

Small Group Guide: Contending for the Faith

Based on the Book of Jude



Overview

This guide is designed to help your group process the closing message of Jude's letter. The sermon walked through the structure of the entire book before landing on the practical tools Jude gives believers for contending for the faith, how to engage those who need the gospel, and the doxology that reminds us where our hope ultimately rests.

Key Takeaways

1. The Structure of Jude Has a Purpose Jude organizes his letter like a mission briefing: the objective (contend for the faith, verses 1-4), intelligence on the traps being laid (verses 5-11), intelligence on the enemy agents themselves (verses 12-19), and finally the tools available to complete the mission (verses 20-25).

2. Four Action Words for Contending Jude gives believers four practical directives in verses 20-21:

- BUILD -- grow on the foundation of your faith in Christ
- PRAY -- seek God's will over your own, as Jesus modeled
- KEEP -- obey God's commands, which flow from loving him
- LOOK -- fix your eyes on the eternal, not just the temporary

3. Knowing Your Audience Matters Jude 22-23 makes a distinction: some people need compassion and mercy, while others need to be pulled urgently from the fire. Effective witness requires sensitivity to which approach a person needs, and sometimes it requires both.

4. The Glory Belongs to Christ Alone The closing doxology in verses 24-25 is the encouragement Jude wanted to write all along. He reminds us that Christ is the one who keeps us from stumbling and presents us faultless before God. The power is not ours. The glory is not ours. It is his.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- When you think about your own faith journey, were you someone who needed compassion and patience to come to Christ, or did you need something more like a jolt -- a moment of fear or urgency? How did that shape the way you came to faith?

On Building (Verse 20)

- The sermon compared building on faith to construction -- it requires a plan, persistence, and action. Which of those three do you find most difficult in your spiritual life right now, and why?
- The sermon warned that if any part of your life is propped up by something other than your faith in Christ, it will eventually crumble under pressure. Can you think of an area in your life where you have been building on the wrong foundation? What would it look like to reorient that area toward Christ?

On Praying in the Spirit (Verse 20)

- The sermon described praying in the Spirit as seeking God's will over your own, bringing your life to him rather than trying to bring him to your agenda. How would

you honestly describe your current prayer life -- is it more about seeking his will or presenting your requests?

- The sermon used the story of the man on the roof during the flood to illustrate waiting on God without taking any action. Have you ever been in a season where you were waiting for an answer but not willing to take a step? What happened?

On Keeping and Looking (Verse 21)

- Jesus said in John 14:15 that those who love him will obey his commands. The sermon connected keeping yourself in the love of God directly to obedience. Is there a command of Christ that you find particularly difficult to obey right now? What is getting in the way?
- The sermon made a distinction between looking to Christ to get through the next circumstance versus looking to Christ in light of eternity. How does keeping an eternal perspective change the way you handle day-to-day struggles?

On Compassion and Urgency (Verses 22-23)

- The sermon said, "We're leading them down the path to hell, and we're lining it with pillows to make it as comfortable as possible on their way." What does this challenge you to reconsider about how you engage people in your life who do not know Christ?
- The sermon also cautioned that pulling someone from the fire is never about grandstanding or feeling superior -- it comes from remembering that you were on the same path. How does that perspective change the tone of how you would approach a difficult conversation with someone about their spiritual life?
- Is there someone in your life right now who needs compassion, someone who needs urgency, or someone who needs both? What is one step you could take this week toward them?

On the Doxology (Verses 24-25)

- The sermon noted that Jude finally gets to end his letter the way he wanted the whole thing to be -- with encouragement. After everything he warned about, he lands on the truth that Christ is the one who keeps us and presents us faultless. Why is it important that the letter ends here rather than with the warnings?
- The sermon said, "I don't have all the answers. I have one answer and it happens to be the right answer. Christ." How does that kind of humility shape the way you talk about your faith with others?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One:

1. **Build with intention.** Identify one specific spiritual habit -- reading a chapter of Proverbs daily, memorizing a verse, joining a Bible study -- and commit to it for the next 30 days. Share your commitment with someone in the group for accountability.
2. **Audit your prayer life.** For one week, begin every prayer session by spending the first few minutes focused entirely on worship and asking how you can serve God, before bringing any personal requests. Journal what you notice.
3. **Name someone.** Think of one person in your life who needs the gospel. Pray for them by name every day this week. Then consider whether they need compassion, urgency, or both, and take one concrete step toward a meaningful conversation with them.
4. **Reorient one area.** Identify one part of your life that has been built on something other than Christ -- a relationship, a financial decision, a habit, a source of identity. Bring it before God in prayer and ask him to show you how to rebuild it on the right foundation.

Closing Reflection

Jude wanted to write an encouraging letter. Instead, the Holy Spirit moved him to write one of the most direct and challenging books in the New Testament. But he still got to end with encouragement, because the encouragement was never going to be about us anyway. It was always going to be about Christ -- the one who is able to keep us from stumbling, to present us faultless, and to receive all glory, majesty, dominion, and power, now and forever.

