

The Books of Titus, Philemon, and Jude, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: Contend for the Faith

Jude 1-4

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

What is doctrinally at stake in this opening of Jude is the nature and finality of the faith itself. Jude calls believers to contend for “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). The teacher should present this as a clear affirmation that the apostolic faith is complete, fixed, and not subject to addition, revision, or supersession. This is the natural place to address, plainly and without harshness, the church of Christ conviction that we have no new revelation, continuing apostleship, or evolving gospel; the completed New Testament is our authority. Contending for the faith means guarding and transmitting this once-for-all deposit, not innovating upon it.

The passage also introduces the danger of internal corruption. The false teachers “crept in unnoticed,” perverting grace into license and denying Christ’s lordship by their lives. The teacher should draw out both the subtlety of this threat and the link Jude makes between distorting grace and denying the Master: to treat grace as a license for sin is, in effect, to deny that Jesus is Lord. This reinforces the study’s consistent theme that grace and the lordship of Christ, faith and obedience, cannot be separated.

The formational aim is to ground students in their security in God (called, beloved, kept) and from that security to equip and embolden them to contend for the truth, every believer, not just leaders. Send them home resting in God’s keeping love, alert to subtle compromise, and willing to know and defend the faith with both courage and love. The disciple being formed is secure, discerning, and faithful to the once-for-all gospel.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jude identifies himself simply as “a servant of Jesus Christ” (v. 1), though he was likely the Lord’s own half-brother. What does this humble self-description teach about true greatness in the kingdom of God and about the proper posture of anyone who serves Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with Jude’s self-description in verse 1: “a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.” Most scholars identify Jude as a half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55 names Judas among Jesus’ brothers). Yet he does not trade on his family connection to Jesus. He calls himself a servant, a bondservant, and identifies himself by his brother James rather than by Jesus directly.

Draw out the humility and its lesson. Jude could have claimed unique status; instead he claims the lowest title, servant. This reflects the kingdom's upside-down values, where greatness is found in service (Mark 10:43–45). Earthly proximity to Jesus meant less to Jude than the privilege of serving Him.

Apply it to ourselves. We are tempted to define ourselves by our credentials, achievements, and connections. Jude models defining oneself by glad submission to Christ. The teacher can invite students to consider what title they instinctively reach for, and whether “servant of Jesus Christ” sits at the center of their identity.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Greatness in the kingdom found in service, not status (Mark 10:43–45)
- Humility as the posture of all who serve Christ
- Identity defined by submission to Christ, not credentials
- Jude's likely kinship with Jesus set aside for the title of servant

Discussion Prompts

- What does Jude's humility teach about greatness in God's kingdom?
- Why does Jude identify himself as a servant rather than Jesus' brother?
- What title do you instinctively reach for to define yourself?

Question 2

Student Question:

Jude calls his readers “beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1). Do you tend to think of yourself primarily as beloved and kept by God, or do other identities (your failures, your roles, your reputation) speak louder? What would it look like to let God's words define you this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the three identity words of verse 1, “called,” “beloved in God the Father,” “kept for Jesus Christ,” and asks which voice actually defines the student. Help them feel the weight of each: chosen and summoned by God, held in His love, and guarded for Christ.

Name the competing voices honestly. For many believers, failures, roles, reputation, or the opinions of others speak louder than God's declarations. We functionally define ourselves by our worst moments or our performance rather than by God's settled love. The question invites students to notice which voice is loudest.

Move toward letting God's words win. Encourage students to identify the false identity that currently shouts loudest and to deliberately replace it with God's truth: I am called, beloved, and

kept. Suggest one concrete practice, such as returning to these words in prayer when the accusing voices rise. The aim is to live from God's verdict.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's declarations as the true source of identity
- Competing voices of failure, role, and reputation
- Living from God's settled love rather than performance
- Replacing false identities with God's truth

Discussion Prompts

- Which voice defines you most loudly right now?
- What would change if you let "called, beloved, kept" define you?
- What practice could help God's words win in your heart?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jude says he changed his subject because he "found it necessary" to urge them to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). What does it mean that the faith was "once for all delivered," and how does this truth guard the church against claims of ongoing new revelation or an evolving gospel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a key doctrinal block; center it on the phrase "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). Unpack each part. "The faith" here is not personal believing but the body of Christian truth, the gospel and its teaching. It was "delivered," handed down as a deposit, not invented. And it was delivered "once for all," a phrase signaling finality and completeness.

