARD TO A LADY AND HER KIDS  
2 JOHN



## The Heart of the Matter

There are few words that better characterize Scripture than *balance*. Time after time we see a balanced reminder of warning and encouragement, grace and truth, doctrine and practice, dos and don'ts. This observation comes through loud and clear in the "postcard" written by the apostle John to a lady and her family. Although tiny and obscure, the second letter of John still penetrates our hearts and minds today. This postcard provides instruction in the area of discernment by reinforcing the importance of both love and truth. While commending the lady and her family for walking in the truth (2 John 4–5), John exhorted her to be on alert for deceivers and to refuse hospitality to false teachers (verses 7–11). Just as a river without the boundaries of the shorelines can become a devastating force, love without discernment can sweep away the reality of sin and the power of grace. John's letter to a lady and her children provides for us guidance as we seek to balance truth and love.



## Discovering the Way

### 1. Introductory Questions

Before we examine this letter we must answer several questions.

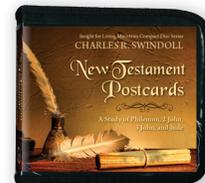
- **Who was "the elder"?** The writer of this letter calls himself "the elder" (verse 1). There's no doubt this letter came from John because it matches the style and content of his other letters. He most likely wrote all three of his three letters, the gospel that bears his name, and Revelation during his time of exile on the island of Patmos.
- **Who was "the chosen lady"?** John wrote to a well-known, chosen lady and her children, whom John and other individuals in the church loved (verse 1).
- **What was the situation?** During the first century, churches met in homes. They didn't have a complete set of New Testament Scriptures or knowledge gained by years of instruction under expository preachers. Churches depended on the training provided by itinerant evangelists. There were no reputable hotels for these traveling teachers, so Christians housed and provided for them. But some of the traveling teachers were heretical con artists who posed as true Christians. Apparently, the "chosen lady" had the gift of hospitality, but her love sometimes outweighed her discernment. John warned her not to house false teachers.



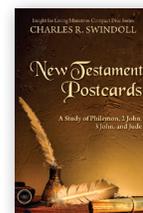
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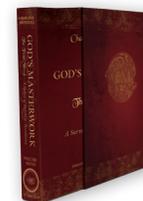
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NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS  
A POSTCARD TO A LADY AND HER KIDS  
2 JOHN

**2. Expository Investigation (2 John 1–13)**

John wanted to teach the chosen lady and her family the importance of balancing love with truth. In the introduction alone (2 John 1–4), John mentioned “truth” five times. And John commended her children for setting an example of walking in the truth (verse 4). Then in verses 5 through 13, John exhorted the lady to continue loving the saints and instructed her to give the proper kind of love. John explained that the most God-honoring love is consistent with His truth. John warned her that many deceivers had infiltrated the church, trying to sabotage it. As the chosen lady and her family sought to show hospitality to itinerant preachers, John reminded them that they must test these preachers according to the truth about Jesus Christ. And those who denied the incarnation, person, and works of Christ didn’t deserve a place in her home.



**DOORWAY TO HISTORY**

***Beware of Freeloaders and False Teachers<sup>1</sup>***

In the first century, religious teachers, political pundits, and philosophers traveled from town to town addressing large crowds who gathered to listen. Such speakers served as the primary form of mass communication, and they made their livelihood from the financial support of followers at each location. As inns were expensive and often known for immorality, these speakers also sought their followers’ hospitality for overnight accommodations.

Many of the religious speakers were in the business of tickling the ears of their audiences than in delivering doctrine because they were more interested in the tithes—the money—than in the truth. Because of this, the tradition of itinerant speakers unfortunately introduced the early church to many false teachers. With few pastors and even fewer copies of Scripture, leaders of the young churches, which often met in their homes, needed both caution and discernment. They had to be on guard so as not to be taken in by those who were more interested in financial gain than scriptural truth.

