

SUSTAINING OUR FAITH

Daily Bible Readings			
M	Feb. 26	1 Cor. 15:1–11	The Faith in Which We Stand
T	Feb. 27	Num. 16:12–13, 23–34	Turn Away from the Wicked
W	Feb. 28	Gen. 18:20–22; 19:1–5, 15–17, 22–25	Flee from the Presence of Sin
Th	Feb. 29	1 Pet. 2:13–25	Always Do the Right Thing
F	Mar. 1	Gen. 5:18–24	Walk with God
Sa	Mar. 2	Jude 3–16	Contend for the Unchanging Faith

MAIN IDEA

How do people remain true to their values? Jude writes to the community of faith, assuring them of God’s promises: to keep us from falling and to make us stand without blemish in God’s presence.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Jude

VERSES TO REMEMBER

[B]eloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 20–21)

PREPARING TO LEAD

- Pray for participants and for yourself as leader. Reflect on lesson 1, “Sustaining Our Faith” (Participant’s Book, p. 1).
- Familiarize yourself with the context of the Scripture. In this letter, the recipients are not identified, but it was likely written to a specific church and was intended to warn against danger and to encourage and urge the church to be faithful.
- Provide Bibles, Participant’s Books, Worship Leaflets for lesson 1, name tags, paper, and pens.
- As in past quarters, the lessons in this quarter suggest that participants respond in a journal. If possible, contact participants in advance and suggest that they bring a tablet or a paper journal. Provide writing paper for those who do not bring one.
- If you do not already have six Lenten candles from the last lessons of the previous quarter, obtain them and arrange them in a line, as well as a means to light them.

- If you plan to use the optional Scripture reading activity, recruit a strong reader in advance to read the passage aloud to the group.
- Step 6 offers additional options from which to choose.

LEADING THE LESSON

Opening Worship

1. Gathering

- Greet participants and provide name tags. When most have arrived, invite participants to respond to the following: My earliest memory of the church was . . .
- Distribute Bibles, Participant's Books, Worship Leaflets, pens, and paper for lesson 1.
- Formulate and get consensus on some simple ground rules for the study (for example, welcoming diverse points of view, maintaining confidentiality, and so on).

2. Morning Prayer 1

Worship Leaflet, lesson 1

- Light four candles, noting that today is the third Sunday in Lent. After a moment, extinguish one candle, leaving three burning.
- Encourage participants to settle into silence.
- Invite volunteers to lead portions of Morning Prayer from the Worship Leaflet, beginning with the Opening Sentences and ending after the Hymn.

Teaching Tip
<p>Even if your group has been meeting for some time, there are always things participants can learn about one another. Using a question as an ice breaker will often reveal something new about a person. And if you do have a newcomer, an activity like this can help that person feel more a part of the group. If the suggested question doesn't work for you, choose another that you think your group will be more responsive to.</p>

SCRIPTURE

Jude 17–25

17 But you, beloved, must remember the words previously spoken by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸for they said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts.” ¹⁹It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions. ²⁰But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on some who are wavering; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, ²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Note: Find Scripture Notes for this reading on the final page of the lesson.

Bible Study

3. Scripture Reading

Participant’s Book, p. 2

- Read the passage round-robin style, with each participant reading one verse in turn.
- Optional: As has been noted in previous studies, epistles in the first century that were directed to a community of faith would have been read aloud to the gathered community. Invite participants to imagine being part of the church to whom this epistle is directed. Remind them that we can’t know for certain which church it was or in what location, but we do know members were under some threats to their faith. Have the reader you recruited read the Scripture passage aloud.

4. Tiny Letter, Big Issues

Participant’s Book, p. 2

- The author of the Participant’s Book calls Jude a tiny letter with big issues. Invite the group to examine both parts of that phrase. Ask:
 1. What do you know about the epistle of Jude? What does the author tell us about its size and prominence in the New Testament?
 2. What are the big issues Jude speaks to? Which themes does the author suggest don’t make for the most uplifting Sunday morning message? Have you ever heard any of these themes addressed in a sermon?