Draw out the implication for revelation. If the faith was delivered once for all, then it is not still being delivered. This guards the church against every claim of new revelation, additional scriptures, or an evolving gospel that updates itself to fit each age. The faith can be more deeply understood and freshly applied, but it cannot be added to or overturned. Connect this to Galatians 1:8, where even an angel preaching another gospel is to be rejected.

Clarify what contending for it means and does not mean. To contend is to guard, hold fast, and transmit the faith intact, defending it against distortion. It does not mean we are free to sharpen it into something new, nor that we contend with carnal weapons or a quarrelsome spirit. The teacher should set up the balance the next question explores: earnest defense joined to genuine love.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “The faith” as the fixed body of Christian truth, not merely personal believing
- “Once for all delivered” as the finality and completeness of the apostolic faith
- The exclusion of new revelation and an evolving gospel (Galatians 1:6–9)
- Contending as guarding and transmitting, not innovating

Discussion Prompts

- What does “once for all delivered” mean for claims of new revelation?
- How can the faith be freshly applied without being added to?
- What is the difference between guarding the faith and reinventing it?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jude calls every believer, not just leaders, to “contend” for the faith (v. 3). Are you equipped to recognize and lovingly answer error when you encounter it? Where do you most need to grow in knowing the truth well enough to defend it, and what is one step you could take toward that?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the fact that Jude calls all the “beloved,” not just leaders, to contend for the faith. Every believer is meant to know the truth well enough to recognize and lovingly answer error. The question asks honestly whether students are equipped for this.

Name the common gap. Many sincere Christians have a warm faith but a thin grasp of its content, leaving them vulnerable to plausible error and unable to help others. Contending requires knowing what we believe and why. This is not for scholars only; it is basic discipleship (1 Peter 3:15, always prepared to give a reason for the hope in us).

Move toward one step of growth. Encourage students to identify where they are weakest, perhaps a key doctrine they could not explain or defend, and to take one concrete step: a study, a book, a class, deeper reading of Scripture. The goal is steady growth toward being able to hold and hand on the truth.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every believer called to contend, not just leaders
- The danger of warm faith with thin content
- Being ready to give a reason for our hope (1 Peter 3:15)
- Growth in knowing the truth as basic discipleship

Discussion Prompts

- Are you equipped to recognize and answer error lovingly?
- Which doctrine could you not yet explain or defend?

- What is one step toward knowing the truth more deeply?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jude warns that “certain people have crept in unnoticed” (v. 4), describing false teachers who infiltrate rather than openly attack. Why is this kind of internal, subtle corruption often more dangerous to the church than open opposition from outside, and how does Scripture call us to watch for it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Focus on the phrase “crept in unnoticed” (v. 4). The danger Jude addresses was not an external assault but an internal infiltration. False teachers had slipped quietly into the fellowship, unrecognized, working from the inside. This is consistently portrayed in Scripture as the gravest threat to the church.

Explain why internal, subtle corruption is so dangerous. Open opposition rallies the church to its defenses; quiet infiltration disarms them. The wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15) and the fierce wolves arising from among the elders themselves (Acts 20:29–30) do their damage precisely because they are not recognized as enemies. Error mixed with truth, taught by trusted insiders, spreads before anyone sounds the alarm.

