

James, Peter, and Jude will be our guides in this new study on growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. They have a lot to teach us about God, ourselves, and life the way it was meant to be, but our first lesson focuses on the messengers themselves. Let's pay careful attention to the way these New Testament letters begin.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...

(1 Pet 1:1)

Near the end of his first letter, Peter doesn't just write as someone whose own life has been completely changed by Jesus. He clearly believes that Jesus can change *anyone's* life.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Pet 5:10)

He begins his second letter in a very similar way:

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence... (2 Pet 1:1-3)

But Peter didn't always talk like that. In fact, there was a time he struggled to even believe this good news could apply to him. Let's read about it together in **Luke 5:1-11**.

Peter isn't the only one whose life was completely changed by Jesus. Notice how both James and Jude introduce their letters...

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ... (James 1:1)

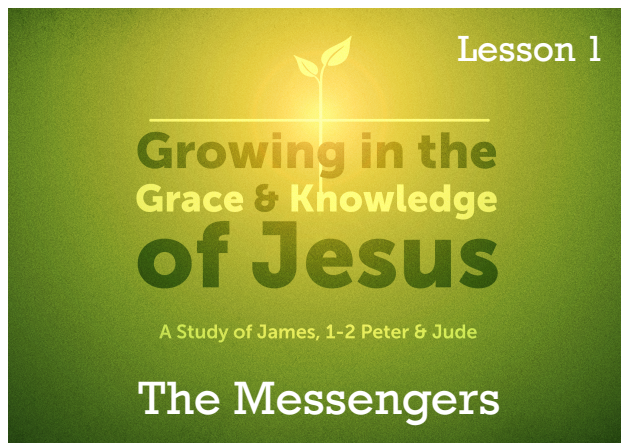
Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ... (Jude 1)

But James and Jude didn't always describe themselves like that. They were well-known in their hometown of Nazareth (Matt 13:53-57). Their father was a carpenter. Their mother's name was Mary. In fact, they were half-brothers of Jesus, and for a while, they didn't believe him (John 7:5). But their lives were completely changed by the gospel.

God used these men as messengers to share for all time this incredible calling:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pet 3:18)



For Class & Family Discussion:

- What is an apostle? How does [Mark 3:13-15](#) help us understand what that description meant? Can you name all twelve?
- Let's take another look at [1 Peter 5:10](#). In your own words, how does Peter believe "[the God of all grace](#)" can change your life for the better?
- If that's going to happen, what sort of attitude must I have according to [1 Peter 5:11](#)? In everyday terms, what does that mean?
- [2 Peter 1:1](#) sounds like it contains some incredibly good news. What do you think that news is?
- We hear "[knowledge](#)" highlighted in [2 Peter 1:2-3](#). What is this "[knowledge](#)" and what difference does it make? Why do I need it if I'm going to develop my own relationship with Jesus?
- What stands out to you about that scene we read in [Luke 5:1-11](#)?
- Why is it truly significant that James and Jude would both describe themselves as "[servants of Jesus Christ](#)" in the introductions of their letters?
- What did it take to convince them to believe in Jesus?
- Let's take a closer look at the conclusion of Jude's letter ([24-25](#)). What does Jude believe... about God? About you? About life the way it was meant to be?
- In your own words, what's it going to mean to "[grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ](#)" ([2 Pet 3:18](#)). Why should that be my greatest goal in life?