

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

Lesson 12: Building Yourself Up in the Faith

Jude 17–23

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

What is at stake doctrinally in this passage is the proper relationship between divine keeping and human responsibility, the very tension this study has been tracking through Jude. Jude commands believers to “keep yourselves in the love of God” (v. 21), placing genuine responsibility on them, even as he will shortly praise God as the One “able to keep you from stumbling” (v. 24). The teacher should help students hold both truths together: God truly keeps His people, and His people are truly called to keep themselves faithful. Neither cancels the other. This guards against both anxious self-reliance and passive presumption, and it coheres with the study's consistent teaching that salvation is preserved through ongoing faith and obedience.

The passage also gives a practical pattern for perseverance: build, pray, keep, wait, and reach. Against the backdrop of false teachers and coming judgment, Jude does not counsel fearful retreat but active faithfulness, spiritual growth, Spirit-led prayer, abiding in God's love, expectant hope, and merciful outreach to those who are slipping. The teacher should present these as the normal, active practices by which believers remain faithful and help others do the same, and should highlight the merciful, rescuing posture Jude commands toward the doubting and endangered.

The formational aim is to move students from fear to faithful action. Send them home with a concrete sense of how to keep themselves in the love of God, a renewed expectancy for Christ's mercy, and a heart that reaches for the wavering rather than turning inward. The disciple being formed is active, prayerful, hopeful, secure in God's keeping yet responsible in keeping himself, and merciful toward those in danger.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jude tells believers to “remember” that the apostles predicted scoffers would come in the last time (vv. 17–18). How does remembering that trouble and false teaching were foretold actually strengthen our faith rather than shake it, and what does this teach about the reliability of the apostolic word?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with Jude's call to "remember the predictions of the apostles" (v. 17). The presence of scoffers was not a surprise; the apostles had foretold it. Jude steadies his readers by reminding them that what they are seeing was predicted, so it confirms rather than threatens the faith.

Draw out the faith-strengthening power of fulfilled prediction. When trouble arrives exactly as Scripture said it would, it is evidence that the word is reliable. Jesus told His disciples things in advance "so that when it does take place you may believe" (John 14:29). Foreknowledge turns potential faith-shaking events into faith-confirming ones.

Apply it to the present. Believers today are often unsettled by opposition, scoffing, and moral decline, as if these disprove Christianity. Jude's logic says the opposite: these were predicted, so their arrival confirms the apostolic word. Help students reframe trouble through the lens of Scripture's reliability, and set up the next question on anchoring in the word when shaken.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Fulfilled prediction as evidence of Scripture's reliability (John 14:29)
- Foretold trouble confirming rather than threatening the faith
- Reframing opposition as predicted, not disproving
- The steadying power of remembering the apostolic word

Discussion Prompts

- How does remembering that trouble was foretold strengthen faith?
- Why does fulfilled prediction confirm the reliability of Scripture?
- How can this reframe the opposition believers face today?

Question 2

Student Question:

Jude steadies his readers by pointing them back to what the apostles taught (v. 17). When your faith is shaken by difficulty or by the scorn of others, where do you turn first? What would it look like to anchor yourself more deliberately in Scripture when storms come?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes Jude's appeal to remember the apostolic teaching (v. 17) and asks where students actually turn when shaken. Under pressure or scorn, our instinctive refuge reveals what we truly trust, whether Scripture, or our own reasoning, or the opinions of others, or distraction.

Help students notice their default. Many sincere believers, when their faith is shaken, turn first to anxiety, to social media, to the reassurance of others, or to avoidance, rather than to the steadying word of God. There is no shame in naming this; it simply shows where a more deliberate habit is needed.

Move toward anchoring in Scripture. Encourage students to build the habit of turning to God's word first when storms come, returning to its promises and its predictions. Suggest one concrete practice, such as a few anchor passages to revisit in hard times. The aim is one deliberate step toward making Scripture the first refuge rather than the last.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Where we turn under pressure as a revealer of trust
- Scripture as our first refuge in trouble (Psalm 119:49-50)
- Replacing anxious instincts with the steadying word
- Building deliberate habits of returning to God's promises

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you turn first when your faith is shaken?
- What would anchoring more deliberately in Scripture look like?
- What is one passage you could return to in the storms?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jude says the scoffers are "worldly people, devoid of the Spirit," who "cause divisions" (v. 19). What does this teach about the difference between those who are led by the Spirit and those who are not, and why is causing division such a serious mark of the absence of the Spirit?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Examine Jude's description of the scoffers in verse 19: "worldly people, devoid of the Spirit," who "cause divisions." Jude gives a stark diagnosis: they are governed by the world and lack the Spirit, and one visible symptom is that they divide the church. Their character and their effect go together.