Close your time together by reading Jude 24-25 aloud as a group, then praying together -- seeking his will, not your own.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Book of Jude and the Call to Contend for the Faith



Day 1: The Mission We Cannot Ignore

Reading: Jude 1-4 — Jude opens by expressing his desire to write about the salvation believers share, but instead feels compelled to urge his readers to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Devotional: Jude wanted to write an encouraging letter. He wanted to celebrate the common salvation that unites every believer. But the condition of the church demanded something harder. There are moments in the Christian life when love requires courage rather than comfort. Contending for the faith is not aggression — it is stewardship. You have been entrusted with something precious. The gospel is not yours to water down, soften for social approval, or quietly set aside when the room grows uncomfortable. Ask yourself today: am I guarding what I have been given, or have I slowly allowed compromise to creep in without noticing?

Reflection Questions:

- Where in your life have you chosen comfort over conviction?
- What does it mean practically for you to contend for the faith this week?

- Is your faith something you actively protect, or something you passively assume?

Practical Application: Identify one area of your faith that has grown soft or compromised. Write it down. Pray over it. Take one deliberate step this week to strengthen your convictions in that area.

Day 2: Recognizing the Enemy Within

Reading: Jude 12-19 — Jude describes those who have crept into the church as waterless clouds, uprooted trees bearing no fruit, wandering stars destined for darkness. He warns that they are grumblers, flatterers, and those who cause division.

Devotional: Jude does not describe the greatest threat to the church as something that attacks from the outside. The danger he is most concerned about is already inside the walls. False teaching rarely announces itself. It does not walk through the door wearing a sign. It is subtle, familiar, and often wrapped in the language of grace and love. An uprooted tree looks like a tree. It has the shape of something that should bear fruit. But without connection to the source of life, nothing grows. The question worth sitting with today is not only whether you can identify false teaching around you, but whether your own roots are deep enough to sustain you.

Reflection Questions:

- What voices are you allowing to shape your understanding of Scripture and faith?
- How do you discern between teaching that is challenging and teaching that is false?
- Are your roots in Christ deep enough to withstand cultural pressure?

Practical Application: Spend fifteen minutes this week evaluating one source of spiritual input in your life — a podcast, a book, a teacher — against the clear teaching of Scripture. Not to condemn, but to discern.

Day 3: The Tools of the Faithful

Reading: Jude 20-21 — Jude instructs believers to build themselves up in their most holy faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit, to keep themselves in the love of God, and to look for the mercy of Christ unto eternal life.

Devotional: Jude does not leave the believer without a course of action. He gives four words that form the framework of a faithful life: build, pray, keep, look. Building requires a

foundation, a plan, persistence, and action. A foundation without action produces nothing. Prayer in the Spirit means seeking God's will above your own comfort, his kingdom above your circumstances. Keeping yourself in the love of God means obeying his commands — not as a transaction, but as a response to love already given. And looking toward eternity means your eyes are fixed on something that does not fade. These are not suggestions. They are the weapons of someone serious about contending for the faith.

Reflection Questions:

- Which of the four — build, pray, keep, look — is the weakest area in your current walk with God?
- Is your prayer life oriented around seeking God's will, or primarily around your own requests?
- How often does eternity shape the decisions you make in the temporary?

Practical Application: Choose one of the four words — build, pray, keep, or look — and design one concrete habit this week that strengthens that specific area of your faith.

Day 4: Compassion, Courage, and Pulling People From the Fire

Reading: Jude 22-23 — Jude calls believers to have mercy on some who doubt, while saving others by snatching them out of the fire, and on others showing mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Devotional: Not everyone who needs the gospel needs it delivered the same way. Jude makes a distinction that requires wisdom and sensitivity: some need compassion, and some need to be pulled from the fire. The danger of choosing only one approach is that you become either a doormat who never speaks hard truth, or a hammer that never shows grace. Christ himself demonstrated both. He wept over Jerusalem and he overturned tables in the temple. He spoke tenderly to the woman caught in adultery and he spoke with unmistakable directness to the religious leaders who were leading people astray. Knowing which tool to use requires knowing the person in front of you. And knowing the person in front of you requires genuine love for their eternity, not just their comfort.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you tend more toward avoiding hard conversations or toward lacking gentleness?
- Think of someone in your life who needs the gospel. What approach does their situation require?

- How does remembering your own need for grace change the way you engage with others?

Practical Application: Identify one person in your life who needs to hear the gospel. Pray for them daily this week. Ask God to show you whether they need compassion, a direct word, or both — and ask for the courage to act on what he shows you.

Day 5: The One Who Keeps You

Reading: Jude 24-25 — Jude closes by declaring that God alone is able to keep believers from stumbling and to present them faultless before his glory with exceeding joy, and that to him belongs glory, majesty, dominion, and power forever.

Devotional: Jude wanted to write about the common salvation that believers share. He spent most of his letter doing something harder. But he ends exactly where he wanted to begin — with the goodness and sufficiency of Christ. After all the warnings, all the intelligence gathered about the enemy, all the instruction about how to contend and fight and discern and rescue — the final word is not about what you must do. It is about what Christ has already done and what he alone can do. He is the one who keeps you from stumbling. He is the one who presents you faultless. Not your effort. Not your vigilance. Not your theological precision. Christ. You are not the hero of this story. He is. And that is the most encouraging thing Jude could have possibly said.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you live as though the weight of your spiritual safety rests entirely on your own effort?
- How does the promise that Christ can present you faultless change the way you see your own failures?
- What does it mean to you personally that the final word of Jude is not a warning, but a doxology?

Practical Application: Write out Jude 24-25 in your own words as a personal declaration of trust. Place it somewhere you will see it daily this week. Let it remind you that the one you are contending for is also the one who is contending for you.