

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE WEEK

51 • DISCERNMENT

Discernment

DISCERNMENT TO REMAIN

STEADFAST IN FAITH

Focal Verses • JUDE 1:3–4, 8, 10, 12–13, 16–23

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson we will: **IDENTIFY** the characteristics of steadfastness; **RECOGNIZE** that our choices have eternal consequences; and **COMMIT** to living faithful lives for Jesus Christ.

In Focus

Trey is on the honor roll at the University of Pittsburgh, with a 3.5 grade point average. Upon graduation, he hopes to get a job as a marketing

consultant at one of Wall Street's most prestigious brokerage houses.



Two months before graduation, Trey was excited to get an interview with a group of executives from a large brokerage firm. After a few minutes of informal chatter, the Vice-President asked Trey some tough questions. He seemed to handle himself quite well, and the CEO was impressed with Trey's level of maturity. Just before the interview ended, Trey had to answer one more very important question. The CEO lowered his voice so no one else could hear him. "Suppose you were asked to sign off on a deal that could net you and the firm several million dollars, even though there might be a

chance that ‘red flags’ are raised by the Securities and Exchange Commission later on down the line. Would you be willing to take the chance?”

Trey examined the CEO’s face. He could discern that the answer to this question would determine his future with the firm. Before he answered, he cleared his throat. “Well, sir, I wouldn’t do it no matter what the net gain may be. You see, I’m a Christian, and my convictions would not allow me to cross any unethical line despite how it may benefit me.”

Trey never heard back from the company, but he was convinced that he had given the executive the right answer.

Like Trey, we, too, may face the temptation to circumvent the truth for our personal gain. In Christ, we are reminded to do what’s right at all times is the best.

In this lesson, we will see how the Apostle Jude affirms godly principles to believers struggling to maintain their commitment to God in a dark and sin-filled world. How do you discern what godly principles are essential to follow in today's cultural climate?

Keep in Mind

“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference”
(Jude 1:21–22, KJV).



“And await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God’s love. And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering” (Jude 1:21–22, NLT).

KJV Jude 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Jude 1:16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

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.

NLT Jude 1:3 Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people.

4 I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:8 In the same way, these people—who claim authority from their dreams—live immoral lives, defy

authority, and scoff at supernatural beings.

10 But these people scoff at things they do not understand. Like unthinking animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and so they bring about their own destruction.

12 When these people eat with you in your fellowship meals commemorating the Lord's love, they are like dangerous reefs that can shipwreck you. They are like shameless shepherds who care only for themselves. They are like clouds blowing over the land without giving any rain. They are like trees in autumn that are doubly dead, for they bear no fruit and have been pulled up by the roots.

13 They are like wild waves of the sea, churning up the foam of their shameful deeds. They are like wandering stars, doomed forever to blackest darkness.

Jude 1:16 These people are grumblers and complainers, living only to satisfy their desires. They brag loudly about themselves, and they flatter others to get what they want.

17 But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted.

18 They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires.

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.

19 These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them.

20 But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit,

21 and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

22 And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.

23 Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.

The People, Places, and Times

The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity and is referred to by Jesus as "another

Comforter” (John 14:16). According to Scripture, the Holy Spirit is not a “force” or a “thing.” He has several attributes that prove He is real.

The Holy Spirit is intelligent (1 Corinthians 2:10–11); He has feelings (Ephesians 4:30) and a will (2 Corinthians 12:11). The Holy Spirit’s work attests to His validity. He teaches people (John 14:26), He guides us (Romans 8:14), He commissions believers to work for God (Acts 13:4), He intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:26), and He speaks to us (John 15:26; 2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit can be obeyed (Acts 10:19–21), He can be lied to (Acts 5:3), He can be resisted (Acts 7:51), He can be blasphemed against (Matthew 12:31), and He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit’s work in the life of Christ is also ample evidence of His nature. In Jesus’ virgin birth, the Holy Spirit caused Christ’s conception

in Mary's womb (Luke 1:35). Jesus was anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), He was filled with and led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1), and He was empowered by the Spirit (Matthew 12:28).