Draw out the contrast between the Spirit-led and the worldly. Those led by the Spirit bear the Spirit's fruit, including love, peace, patience, and gentleness (Galatians 5:22), which build unity. The worldly, devoid of the Spirit, follow their own desires, which fracture community. The Spirit unites; the flesh divides.

Explain why causing division is so serious a mark. The New Testament repeatedly warns against those who create division (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10) and prizes the unity of the body (Ephesians 4:3, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit). Persistent division-causing reveals a heart out of step with the Spirit, who is the bond of the church's unity. Set up the personal application about being a peacemaker in the next question.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Spirit-led versus the worldly, devoid of the Spirit (v. 19)
- The fruit of the Spirit building unity (Galatians 5:22)
- Causing division as a serious mark against the Spirit (Romans 16:17)
- The Spirit as the bond of the church's unity (Ephesians 4:3)

Discussion Prompts

- What distinguishes the Spirit-led from the worldly?
- Why is causing division such a serious sign?
- How does the Spirit produce unity rather than fracture?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jude warns against those who “cause divisions” (v. 19). Examine your own part in the relationships and community around you. Are you, on the whole, a peacemaker who builds unity, or do you sometimes sow division through criticism, gossip, or taking sides? How is Christ calling you to be a builder rather than a divider?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the charge that the scoffers “cause divisions” (v. 19) and turns it inward. It is easy to condemn dividers in the abstract while contributing to division ourselves through criticism, gossip, or taking sides. The question invites honest self-assessment of our part in our communities.

Help students examine their patterns. Are they generally peacemakers who build unity, cover offenses, and bring people together? Or do they sometimes sow discord, through a critical spirit, careless words, gossip, or factionalism? Most of us are a mix, and honesty here is clarifying.

Point to the blessing on peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) and the call to build. The aim is to become, like a wise builder, someone who strengthens unity rather than fractures it. Ask each student to name one relationship or setting where they could choose to build rather than divide this week, perhaps by refusing gossip, covering an offense, or pursuing reconciliation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Examining our own part in unity or division
- Criticism, gossip, and factionalism as quiet division
- The blessing on peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)
- Choosing to build unity rather than fracture it

Discussion Prompts

- Are you, on the whole, a peacemaker or a divider?

- Where might you be sowing division without realizing it?
- How could you build unity in one relationship this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jude commands believers to be “building yourselves up in your most holy faith” and “praying in the Holy Spirit” (v. 20). What do these two practices involve, and why does Jude make spiritual growth and prayer our active responsibility rather than something that simply happens to us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Focus on the first two of Jude’s four commands in verse 20: “building yourselves up in your most holy faith” and “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Building up pictures construction, the deliberate, ongoing addition of strength and maturity, grounded in “your most holy faith,” the body of truth delivered once for all. Praying in the Spirit means prayer enabled and guided by the Spirit, in line with His will.

Draw out that these are our active responsibility. Jude uses commands: build, pray. Spiritual growth and a vital prayer life do not simply happen to us; we are called to pursue them. While God supplies the grace and the Spirit empowers, we must engage, through Scripture, devotion, fellowship, and disciplined prayer. Passivity is not an option.