Second John is a call to wisdom from the apostle John to a woman, her family, and her fellow church members (2 John 1). This woman often provided hospitality for itinerant teachers, so John gave church members a measuring stick by which to judge visitors. If a teacher contradicted what the church had been taught about the supremacy of Jesus Christ, the host was to pull in the welcome mat (verses 9–10). Christian love and generosity must adhere to God’s Word and the truths passed down from the apostles.



NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS  
A POSTCARD TO A LADY AND HER KIDS  
2 JOHN



## Starting Your Journey

John's message has as much relevance today as it did then. As Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other cults knock on our doors seeking an audience, how must we respond? How can we best show love informed by the true doctrines of our faith? This postcard serves as a word of admonition to all of us, reminding us that love must always coexist with the truth. If we desire to walk in truth and love as Christ did, we must exercise Spirit-directed discernment.

**How will you show discerning love to the people you meet today? How will you equip yourself and your family to walk in the truth of God's Word?**

### ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, "Second John," in *Insight's Handbook of New Testament Backgrounds: Key Customs from Each Book* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2012), 111.



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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## A POSTCARD OF CANDID TRUTH

### 3 JOHN



## The Heart of the Matter

If we could only return to the days of the first-century church—a much more simple, authentic time in the church! That’s what many struggling saints think today. But the idea behind such a comment is idealism, thinking that the early churches were free from disagreement and as doctrinally pure as the driven snow. That simply was not the case. An honest look shows Corinth as a church shot through with conflict, Colossae and Galatia as churches struggling with doctrinal error, Laodicea as lukewarm in its affection for Christ, Jerusalem as struggling with financial constraints, and Thessalonica as indifferent, not to mention the hypocritical Hebrews in the days of James. But perhaps we can find the best snapshot of the situation in the first-century church in John’s third letter. We will also see a reflection of modern-day churches as we examine these fourteen verses.



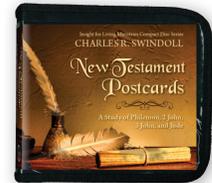
## Discovering the Way

### 1. Comparison with Second John

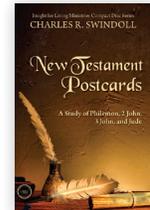
Second John	Third John
<b>To:</b> Written to a lady and her kids	<b>To:</b> Written to Gaius, whom John loved
<b>Problem:</b> The lady exercised misguided hospitality by receiving heretical teachers.	<b>Problem:</b> A man, Diotrephes, refused hospitality to true Christians.
<b>Need:</b> The lady needed God’s truth to balance her love.	<b>Need:</b> Diotrephes needed love to balance out truth.



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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## A POSTCARD OF CANDID TRUTH

### 3 JOHN

#### 2. Analysis of Third John (3 John 1–14)

John addressed his third letter to a beloved friend, Gaius. John praised Gaius for walking in truth (3 John 3), for his faithful love for the brethren, and for his generous hospitality even to strangers (verses 5–6). John reminded Gaius that itinerant preachers needed the support of Christians, who had a moral obligation to provide for these faithful workers (verses 7–8).

In the next section of his letter, John criticized Diotrephes, a man who had kept his pagan name meaning, “Zeus-reared.” Diotrephes was selfish, refused to accept John and other itinerant preachers with hospitality, and openly slandered John (verses 9–10). John promised to come and deal with this evil man.

John concluded his letter by commending Demetrius for his faithfulness to Scripture and for the good report John had heard about him from the community.



#### DOORWAY TO HISTORY

##### *Hospitality in the Ancient World<sup>1</sup>*

In the ancient world, hospitality toward a traveler was considered one of the most significant acts of service. Hospitality involved not just giving the traveler a bed for the night but also food and drink. Sharing a meal, in particular, united people in friendship as one gave from his or her own possessions to sustain the life of another. Sharing a meal also had significance in the Jewish and Christian traditions of the Bible.

We see an early biblical example in Abraham, who modeled hospitality in Genesis 18. However, the explicit reason for the Israelites to pursue hospitality came later, when the Lord commanded the people of Israel through Moses: “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:34). Hospitality, a solemn duty commanded by the Lord, reminded the Israelites where they had come from.