Finally, the Holy Spirit is actively at work in the life of a believer at the time of his or her salvation. The Holy Spirit convicts people of their need for a Saviour (John 16:8–11); He regenerates (Titus 3:5); gives people a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), and indwells people (1 Corinthians 6:19), empowering them with the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11). Other ministries of the Holy Spirit include teaching (John 16:12–15); guiding (Romans 8:14); assuring (Romans 8:16); and praying for God's children (Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18).

Background

Jude is considered by most scholars to be the brother of James and the half brother of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Although very little is known about him or about those to whom he was writing the epistle bearing his name, it is clear that Jude faced the same kinds of problems in writing to the churches as did the Apostles Paul and Peter.

Jude’s purpose for sharing his heart was to combat the false teachings that had made tremendous inroads into the first-century Church. Like Peter and Paul, Jude understood that Gnosticism was a dangerous heresy that had to be stamped out if the people were to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

At-A-Glance

1. Be on Guard Against False Teachers
(Jude 1:3–4, 8, 10)
2. Recognize Their Shameless Deeds
(vv. 12–13, 16–19)
3. Commit Yourself to Maintaining
Godly Faith (vv. 20–23)

In Depth

1. Be on Guard Against False Teachers (Jude 1:3–4, 8, 10)

Jude begins his letter by sharing his purpose in writing to these believers. We are not given their identity, but it is obvious that Jude is concerned about their spiritual health. The apostle is very aware that these believers were being influenced by people who taught a doctrine completely foreign to the truth. Therefore, it was necessary for him to share with them about the “common salvation” (v. 3).

The idea the apostle is conveying is that this salvation is open for all to see. Unlike Gnosticism, which taught that only the enlightened ones were privy to its pure revelation, God’s salvation is for everyone. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Jude declares that it was necessary for him to write to these believers and encourage them, in the midst of the heretical teaching that was infiltrating the church, to stand up and fight for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jude affirms that the believer must resist, at all costs, any forms of heresy that may come into the church and cause people to turn away from the truth.

God gave the apostles the doctrine of grace and redemption found only in the blood of Jesus Christ and His efficacious work on the cross. This “faith” has stood the test of time. Therefore, we must be careful that we don’t allow any new “wave” of teaching that is not in line with the Word of God to creep into our churches. The Word that God gave the believers in the first century is the same Word we must contend for today.

The apostle tells us why it is necessary that we remain steadfast to

God's Word. Jude recognized that in the midst of the church, ungodly men had come in to turn God's grace into a license to live any way that people pleased. The word that Jude used is "lasciviousness" (v. 4) which, in the Greek language, means a readiness for pleasure without any restraints; doing and thinking anything imaginable.

Jude describes these false teachers as ungodly persons who have no fear of or reverence toward God. The apostle says that these people are "dreamers [who] defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries" (v. 8, NKJV). One of the main characteristics of false teachers is that their lives are marked by ungodliness. Because their spirits are "polluted," false teachers usually have "dreams and visions" that are not from God. Yet, their goal is to convince the unlearned that they have a "word" from the Lord.

Second, the ungodly not only defile their own flesh, but they also pollute the body of Christ with their damnable heresy. Gnostics taught that it was all right to indulge in fleshly behavior as long as the spirit was developing in godlike fashion. How deceived can people be? Scripture affirms that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. God is just as concerned with our having a clean “temple” as He is with our having an undefiled spirit.

Third, these false teachers encouraged rebellion against constituted authority. The Bible tells us that all authority comes from God whether we like it or not. It is not our responsibility to attempt to overthrow authority in the church, home, or society. True believers are called to pray for those in authority. Those who are false teachers are anarchists. They believe in overthrowing all authority

and all constraints so that they can live any way they please.