Connect the two practices. Building ourselves up in the faith fills us with truth; praying in the Spirit keeps us in living communion with God. Together they make a believer strong and dependent at once, growing in knowledge and grounded in relationship. Help students see these not as duties to dread but as the means by which they are kept faithful. Set up the personal application about laying the first stone next.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Building up in the faith as deliberate, ongoing growth (Colossians 2:6–7)
- Praying in the Spirit as Spirit-enabled communion with God (Romans 8:26–27)
- Spiritual growth and prayer as active responsibility, not passivity
- Truth and relationship together making a believer strong and dependent

Discussion Prompts

- What do building up and praying in the Spirit actually involve?
- Why does Jude make growth and prayer our active responsibility?
- How do these two practices work together to keep us faithful?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jude calls you to actively build yourself up in the faith (v. 20), like adding stone upon stone. What is one specific way you could build yourself up spiritually in this season, in Scripture, prayer, or fellowship, that you have been neglecting? What is the first stone you could lay this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes “building yourselves up” (v. 20) and makes it concrete. The image of construction implies deliberate, stone-by-stone effort. The question asks students to identify one specific way they could build themselves up spiritually that they have been neglecting.

Help students get specific rather than general. Building up happens through particular practices: regular Scripture intake, consistent prayer, gathered worship, the Lord’s Supper, fellowship, and study. Ask which of these has been neglected and which one stone, laid this week, would begin to strengthen the structure.

Encourage realistic, sustainable steps. The goal is not a sweeping overhaul that collapses in a week but one concrete, achievable step: a daily reading plan, a set prayer time, faithful attendance, a study group. Ask each student to name the first stone they will lay this week. The aim is genuine, beginning action.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Spiritual growth as deliberate, stone-by-stone construction
- Concrete practices: Scripture, prayer, worship, the Supper, fellowship
- Realistic, sustainable steps over sweeping resolutions
- Taking responsibility for one’s own building up

Discussion Prompts

- What is one neglected way you could build yourself up spiritually?
- Which practice would most strengthen your structure right now?
- What is the first stone you could lay this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jude says, “keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” (v. 21). What does it mean to “keep yourself in the love of God,” and how does the forward-looking posture of “waiting for the mercy” of Christ shape a faithful life in the present?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Examine the remaining two commands in verse 21: “keep yourselves in the love of God” and “waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” To keep ourselves in God’s love does not mean earning His love but remaining in the place where we consciously experience and abide in it, much as Jesus said to abide in His love by keeping His commandments (John 15:9–10).

Draw out the forward-looking posture of “waiting for the mercy.” The Christian life leans toward the future, toward the final mercy of Christ that issues in eternal life. This expectancy steadies and purifies the present; we live now as people who are looking for our Lord’s mercy, not as people who have given up hope or settled for the here and now.

Hold the keeping and the waiting together. We actively keep ourselves in God’s love while expectantly waiting for His mercy: responsibility and hope, effort and expectancy, side by side. This sets up the central doctrinal block on divine keeping and human responsibility at question nine, but here the focus is the practical posture of abiding and waiting. Help students see both as daily, lived realities.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Keeping ourselves in God’s love by abiding in Christ (John 15:9–10)
- Abiding as remaining where we consciously experience God’s love
- The forward-looking posture of waiting for Christ’s mercy
- Expectant hope steadying and purifying the present (1 John 3:2–3)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to keep yourself in the love of God?
- How does waiting for Christ’s mercy shape life in the present?
- How do abiding and waiting work together day to day?

Question 8

Student Question:

Jude joins keeping yourself in God’s love with waiting for Christ’s mercy (v. 21). Is your daily life marked by genuine expectation of Christ and His mercy, or has your hope grown dim and your focus shrunk to the here and now? How might living as one who is “waiting for the mercy of our Lord” reorder your priorities?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the “waiting for the mercy of our Lord” (v. 21) and probes the student’s actual expectancy. For many believers, hope in Christ’s return and final mercy has dimmed, and their focus has shrunk to the immediate concerns of the here and now. The question invites honest reflection on whether real expectancy marks their daily life.

Help students see what is lost when hope dims. Without the forward look, the Christian life loses perspective, urgency, and joy; present troubles loom larger and present comforts grip harder. The early church's vivid hope ("Maranatha," come, Lord) gave them courage and lightness; we are poorer when we lose it.

Move toward reordered priorities. Living as one "waiting for the mercy of our Lord" reorders what matters, loosening our grip on the temporary and strengthening our investment in the eternal. Ask each student how genuine expectancy would change their priorities, and one concrete way to recover the forward look this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The dimming of Christian hope and its costs
- Expectancy of Christ's return as a source of courage and joy
- Hope reordering priorities toward the eternal (Colossians 3:1-4)
- Recovering the forward look of the early church

Discussion Prompts

- Is your daily life marked by real expectancy of Christ's mercy?
- What is lost when that hope grows dim?
- How would living as one who is waiting reorder your priorities?

