

Unit I: Faith-FULL versus Faith-LESS

Build Yourself Up

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jude

PRINT PASSAGE: Jude 17-25

KEY VERSES

Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 20-21, KJV)

.....

You, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 20-21, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Discern the factors that create tension when Christian values clash with societal values.
- Experience deeper trust in God's promise to restore you when you fall.
- Build faithful practices that reflect God's restorative work in us.

*Key Terms

Mercy (verse 21)—Greek: *eleos* (el'-eh-os): pity; understanding; compassion.

Scoffers (verse 18)—Greek: *empaiktés* (emp-aheek-tace'): "mockers" (KJV), by implication, false teachers; deriders.

Ungodly (verse 18)—Greek: *asebeia* (as-eb'-i-ah): lacking respect, piety, reverence; being wicked.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

As children mature chronologically, they become "open game" for "peer pressure." Peer pressure is a mechanism of social conformity that pressures people to think or behave according to what the peer group determines. Peer pressure is most commonly found in youth between the ages of twelve and nineteen years old. The causes of succumbing to peer pressure include the need to fit in, low self-esteem, fear of rejection, and often, the need for safety and security. The results of succumbing to peer pressure include unhealthy social, physical, and emotional behaviors like hurting others, drug and alcohol use, criminal activity, depression, and



The Biblical Context

The epistle of Jude, “Judah” in Hebrew, was named for its author, one of Jesus’ half-brothers. Although Jude and Jesus’ other half-brothers initially rejected His messiahship, they were believed to be converted sometime after His resurrection. The epistle was written during a period of severe political opposition against Christianity from Roman authorities and a gnostic-like apostate group that sowed damaging doctrinal error. This latter group was likely one of the forerunners of Gnosticism, later confronted by the apostle John, because all the other apostles, except John, had been martyred. By the time Jude penned this epistle, most of the apostles had been martyred, and the Christian movement was considered especially vulnerable to erroneous doctrine. Consequently, Jude’s challenge was to defend the truth amid an intense spiritual attack. He wrote to condemn apostates and to motivate believers to strive and persevere for the faith. His is the only New Testament book that exclusively addresses defection from the true biblical faith. Jude’s writing urged the church to exercise discernment and strenuously defend biblical truth.

eating disorders. Believers can fall prey to or be tempted to give in to peer pressure within and without the faith community. To prevent “causing conflict” or being ostracized, some believers remain silent when they should speak out against situations and practices contrary to God’s Word. Still others, like Peter, will deny verbally or behaviorally that they are Christ’s followers to save face or preserve their perceived social status. Early Christians faced peer pressure to compromise their faith by apostates who infiltrated their ranks and spread doctrinal errors. The attractive temptation to concede and adopt the apostates’ gnostic-like teachings was the basis of Jude’s urgent call for believers to contend for the faith and remain true to their Christian values and beliefs.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Remember What You Were Taught (Jude 17-19)

KJV

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;
18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

NIV

17 But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.
18 They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”
19 These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

The preceding verses in Jude’s letter identified the apostates—those infiltrating the church with false teaching. The Print Passage, verses 17-25, provides guidelines to help believers avoid falling into error and compromising the faith. Jude begins by encouraging his audience to remember what the apostles had taught, warned, and foretold about scoffers (**verses 17-18a**; see Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:3-4). Although the other apostles were martyred (with the exception of John), Jude stressed that the saints must hold firmly to apostolic teaching, neither forgetting nor abandoning what they had learned. Jude describes apostates as ridiculers of the faith, walking after their own desires and creating division among the faith community—worldly and unsaved (**verses 18b-19**). Jude’s instructions to the early faith community regarding the importance of remembering the apostle’s teaching is relevant today. Being taught God’s Word, remembering it, and understanding and applying it are vital to defending God’s truth without compromising. Regrettably, the vital ministry requires God’s people to prepare to contend for the faith effectively, with the

most significant percentage of professing Christians failing or refusing to engage. It is impossible to defend what we don't know. Therefore, the church must promote correct biblical teaching and elevate it to priority status among its members.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should participation in the church's teaching ministry (e.g., Bible study, Sunday school, etc.) become a requirement? Why or why not?