Jude warns the believers how to spot these heretics. First, they speak evil only of what they don't know. The Bible tells us that life and death are in the power of the tongue and that we will eat the fruit of whatever we speak. That's why it is important to pray about those persons and things we are not clear on rather than to criticize with our mouths. In addition, we don't want to become "gossip mongers" who tear down the church, the pastor, and other leaders.

Second, Jude says you can spot these people like "brute beasts"—they even corrupt themselves in things that they know. One leader puts it this way: "We can be 100% right and yet 100% wrong by the way we talk about others." Jude uses this term to describe how depraved these false teachers are

and how far they have strayed away from the truth.

2. Recognize Their Shameless Deeds (vv. 12–13, 16–19)

Jude does not mince words when it comes to identifying the corrupt and ungodly. He knew he had a responsibility to make sure that the people he served did not get “hoodwinked” by their influence. Jude affirms that one way to recognize these men is by their coming into the fellowship meal and causing dissension among believers.

The love feast was a time when believers would come together to share a meal and the Lord’s Supper and fellowship with one another (see 1 Corinthians 11:17–34). For Jude, these corrupt men were nothing more than “spots in your [the] feasts of charity [love]” (v. 12). These men probably corrupted the celebration

with their pride, arrogance, rebellion, and sin. Perhaps they shared some words with the people, confusing some and challenging others. Thus, it was necessary for Jude to characterize these heretics in the following ways:

“Clouds...without water, carried about of winds” (v. 12). These false teachers are a nuisance to the growth and development of God’s church because they don’t produce anything except disciples who are false like themselves.

“Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots” (v. 12). On one occasion when Jesus was hungry, He noticed a fig tree that had no fruit. Jesus spoke a curse upon the tree so that it would never produce again. Like that fig tree, false teachers may look good, but upon close inspection they are no different than a tree that hasn’t produced any fruit except that which is rotten and

tasteless. The only “fruit” a false teacher produces is that which has no appeal for the true believer. Why? Like a tree whose root system is rotten, a false teacher must be plucked up before he destroys everyone he touches.

“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame” (v. 13). Here, Jude compares the false teacher to the sea or ocean whose waves can be dangerous to the shoreline and to homes built nearby if it gets out of control. In like manner, when a false teacher gets out of control there is no telling what he or she may destroy. How many people’s lives have been destroyed by false teachers who espouse their damnable heresies? Like structures falling into the sea at the force of the ocean’s waves, so, too, do people fall under their destructive force.

“Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (v. 13). Jude makes it clear that

false teachers are no different than the angelic hosts that fell from God's grace and became demons who gave their allegiance to Satan. Unless they repent, false teachers will forever be in darkness and away from our Lord.

For Jude, false teachers are not to be given any consideration whatsoever. They are dangerous, and their sole purpose is to enslave God's people to their pernicious ways. Their characteristics include murmuring, complaining, and being lustful, arrogant, and prideful—all works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21). Jude affirms how important it is that we do not listen to these heretics.

3. Commit Yourself to Maintaining Godly Faith (vv. 20–23)

Jude would have ended his letter on a negative note if all he did was point out the ungodly. However, the apostle also wants to encourage the people

to maintain steadfastness even in the midst of an ungodly society.

First, the believers are called to “build [themselves] up” in the faith that has been given to them by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Like body-builders who spend hours exercising and flexing their muscles so they can stay in shape, believers are called to spend hours in God’s Word, exercising their spiritual “muscles” and increasing their stamina for the truth so we won’t be tossed about by every wind of doctrine that comes our way.

Second, Jude tells us that we must pray in the Holy Ghost (v. 21). The Bible tells us that we don’t know how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit prays through (and for) us with words and sounds that cannot be discerned by the human spirit. There are times when we don’t know what to say, or when mere words are inadequate. That’s why we must be filled with the Holy Spirit and

allow Him to bring our petitions before the Father. He knows our needs better than we do, and He is always willing to help us reach the throne of grace.