Draw out the call to vigilance. Jude’s warning implies that the church must be discerning, testing teaching by the apostolic standard rather than assuming that anyone inside the fellowship must be sound. This is not paranoia but watchfulness, the loving alertness of those who guard what is precious. Help students hold discernment and love together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Internal infiltration as the gravest threat to the church (Acts 20:29–30)
- Wolves in sheep’s clothing, hard to recognize (Matthew 7:15)
- Error spreading through trusted insiders mixing truth and falsehood
- Watchfulness and discernment as loving vigilance, not paranoia

Discussion Prompts

- Why is subtle internal corruption often more dangerous than open attack?
- How does Scripture call us to watch for it?
- How do we stay discerning without becoming suspicious of everyone?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jude says the danger had “crept in unnoticed.” Where might subtle compromise be creeping into your own heart or habits unnoticed, small allowances that, left unchecked, could pull you off course? What is one area where you need to pay closer attention before it grows?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question turns “crept in unnoticed” inward. The same subtlety that lets error infiltrate a church lets compromise creep into a heart. Small allowances, unguarded habits, and quiet rationalizations slip in unnoticed and, over time, pull a life off course.

Help students see the danger of the gradual and the small. Major moral failures usually begin with minor, unexamined compromises, a little dishonesty, a slowly cooling devotion, an appetite indulged just a bit more each time. What creeps in unnoticed is precisely what we have stopped paying attention to.

Move toward watchful self-examination. Encourage students to ask the Lord to show them one area where compromise has been quietly creeping in, and to address it now while it is small. Connect this to the discipline of regular self-examination (Psalm 139:23–24, search me and know my heart). The aim is one area brought back into the light.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Compromise creeping in through small, unexamined allowances
- Major failures beginning as minor rationalizations
- The danger of what we have stopped paying attention to
- Self-examination that invites God’s searching (Psalm 139:23–24)

Discussion Prompts

- Where might subtle compromise be creeping into your life unnoticed?
- Why do big failures usually begin with small allowances?
- What is one area you need to bring back into the light?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jude charges the false teachers with two things: they “pervert the grace of our God into sensuality” and “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (v. 4). How is turning grace into a license for sin actually a denial of Christ, and what does this teach about the inseparable link between truly receiving grace and submitting to Jesus as Lord?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Examine the twofold charge in verse 4: the false teachers “pervert the grace of our God into sensuality” and “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” Jude joins these two as if they were one sin, and the teacher should show why they belong together.

Explain the perversion of grace. These teachers took the glorious truth of God’s grace and twisted it into a license for unrestrained indulgence, as if forgiveness made holiness optional, even pointless. This is the antinomian distortion the whole study has been confronting: grace that frees us from sin turned into grace that frees us to sin.

Show how this denies Christ’s lordship. To call Jesus Lord is to submit to His rule; to use grace as a cover for sin is to refuse that rule while keeping the religious vocabulary. So a life of unrepentant indulgence, however orthodox its words, is a practical denial of Jesus as Master. Receiving grace and submitting to Christ’s lordship are inseparable; you cannot truly have one without the other. Connect this to Titus 1:16, professing to know God but denying Him by works.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Perverting grace into a license for sin (Romans 6:1-2)
- The inseparability of receiving grace and submitting to Christ’s lordship
- Practical denial of Christ through unrepentant living (Titus 1:16)
- Calling Jesus “Lord” while refusing His rule (Luke 6:46)

Discussion Prompts

- How is turning grace into license actually a denial of Christ?
- Why can’t we separate receiving grace from submitting to Jesus as Lord?
- How does unrepentant living deny what our words confess?

Question 8

Student Question:

Jude says these people used grace as a cover for sensuality. Is there any place where you have quietly used grace as an excuse, telling yourself a sin does not matter because you are forgiven anyway? How does the lordship of Christ confront that thinking in your life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the perversion of grace (v. 4) into the student’s own heart. Few believers would openly teach license, but many quietly use grace as a private excuse: telling themselves a particular sin does not really matter because they are forgiven anyway. The question invites honest exposure of that reasoning.

Help students recognize the subtlety. “I’ll be forgiven” can function as advance permission to sin, the very abuse of grace Jude condemns. It treats God’s mercy as a loophole rather than a rescue. Naming this pattern is the first step to repenting of it.