The New Testament continues the tradition of hospitality with John’s exhortations to his readers to provide for strangers and Christians who travel for the sake of the gospel (3 John 5–8). Paul also encouraged hospitality, as did the writer to the Hebrews. Most significantly, though, Jesus spoke of the fundamental importance of caring for those in need, including welcoming the stranger. Hospitality for others reminds believers that we, too, were once strangers, separated from God and in need of the care He provides.



# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## A POSTCARD OF CANDID TRUTH

### 3 JOHN



## Starting Your Journey

As we seek to apply this postcard to our lives, we must recognize the four threads woven through the letter. Each thread represents a biblical virtue that should mark the life of every Christian:

- **Hospitality:** Genuinely caring for others
- **Generosity:** Genuinely giving to others
- **Honesty:** Genuinely sharing with others
- **Purity:** Genuinely clean in ourselves

Do you identify most with Gaius, Diotrephes, or Demetrius? Do you freely give of your time and resources to others?

#### ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, "Third John," in *Insight's Handbook of New Testament Backgrounds: Key Customs from Each Book* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2012), 113.



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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTATES

JUDE 1–4



### The Heart of the Matter

Except for its resounding, magnificent doxology, the “postcard” of Jude is a little-known piece of New Testament literature. Those few who attempt to read and understand this book often feel puzzled and confused. Admittedly, its language and word pictures seem curiously foreign to our ears. But the first time it was read by its original audience, it probably struck like a hammer-blow on their hearts. Jude’s letter condemned the acts of those who opposed the faith and warned the faithful believers to stay strong in the midst of moral and spiritual chaos. When properly interpreted and applied, this postcard still has the same impact today. This single-chapter letter may provide the most dramatic depiction and denunciation of heresy in the entire Bible. It calls Christians to prepare for battle—to equip our hearts and minds with a deep knowledge of and commitment to the truth.



### Discovering the Way

#### 1. Introductory Facts to Remember

Before we study Jude’s postcard, we must learn about the writer, the recipients, and the theme.

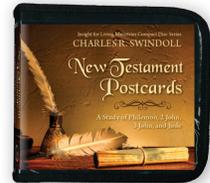
- **The Writer:** Jude, the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus, wrote this letter.
- **The Recipients:** Jude addressed his letter to Christians and probably intended the letter to be passed from church to church.
- **The Theme:** Jude recognized that heretical, immoral teachers had infiltrated the young church. So Jude wrote this postcard to prepare Christians to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3).



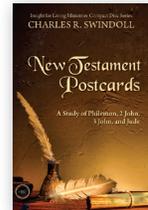
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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTATES

### JUDE 1–4

## 2. Probing Questions to Answer

Let's answer three questions about Jude's letter:

- **Why did Jude change his purpose?** While Jude wanted to encourage Christians by highlighting their salvation through Christ, Jude switched his focus because false teachers had infiltrated the church. Jude wrote his letter to prepare believers for battle (Jude 3).
- **What characterized the apostates?** Jude gave his readers several ways to recognize apostates and false teachers: they turned the grace of God into a license to sin and they rejected the deity of Jesus Christ and His authority to rule over them (verse 4).
- **How did Jude develop his theme?** In Jude 5–16, Jude called Christians to contend for the faith, and he exposed the beliefs and behaviors of the apostates. In Jude 17–23, Jude explained how Christians can fulfill their responsibility and carry out this important task.



### GETTING TO THE ROOT

#### *Agonize for the Faith*<sup>1</sup>

The word for *contend* in Jude 3, *epagonizomai*, means “to exert intense effort on behalf of something.”<sup>2</sup> If you look closely at this Greek word, you'll see the root from which we get our English word *agonize*. The Greek word often referred to the struggle between two athletes who sought the same prize. Jude pled with Christians to struggle and expend themselves as they defended doctrinal truth.



# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTATES

JUDE 1-4



### Starting Your Journey

In this lesson we have discovered the need to be equipped to stand firm against false teaching. Christians must develop the discernment to distinguish between doctrinal truth and error. As Christians, we must strengthen our knowledge through personal study. It won't always be easy, but in a time when error is flaunted as fact, we must diligently follow the way of truth.

**Do you know the central tenets of the faith? How can you grow in your knowledge of the doctrines Jesus and His apostles taught?**

#### ENDNOTES

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, *The Way of Truth in a World of Fiction: Beyond The Da Vinci Code* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2006), 22.
2. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 356.



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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## WHY BOTHER TO BATTLE?

JUDE 5-16



### The Heart of the Matter

When a man named Jude sat down one day in the first century to record some thoughts about the Christian life, he suddenly changed his mind. Instead of presenting a calm, calculated explanation of our walk with Christ, he unloaded a blistering exposé of apostasy, exhorting his readers to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Because God led Jude to change his message, today we have this postcard of helpful guidelines on how to stand firm against the tempting trends of our times. Unlike many today who tolerate heresy to keep the peace, Jude demonstrated clearly that the battle for truth demands our effort.



### Discovering the Way

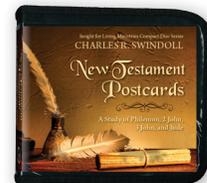
#### 1. A Brief Review (Jude 1-4)

The particular invaders who incited Jude’s anger were twisting grace into a license to sin as well as denying the person and work of Christ. This description matches a group of heresies that eventually became known as Gnosticism. Gnostics blended Christianity with Greek philosophy, Middle Eastern religions, and even Jewish mysticism. Fundamentally, they taught that our physical body is evil and our spirit is good. This led Gnostics to one of two extremes: asceticism and the denial of all bodily pleasures or immorality and the casting off of all restraints.

Apparently, false teachers who lived in wickedness had infiltrated the church, claiming that their righteousness in Christ freed them to do as they pleased. They also taught strange doctrines about Christ, denying His humanity and assuming that He had merely a ghost-like appearance.



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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## WHY BOTHER TO BATTLE?

JUDE 5–16

### 2. A Bold Reminder (Jude 5–16)

Believers in the true Christ who study true Scripture and fellowship in a true church already have the infallible sources of true knowledge and wisdom. Knowing this, Jude provided four essential reasons to join in the fight for the true faith.

- First, we know that heretics face certain doom.
- Second, false teachers blaspheme.
- Third, the religion of the apostates is empty.
- Fourth, heretics live godless lives and seek to spread their evil ways among others.



#### DOORWAY TO HISTORY

##### *Early Contenders*<sup>1</sup>

Those who earnestly contend for the faith today stand in a long line of saints who have fought for the central truths of Christianity against false teachers and bloodthirsty tyrants.

**Ignatius of Antioch** (*martyred c. AD 110*) While on his way to martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote seven letters to various churches. He challenged the false teachings of the Judaizers who denied grace and docetists who denied the incarnation of Christ. He called for unity in the church around the doctrine of Christ and the essentials of the gospel.

**Polycarp of Smyrna** (*martyred c. AD 155*) A friend of Ignatius and student of the apostle John, Polycarp was a long-time pastor of Smyrna. He battled heretics and advanced the gospel of Christ, eventually suffering martyrdom in his eighties.

*Continued on next page*



# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

## WHY BOTHER TO BATTLE?

JUDE 5–16

*Continued from previous page*

**Justin Martyr** (*martyred c. AD 165*) Justin was a convert to Christianity from Greek philosophy. He wrote several defenses of Christianity against both pagans and Jews, and he combated Gnostics and other false religions. As his name indicates, Justin was ultimately martyred for his faith at the hands of the Romans.

**Irenaeus of Lyons** (*martyred c. AD 200*) Originally from Asia Minor, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp. Irenaeus lived in Rome before serving as a pastor in Lyons (modern-day France). There he wrote the massive, five-book *Against All Heresies*, in which he demonstrated the true Christian faith and identified the errors of the heretical groups of his day, especially the Gnostics.