Third, we must “keep [ourselves] in the love of God.” Jude affirms that as believers, we have the responsibility to keep our bodies under subjection to the Father so that we don’t allow the flesh to dominate our lives. God has given us the commandment to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Jude says a believer must diligently seek after the grace of the Lord God that leads us to salvation and eternal life and away from a life of sin. As we continually seek after the Lord and walk as He commands, we can discern the truth and help those who are caught up in the web of deception that is too prevalent even in the church today.

The love of God gives us compassion to minister to those who are bound in a

life of sin so that we can “pull them out of the fire” of false doctrine. While we can never join them in their pernicious ways, we should be willing to do all we can to bring people to the knowledge of the truth, even if we have to expose their sins.

Jude understood that heresy was a dangerous cancer that must be rooted out of the church of Jesus Christ if we are to maintain steadfast faith in Christ. Let us recognize this truth and do what we can to keep heresy out of our fellowships as well.

Search the Scriptures

1. How did Jude describe God’s Word? (Jude 1:3)

2. Who had turned God’s Word into a license to sin? (v. 4)

3. What are some of the characteristics Jude attributes to these false teachers? (vv. 8, 12–13, 16)

4. How does Jude tell us to combat false teachers? (v. 20)

5. What is our responsibility to those who may be affected by false teachers? (v. 23)

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why is it necessary that we build ourselves up on faith?

2. How do we pray in the Holy Ghost?

3. Is it our responsibility to help people who are caught in a web of deception? Why or why not?

4. How can we spot false teachers? Explain.

Liberating Lesson

The African American community is besieged by so many “voices” claiming to speak for us. Some of these “voices” may be deceiving since they are not all speaking the truth. How can we discern who is speaking on our behalf and who

is not? What can we do to alert others so that they won't fall under the spell of "charismatic" leaders who may not have our best interests at heart?

Application for Activation

This week, ask God to give you a discerning ear so that you will know how to hear the truth. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in emotions and swayed from the foundations of biblical truth. Spend time in God's Word and in prayer so that you will be able to train your spirit to know when someone is speaking the truth.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Jude 1:3–4, 8, 10, 12–13, 16–23

The Book of Jude addresses the danger posed by the secret infiltration of heretics among Jude's readers. In his letter, he gives a vivid description of the apostate, calls the Christians to arms, and admonishes them on how to remain steadfast in faith in spite of circumstances. Jude makes an urgent, passionate appeal that carries a note of duty and reveals a sense of danger. Both the sense of duty and the presence of danger are as relevant today as in Jude's day.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common

salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

The Greek word *agapetoi* (ah-gah-pay-TOY), which means “beloved, dear, prized, or valued,” reflects the love, warmth, and intimacy existing between Jude and his readers and which should exist in the Christian community (cf. v.12). His affection for them makes his appeal more compelling. For Jude, the term “beloved” carried both personal and theological overtones.

A keen sense of duty pervades this verse, on the part of both the writer and the reader. The Greek word *spoude* (spoo-DAIN), meaning “diligence,” demonstrates Jude’s commitment to his original intention to write about “the common salvation” The Greek word *ananke* (ah-NAG-kay), meaning “necessity, obligation, or compulsion,”

further betrays Jude's sense of duty that called for a change of subject to one he considered more urgent and threatening.

Both Jude and his purpose for writing call for a similar sense of duty on the part of his readers. Their appeal is indeed "a call to arms." The Greek word *parakaleo* (pah-rah-kah-LEH-oh) means "to exhort, to appeal, to encourage, to urge strongly, or to comfort." Jude's appeal is expressed by a Greek word that appears only here in the entire New Testament: *epagonizomai* (epp-ah-go-NIHZ-zoh-my). The word means "to contend about a thing," as a combatant or with the fierce competition of an athlete. Of course, the nature of the contention is to fight and to defend; it is spiritual, ethical (moral), and doctrinal rather than natural or physical (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

The focus of the contention is the Christian faith. The Greek word *pistis* (**PIS**-tiss) or “faith” implies the sum of that which Christians believe: faith *which is believed*, not faith *by which we believed*. Faith embraces all that Christians believe, teach, and confess. The Greek word *paradidomi* (pah-rah-**DIH**-doh-me), which means “to entrust or to deliver,” indicates that the faith has been handed over to the saints like a baton in a relay race or like a treasure to be kept from corruption and decay.