- Invite volunteers to describe the various theories as to the origins of this epistle.
 1. Who are possible authors?
 2. What connections can we identify in portions of 1 Peter?
 3. What troubles does the community appear to have been facing?
 4. Can you name false teachers—either actual persons or prevailing theories or trends—that threaten the faithful today? Why do you think they are a threat?
- Invite the group to reflect in silence for a moment on the question posed by the author at the close of this section:
 1. Who do you trust to advise you on matters of faith?

5. **What Really Matters** Participant's Book, p. 3

- Invite a volunteer to summarize the notes from the author's study Bible.
 1. In Jude's time, what was indicated by the dissension occurring because of false teachers?
- We read that Jude points out that, even before Jesus, those trying to follow God's call were subject to false understandings, prone to error, and at risk from heresy. What examples from Israel's history does the author of Jude cite? What examples do you know of in early Christian history or from the history of your own denomination? Can you cite current controversies troubling faith groups today?
- Jude exhorts readers not to concern themselves with rooting out and punishing those proclaiming a distorted faith. What does he suggest they do instead?
- Why is it difficult to focus on our own faith in the midst of dissension and division?

6. **Stepping into the World** Participant's Book, p. 5

- The author suggests that Jude asks us to back away from finger-pointing and name-calling and to focus on building up our own faith, not just for our own sake, but for the good of the whole community. Invite participants to reflect on the following questions and to respond in their journals to one or more:
 1. How do I respond to the idea that my time might be better spent backing away from the keyboard or megaphone, and engaging instead in personal reflection on my own faith?

2. Are there controversies the author of the Participant's Book cites that would be difficult for me to refrain from writing or speaking out about? When is it appropriate to stand up, and when to stand down?
 3. When, if ever, have I addressed my feelings of dissension with prayer or thanksgiving?
 4. What helps me sustain my own faith?
- Choose between the following optional activities for exploring the Scripture:
 1. Examine the connection between Jude 17–18 and 2 Peter 3:2–3. Then consider other predictions, warnings, or promises that are repeated throughout the Bible and why these repetitive reminders are valuable.
 2. Study the Key Verses, concentrating on the verbs Jude uses in admonishing readers to faithful living. Discuss actions participants can take toward practices in faithful living.

Closing Worship

7. Morning Prayer 2

Worship Leaflet, lesson 1

- Invite the participants to turn to the Worship Leaflet, and enlist volunteers to lead the remaining portions of Morning Prayer.
- Begin with Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession, pray the Lord's Prayer, and end with the Dismissal.
- Bless participants as they leave, saying, "(Name), beloved one, build yourself up in your most holy faith."
- Extinguish the three remaining candles, encouraging participants to sit in silence and offer silent prayers as the tendrils of smoke from the candles loft upward.

SCRIPTURE NOTES

The following notes provide additional information about today's Scripture.

1. Remembering (v. 17) is a significant part of growing in faith, including remembering what a faith-filled life looks like, remembering what God has said and done, remembering God's promises, and remembering what we've been taught by faithful followers of Jesus.
2. The phrase "last time(s)" (v. 18) was frequently used by first-century Jews to refer to eschatological times: the events that will mark the end of human history. Jude 18 quotes 2 Peter 3:3, which (like Jude's letter here) specifically addresses the dangers that threatened the early church through false teachers whose greed for honor, recognition, and attention drove them to masquerade as spiritual super-teachers.

3. Jude provides a “litmus test” to enable believers to discern between false and faithful teachers: anyone whose words and lifestyle mimic the surrounding culture and who instigates division within the church should not be accepted as a faith model by believers.
4. Jude 20–23 encourages believers to resist the immoral ways of false teachers and instead to “contend for the faith” (v. 3): building their lives on the foundation of the gospel, praying in the spirit, relying on God’s love, looking forward to Christ’s mercy and eternal life, offering mercy toward others, and rescuing others from the fire. Such living sets apart the faithful from those who are false.

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS DURING THE WEEK

Send an email or a text:

1. Suggesting that participants revisit the question on which they reflected early in the lesson: Who do you trust to advise you on matters of faith?
2. Encouraging them, in the season of Lent, to add to or deepen the faith practices in which they are currently engaged.