### Starting Your Journey

Jude wanted to instill in his audience a sense of righteous anger against the apostates. But if we're not careful, righteous indignation can boil over into uncontrolled hostility. We must prepare ourselves to stand up for truth and rely on the Holy Spirit to help us exercise control.

**Do you know where you stand doctrinally? Are you ready to challenge the apostates you will come in contact with?**

#### ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, *The Way of Truth in a World of Fiction: Beyond The Da Vinci Code* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2006), 43–44.



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# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER!

JUDE 17–25



## The Heart of the Matter

A battle against heresy has raged on and on for centuries with monotonous regularity and increasing intensity. The church was still in its infancy when the battle began. Jude exposed the false prophets who twisted the teaching of grace and resisted the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude also exhorted his readers to stay on target themselves, to get their act together, and to stand firm in the faith against all opposition. His message remains the same for us today as we stand for unchanging truth in a world of fiction.



## Discovering the Way

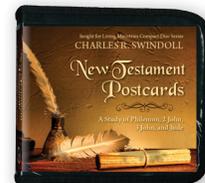
### 1. A Serious Situation

Jude worried that his readers might become spiritual casualties in the battle for good doctrine and right living—and for good reason. Those who received Jude’s letter had already been enduring physical oppression from the Romans, who, at the time, were stepping up their persecution. Now they had to weather the insidious assaults of the apostates. Jude fervently pleaded with his audience, exhorting them to fight for their beliefs.

Although the circumstances have changed since the first century, the broader issue remains very serious. Many enemies of Christ today lurk outside and inside the church, waiting to assail our faith. That’s why, once we’ve girded ourselves with a protective fortress of truth, we must take action to protect other believers around us.



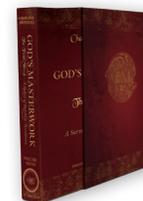
## Tools for Digging Deeper



**New Testament Postcards: A Study of Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude**  
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GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER!

JUDE 17–25

## 2. An Essential Strategy (Jude 17–23)

As Jude concluded his hard-hitting letter, he issued at least four commands to the troops in Jesus Christ's army:

- Remember your training (Jude 17–19).
- Keep in spiritual shape (verses 20–21).
- Have mercy on the war-torn (verse 22).
- Save the defectors (verse 23).



### DIGGING DEEPER

*The Center of Theology*<sup>1</sup>

Christians from the earliest days of the church to the present day have held to the following core doctrines of the faith: the infallibility of Scripture as the final authority in faith and practice; one eternal, triune God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the absolute deity and perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, and literal, future return; the special creation and fall of humanity; salvation by grace through faith; and the eternal life of believers and condemnation of unbelievers. Those who have strayed far from this center of orthodoxy have been regarded as outside of the true Christian faith.

Some liberal theologians and critical scholars want to advocate further diversity in Christianity by including teachings that deny the essential truths of historic Christianity—the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3). These teachers, bent on pluralism and relativism, deliberately emphasize a so-called “radical diversity” in the early centuries of Christianity and the dozens of false views about Christ. They want us to embrace as brothers and sisters the varieties of “Christianity” that have no part in the central truths of the faith. However, true Christians today must stand with the faithful saints of old who fought against heresy rather than tolerated or embraced it.



# NEW TESTAMENT POSTCARDS

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER!

JUDE 17–25



## Starting Your Journey

Jude's closing benediction communicated God's protection during the present and future battles (Jude 24–25). With stirring rhetoric, he called out to the troops who were engaged in spiritual warfare. Jude reminded his readers, and believers today, that we can only stand confidently before God because Christ has already secured our victory. Now we must remember that we bear the responsibility of supporting the faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must intervene when they are in danger of drowning in a sea of deception.

**Have you been motivated to help others who may have been led astray by Satan's sweet-sounding propaganda? Has God placed somebody in your path who needs your spiritual reinforcement?**

### ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, *The Way of Truth in a World of Fiction: Beyond The Da Vinci Code* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2006), 28–29.



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