Furthermore, the Greek word *hapax* (**HA**-pox), meaning “once for all,” shows that the core teaching of the Christian faith is fixed, requiring no innovations. Better and clearer understanding of the Word of God is possible, but the Word must neither be added to nor taken away from (cf. Galatians 1:6–9; Revelation 22:18–19).

Jude’s purpose for writing was to make an earnest appeal for Christians

to fight earnestly against enemies of faith and to build themselves up in the faith.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

While the preceding verse indicates a sense of duty, this verse sounds a note of danger. The danger is the more perilous—it comes from within the church. The Greek word *pareisedusan* (pah-ray-seh-DOO-a-sahn), translated as “crept in unawares,” indicates the secret and subtle infiltration of the church by the heretics (cf. Genesis 3:1; Galatians 2:4) of whom Jude makes preliminary descriptions.

First, their judgment (*krima*, KRIH-mahor), meaning “condemnation,” had

been ordained. Everyone outside of Christ ,is under condemnation that can only be reversed by acceptance of Christ (John 3:36; cf. 2 Peter 2:1–3). Second, the Greek words *asebes* (ah-seh-BACE) meaning “ungodly or irreverent,” and *aselgeia* (ah-SELL-hay-ahn), meaning “licentiousness or a debauchery,” describe their moral perversion. Third, they denied the lordship of Christ. Here Jude speaks of the deceptiveness of the apostates (entering stealthily), their distortions (moral perversions), their denials (of Christ), and their doom (condemnation).

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Both the speech and the character of the deceivers are mentioned here: they are dreamers who defile, despise, and speak evil. The Greek

word *enupniazomai* (n-noop-nee-AH-zoh-my), which means “to dream,” is negatively used here, indicating that the deceivers, like their Old Testament counterparts (false prophets and apostates), were out of touch with the truth and reality. The Greek word *miaino* (me-I-no), meaning “to defile,” shows that they were also morally stained by immorality. Furthermore, they were insubordinate: they deliberately rejected any form of established authority that hindered their impulses. They also manifested gross perversion of speech. The Greek word *blasphemeo* (blahs-fay-MEH-oh), meaning “to insult, to blaspheme, or to slander,” underscores their crass perversion of speech against celestial beings.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute

beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

The sinful speech of the ungodly deceivers is further emphasized. They “pour abuse upon” (NEB) spiritual beings about which they were ignorant (cf. 2 Peter 2:12). Second, the deceivers were enslaved by their animalistic instincts.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Further descriptions of the character of the apostates are stated by the use of metaphors drawn from nature. The Greek word *spilades* (spih-LAH-dess), meaning “blemishes,” also means hidden rocks involving unsuspected peril of shipwreck of faith and

character. The deceivers attended the Christians' common meals or *agapais*, (Gk. ah-GAH-pice), which means "love feasts," turning them into times of revelry and promotion of gluttony and immorality (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17–22). They were shepherds who fed only themselves (cf. Ezekiel 34:8–10).

Like clouds without a drop of satisfying, refreshing rain, the deceivers promised what they could not produce for those who followed them truth, spiritual nurture, and enrichment. In contrast, the Greek word *parapheromenai* (pah-rah-ferr-AH-men-i) means "being carried about by the wind" and implies that they were also "unstable and unpredictable." They were like barren autumn trees that would be uprooted or cut down (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9).

**13 Raging waves of the sea,
foaming out their own shame;**

wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

In this verse, Jude adds two more metaphors to the four he has used in the preceding verse to further describe the character of the heretics. Like the waves of the sea that pour all sorts of refuse on the beach, the deceivers shamelessly exhibited moral filth.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Again, the characteristics, precepts, and practices of the ungodly heretics were concluded. They were *gogustai* (gorg-goose-TIE), which means “murmurers or grumblers,” and *mempsimoiroi* (memp-PSIM-moy-roy), meaning “complainers or malcontents” who spoke with pride, arrogance, and flattery. Jude underscores two reasons

for their belief and their behavior: “lust” (Gk. *epithu-mia*, epp-ih-thoo-ME-uh) and “personal advantage or benefit” (Gk. *opheleia*, oh-feh-LAY-AH).