Bring in the lordship of Christ as the corrective. If Jesus is truly Lord, then His rule extends to the very area we have been excusing. Grace was given to free us from that sin, not to license it. Encourage students to name one place they have used grace as an excuse and to surrender it afresh to Christ’s lordship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Using grace as advance permission to sin
- Mercy treated as a loophole rather than a rescue
- The lordship of Christ extending to every excused area
- Repenting of the abuse of grace

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you quietly used grace as an excuse to sin?
- How does treating mercy as a loophole abuse God’s grace?
- How does Christ’s lordship confront that area of your life?

Question 9

Student Question:

Jude grounds his entire appeal in the conviction that the apostolic faith is complete, fixed, and to be defended against those who would distort it. Drawing on the whole New Testament, why do we hold that the faith was delivered once for all and that the completed Scriptures, not new prophecies or continuing revelation, are our authority today? Why does this matter so much for the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it should give a full, clear account of why we hold that the faith was delivered once for all and that the completed Scriptures are our authority today. Begin from Jude’s own words (v. 3) and build outward to the witness of the whole New Testament.

Lay out the biblical case. God has spoken His final word in His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2); there is no fuller revelation to await. The gospel is fixed, so that even an apostle or an angel preaching another gospel is accursed (Galatians 1:8). The apostles were given to lay the foundation once (Ephesians 2:20), and the faith was “once for all delivered” (Jude 3). The Scriptures are God-breathed and able to make us complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17),

which means no further revelation is needed to complete them. Paul warned that people would turn from sound teaching to myths (2 Timothy 4:3–4), exactly the danger Jude faced.

Address the implications plainly and without harshness. This means we do not look for new prophecies, additional scriptures, continuing apostles, or a gospel that evolves with the culture. Claims to present-day new revelation, however sincere, stand under the warning of adding to what God has finally said. Our task is to interpret, apply, and obey the completed word, not to supplement it. The teacher should present this as the church's settled conviction, held with confidence and offered as good news: we are not at the mercy of every new spiritual claim, because God has given us a complete and trustworthy word.

Show why it matters pastorally. A faith “once for all delivered” gives the church stability, unity, and assurance. We can know what we believe, test every teaching against a fixed standard, and stand together on solid ground across generations and cultures. Without this, the church is blown about by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). Help students treasure the completed word as a gift that anchors them, and feel the seriousness of guarding it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's final, complete revelation in His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2)
- The faith delivered once for all, not still being delivered (Jude 3; Ephesians 2:20)
- The God-breathed Scriptures as sufficient and our authority today (2 Timothy 3:16–17)
- No present-day new revelation, continuing apostleship, or evolving gospel (Galatians 1:8)
- The completed word as the church's anchor against every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14)

Discussion Prompts

- Why do we hold that the faith was delivered once for all?
- How do the Scriptures themselves claim to be sufficient and complete?
- What does the church gain by standing on a fixed, completed word?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these four verses. Jude has shown you a humble servant, a people kept by God, a faith worth contending for, and a danger that creeps in quietly. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Jude 1–4 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the passage into one personal takeaway. Encourage students to land on something specific, whether about their security in God, their alertness to compromise, or their resolve to know and guard the faith.

Trace the movement of the four verses. Jude moved from a humble servant, to a people called, beloved, and kept, to an urgent summons to contend for a once-for-all faith, to a warning about a danger that crept in quietly. Security and vigilance stand side by side: we are kept by God, and we are called to guard the truth.

Close by holding those two together. The same God who keeps us calls us to contend; resting in His love and standing for His truth are not opposites but partners. Ask each student to name the one truth from this passage they most need to carry, and one way they will live it this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Security in God and vigilance for the truth held together
- Resting in being kept while standing for the faith
- Personal formation as the goal of the study
- Carrying one specific, applied truth into the week

Discussion Prompts

- What one truth from this passage do you most need this week?
- How do security in God's love and contending for truth fit together?
- How is Christ forming you through these verses?