Question 9

Student Question:

Jude commands us to "keep yourselves in the love of God" (v. 21), yet he will soon praise God as the one "able to keep you from stumbling" (v. 24). Drawing on the whole of Scripture, how do we hold together God's keeping power and our responsibility to keep ourselves faithful, and why must we affirm both rather than choosing one and denying the other?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it addresses head-on the relationship between divine keeping and human responsibility. Set the two statements side by side: "keep yourselves in the love of God" (v. 21) and God is "able to keep you from stumbling" (v. 24). The same short letter affirms both our keeping and God's keeping, without apology or contradiction.

Establish that Scripture consistently affirms both. God genuinely keeps His people: He is faithful, He will sustain us to the end (1 Corinthians 1:8-9), and no one can snatch Christ's sheep from His hand (John 10:28-29). And believers are genuinely responsible to remain faithful: to abide, to continue, to keep themselves, to work out their salvation (Philippians 2:12-13, where God's working and our working appear in the same breath). These are not competing claims but complementary truths.

Show why we must affirm both rather than choosing one. To affirm only God's keeping and deny our responsibility leads to the presumption of "once saved, always saved," which the warnings of Jude and the wider New Testament exclude. To affirm only our responsibility and deny God's keeping leads to anxious self-reliance, as if our salvation rested on our own strength. The biblical balance is this: God supplies the power to remain faithful, and we must actually remain faithful by His power. We keep ourselves in His love precisely by relying on the One who keeps us. Philippians 2:12–13 captures it: work out your salvation, for it is God who works in you.

Bring it home pastorally. This is not a riddle to be solved but a partnership to be lived. The faithful believer neither presumes ("I can coast; God will keep me regardless") nor despairs ("It all depends on me"). Instead, they actively abide, pray, grow, and wait, leaning the whole time on the God who is able to keep them from stumbling. Help students rest in God's keeping power while taking full responsibility to keep themselves in His love, holding assurance and effort together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Both human responsibility ("keep yourselves," v. 21) and divine keeping ("able to keep you," v. 24) affirmed
- God's faithful keeping of His people (1 Corinthians 1:8–9; John 10:28–29)
- Believers' real responsibility to remain faithful and abide
- Working out salvation because God works in us (Philippians 2:12–13)
- Rejecting both presumption ("once saved, always saved") and anxious self-reliance

Discussion Prompts

- How do God's keeping and our keeping fit together rather than conflict?
- Why must we affirm both instead of choosing one and denying the other?
- How does Philippians 2:12–13 capture this partnership?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these verses. Jude has moved you from fear to action, calling you to remember, build, pray, keep, wait, and reach for those who are slipping. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Jude 17–23 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the passage into one personal takeaway, but note that Jude does not end with self-focus; he ends with mercy toward others (vv. 22–23). Help students include this outward turn: have mercy on the doubting, snatch others from the fire, show mercy with fear. A built-up, praying, abiding church reaches for those who are slipping.

Trace the movement of the passage. Jude moved his readers from fear to action: remember, build, pray, keep, wait, and rescue. The warnings of the whole letter culminate not in retreat but in active, merciful faithfulness. Security in God and responsibility before God produce a church on its feet, not on its heels.

Close by inviting one concrete response. Of the practices Jude commands, building, praying, keeping, waiting, and reaching for the wavering, ask each student which the Lord is calling them to take up afresh, and one way they will do it this week. Encourage them to include the outward, merciful reach toward someone who is doubting or in danger.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- From fear to action: remember, build, pray, keep, wait, rescue
- Merciful, rescuing outreach to the doubting and endangered (vv. 22–23; Galatians 6:1)
- Security and responsibility producing active faithfulness
- Carrying one specific, applied truth into the week

Discussion Prompts

- What one truth from this passage do you most need this week?
- Which of Jude's commands is the Lord calling you to take up afresh?
- Who is one wavering person you could reach with mercy this week?