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Jude now turns from the description of the “false brethren” to exhort the faithful Christians. He outlines concrete steps that the church should take in response to the heretic scourge. Inherent in his counsel are basic biblical principles for facing and overcoming life’s challenges in general. Jude’s counsel is essentially a corporate exhortation to the church as a community of believers.

Verse 17 opens the same way as verse 20. Jude sets a contrast between the heretics and the true Christians: “But [you], beloved.” It is

also obvious that Jude's counsel is a corporate exhortation to the church as a community, with personal application to the individual members. Like the Old Testament prophetic watchman, Jude urges the Christians to remember the apostles' words or "predictions" (Gk. *rhematon*, hray-MAH-tone) about the invasion of godless heretics (cf. Acts 20:29; 1 Timothy 4:1ff.; 2 Timothy 3:1–9; 4:3–4; 1 John 2:18).

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

The content of the apostolic predictions about the heretics is summarized, and the certainty and significance of their appearance are underscored. Part of the significance lies in the fact that their manifestation is an integral sign of the last times (cf. 2 Peter 3:3). Their characteristics (e.g.,

mocking or scoffing, ungodly lusts) are also foretold. By their fruits (doctrinal and ethical), they shall be known.

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

Three final descriptions of the heretics are included in verse 19: they create factions and split communities, they follow animalistic instincts, and they lack the Spirit of God.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

In contrast, the faithful Christians must follow a completely different lifestyle. This verse and the next (v. 21) indicate believers' corporate and personal responsibilities in facing and foiling the challenge of heresy and other life challenges. Two instructions are given here. One is the continuous

mutual building up of one another in the very faith that the heretics seek to undermine. The Greek word *epoikodomeo* (epp-oy-kaw-doh-MEH-oh) implies a building process of personal and corporate development. Mutual edification is a cardinal ministry of believers (cf. Colossians 2:7; 1 Peter 2:5).

Jude also urges the Christians to keep on praying in the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:26–27; Ephesians 6:18). Standing in sharp contrast against the corruption of the heretic is the purity of the Christian faith. God is holy. Therefore, the Christians have been made “most holy or a saint” (Gk. *hangiri*, HA-ghee-oy). Because the Spirit of God is holy, then Christianity is described here as the “most holy faith.”

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

This verse identifies Jude's primary command: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." The continual keeping of the believers has two related dimensions: the divine (v. 1) and the human (v. 20). The love of God is the realm in which Christian faith takes source and sustenance (Romans 8:35–39). By "the love of God," Jude means first God's love for us, and then His love through us for Himself and for others.

The fourth instruction is to consistently and eagerly await Christ's mercy. The entire Trinity is involved in the Christian's growth and development: to pray in the Holy Spirit, be kept in the love of God, and look for the mercy of Christ. The last speaks of the expectation of the second coming of Christ.

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.

Jude concludes with admonitions to help those who may have been led astray by the heretics. Jude urges the Christians to demonstrate compassion (Gk: *eleos*, **ELL-eh-ahss) meaning “mercy or pity.” Furthermore, persuasion and active evangelism are also necessary to save others and snatch them from eternal fire.**

Say It Correctly

Agapetoi. ah-gah-pay-TOY

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 351
Hebrews 5–6
Proverbs 29

DAY 352
Hebrews 7–8
Proverbs 30

DAY 353
Hebrews 9–10
Proverbs 31

DAY 354
Hebrews 11
Ecclesiastes 1

DAY 355
Hebrews 12–13
Ecclesiastes 2

DAY 356
James 1–5
Ecclesiastes 3

DAY 357
1 Peter 1–5
Ecclesiastes 4

Notes