Pay Attention to Yourselves and Others (*Jude 20-23*)

KJV

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:
23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

NIV

20 But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,
21 keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
22 Be merciful to those who doubt;
23 save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

In addition to remembering what the apostles taught about apostates, Jude encouraged his readers to pay attention to themselves spiritually to defend the faith effectively. First, Jude advises that the best way to remain strong in the struggle against apostates is their building themselves up by progressing in the knowledge of the faith and its object, Jesus Christ (**verse 20a**). Defending the faith then and now begins with growing in the knowledge and application of Scripture. Second, Jude recommends praying in the Holy Spirit (**verse 20b**). Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in God's power from a heart that God has enlightened and filled. It is paradoxical to think that we can correctly defend what we don't know and can't know; spending time in God's Word is not optional. Third, Jude teaches that remaining strong in the face of open opposition to faith requires staying focused on God's love and obeying His will (**verse 21a**). Abiding in God's love requires obedience to His commandments. Focusing on that love motivates us to be obedient, thus insulating us against succumbing to false teaching while waiting for the Lord's return and fulfilling His mercy (**verse 21b**). Jude further encouraged these believers to watch out for others—those wavering with uncertainty about the faith, the unsaved, and those experiencing doubt about the truth (**verse 22**). Christ has shown mercy instead of judgment toward believers. Therefore, Jude exhorts the strong to extend mercy to those wavering between the truth and the apostates' false teaching. Finally, in **verse 23**, Jude encourages believers to reach out to the unsaved and snatch them from hell's "eternal fire," while cautiously showing mercy toward the morally corrupt to prevent being contaminated by their immorality. Jude's practical action plan for recognizing, resisting, and defending the faith is still relevant. Each believer must make their priority be to mature spiritually by internalizing God's Word,

demonstrating His love through obedience, showing compassion for the weak, and being in the world as God's witnesses.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In this context, why is progressive spirituality a necessity?

Victory in Jesus (*Jude 24-25*)

KJV

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

NIV

24 To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

The hymn “Victory in Jesus” proclaims that the Christian’s victory is in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jude climaxes his letter with this truth in mind. **Verse 24** emphasizes that believers are on the winning side eternally and in the fight against apostasy. Apostates can’t destroy our faith or eliminate us from the Christian race—because believers are eternally secure in Christ (see John 10:28). Hence, since we are His, God has the power to keep us upright and present us faultless to Himself. For Jude’s audience, then and now, the prospect of being presented faultless in heaven is encouragement and motivation to persevere and continue in the faith. **Verse 25** concludes with a crescendo of praise to God. First, Jude acknowledges Him as the only God and our Savior. Jude reminds us that only one God can save all who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. Next, Jude ascribes to God inestimable worth (glory), sovereign rule (majesty), and complete authority. Jude’s description and acknowledgment of God’s attributes and praise to Him as the only true God is the basis for believers’ overcoming victory over false teaching and any opposition to our faith in Him. Jude is so convinced of this truth that he ends his letter with one word: “Amen” (so be it).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Using verses 24-25, how would you encourage a believer to persevere in the faith?

A Closing Thought

Jude's focus in this letter is relevant to the twenty-first-century faith community. There are multiple "apostate-isms," non-biblical doctrines, and practices designed to lure believers from the faith. Therefore, the church must apply Jude's practical strategies for equipping believers to effectively contend for the faith by doing the following: intentionally applying God's Word; drawing closer to God; praying in the Spirit; focusing on God's love; waiting expectantly for Christ's return; showing mercy to doubting believers; snatching unbelievers from condemnation; and cautiously showing compassion toward the morally corrupt.

Your Life

Reflect on your current ability and preparation to discern false teaching, confront it, and help others protect themselves from its adverse effects. Next, identify in the Print Passage the six commands that Jude gave as practical strategies to help believers contend for the faith. Then, select one to begin maturing in and applying to your faith walk with God.

Your World!

What are the cultural or societal lifestyles that have a harmful impact on the faith community in your locale by instigating division and confusion? As you and your study group respond to this question, consider how Jude's cautions and instruction in this lesson can be used to address them. Then, suggest how applying one or more of them to your environment can strengthen your congregation's witness and encourage weaker believers to persevere.



Closing Prayer

Dear God, as we strive to grow our faith to face the challenges of false teaching, we humbly entrust ourselves to Your love and infinite power to strengthen and sustain us for Your glory and honor. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

As you prepare for next week's lesson, consider your response to this question: "How and where do we find the courage to live authentically, keeping true to our ideals?" Read 2 Corinthians 13:5-11.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, March 4	"The Testing of Faith Produces Endurance"	(James 1:2-12)
TUESDAY, March 5	"The Sources of Temptations"	(James 1:13-18)
WEDNESDAY, March 6	"God Has Searched and Known Us"	(Psalm 139:1-12)
THURSDAY, March 7	"God Knows All Things"	(Psalm 139:13-18, 23-24)
FRIDAY, March 8	"God's People Boast in Weakness"	(2 Corinthians 11:22-33)
SATURDAY, March 9	"Strength through Christ Alone"	(2 Corinthians 12:1-10)
SUNDAY, March 10	"Live by Christ's Power in You"	(2 Corinthians 13:1-10)