

## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #15

Jude / 2 Pet. 3 / Titus 1:10-16 / Gal. 1:6-9

### CONTENDING EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

Whose responsibility is it to stand up for the doctrines of the Christian faith taught in the church and lived out in the lives of the members?

*<sup>3</sup> Beloved, while I was making every effort to write **you** about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to **you** appealing that **you** contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. — Jude 3*

We come now, in our studies of living for Jesus Christ, to consider our instructions and duties in response to **false teaching, false teachers, and false brethren** that are found in our churches and among God's people. We find this addressed clearly, with dire warnings, and extensive descriptions of what we will face, and precise instructions on what to do.

False teaching and self-oriented church members, contradicting the truths revealed to us in the Scriptures, have always sought to infiltrate and influence the people of God. They deny the inerrancy of God's Word, the deity and work of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace, and that life is to be lived loving God instead of self.

*<sup>10</sup> These men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. <sup>11</sup> Woe to them!...*

*<sup>12</sup> These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; <sup>13</sup> wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. — Jude 10-13*

**Jude** lists 23 characteristics of such men, warning us regarding them, and telling us to “**contend earnestly**” with them. Our Lord, Peter, Paul, John, and James, all warn us of them and give instructions to contend earnestly with them for “the once for all delivered to the saints faith”. They are the entire focus of Peter's second epistle.

*<sup>1</sup> But just as false prophets arose among the people, **there will also be false teachers among you**, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. <sup>2</sup> And **many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned**; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words. — 2 Pet. 2:1-3*

**Peter** lists over 20 of their actions and motives and ends his letter with this warning:

*<sup>17</sup> You therefore, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, lest, being carried away by the errors of these men, you fall from your own steadfastness.*  
— 2 Peter 3:17

**Paul** addressed their insidious work of false teaching and self-oriented living in the church several times in his letters.

*<sup>10</sup> There are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, <sup>11</sup> who must be silenced, because their lies [regarding the faith] are upsetting whole families, teachings things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain... <sup>16</sup> they profess to know God, but they actually deny Him, they are disobedient and detestable, and worthless for any good.*  
— Titus 1:10-16

*<sup>6</sup> I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; <sup>7</sup> which is really not another; only **there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.** <sup>8</sup> But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*  
— Gal. 1:6-8

To Timothy he warned of them and spoke of their effect upon young, unaware, and unprotected believers. He was not subtle in dealing with them!

*<sup>4:1</sup> The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and demonic doctrines... <sup>3</sup> men who teach against God's design of marriage and add to God's revelation with their own doctrines... <sup>1:20</sup> among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, who I have delivered over to Satan, that they may be taught not to blaspheme...*

*<sup>6:3</sup> If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*  
— 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1:20; 6:3-5

**John** warned of those who taught a false faith, both by their words and their lives:

*<sup>4</sup> I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. <sup>5</sup> And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, **that we love one another.***

*<sup>6</sup> And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. **This is the commandment,** just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.*

<sup>7</sup>For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup>Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

<sup>9</sup>Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

<sup>10</sup>**If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;** <sup>11</sup>for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. — 2 John 4-11

Jude's entire letter is devoted to warning us about false teachers and influences, how to respond to them, and how to help those influenced by them. He tells us:

1. What we are to do – contend earnestly.
2. What we are to contend for – the once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith.
3. Who we are to contend against.
4. Six responses we are to have in regard to them and those that are influenced by them.

Let us briefly clarify each of these.

### 1. What does it mean to contend earnestly?

The Greek words mean “to combat intensely”, carrying the sense of intensive force against someone in combat. We are to enter into aggressive repulsion of an enemy. We are to go into battle.

### 2. What are we to contend for?

“The once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith.” This is not just the gospel, but the whole body of revealed truth given to us in the Scripture. Is this only the theological concepts and doctrines of the Christian faith, or both correct theology AND correct living? Is godly living to be contended for as well as sound doctrine? It is.

<sup>1</sup>Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits to see whether they are from God**; because many false prophets have gone out into the world...<sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love...<sup>20</sup> **If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar**; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

<sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. — 1 John 4:1, 8, 20-21

This leads us to briefly note how we are to respond to 1) those who are engaged in false teaching and unbiblical living, and 2) those who are being influenced by them.

### 3. How are we to contend earnestly for the truth against false teaching and teachers in the church?

Let's not be naïve here about what we are facing. It is good to expect a little blood on the floor in this combat against the forces of darkness, disguised as good guys, seeking to harm our children, family, and brothers and sisters in Christ at church. The creeps.

<sup>3</sup> *Beloved,.. I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.* <sup>4</sup> *For certain persons have crept in unnoticed (creeps!), those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, **ungodly persons** who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

— Jude 3-4

Remember the words used to describe them by Peter and Jude and Paul:

<sup>1</sup> *There will also be false teachers among you, who will:*

- *secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them...*
- <sup>2</sup> *many will follow their sensuality.*
- *because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.*
- <sup>3</sup> *in their greed they will exploit you with false words....*
- <sup>10</sup> *They indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.*
- *daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,...*
- <sup>12</sup> *But these, like unreasoning animals...reviling where they have no knowledge....*
- <sup>13</sup> *They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime...in their deceptions...*
- <sup>14</sup> *having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls,*
- *having a heart trained in greed,*
- <sup>15</sup> *forsaking the right way they have gone astray,...*
- <sup>18</sup> *speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality.* — 2 Pet. 2:1-18
  
- <sup>16</sup> *These are grumblers,*
- *finding fault,*
- *following after their own lusts,*
- *they speak arrogantly,*
- *flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.* — Jude 16
  
- <sup>13</sup> *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ...as servants of righteousness.* — 2 Cor. 11:13

Dealing strongly with them is required as described in the following passages: (Rom. 16:17, 2 Thess. 3:6,14, 2 John 1:10, 1 Cor. 5:9-11, Mt. 18:15-17, Titus 3:10 and many others)

Contending strongly with false teachers and brethren is only half of the battle. Helping other brothers and sisters who are being influenced by them is an equaling challenging and important task for those making disciples for Christ.

Jude provided some direction for us, identifying three categories of Christians we are to help: in mind here: 1) those **confused** by false teachers and teaching, those **convinced** by false teachers and teaching, and those **committed** to false teaching.

<sup>22</sup> And have mercy on <b>some</b> , who are doubting;	(they are confused)
<sup>23</sup> save <b>others</b> , snatching them out of the fire;	(they are convinced)
and on <b>some</b> have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.	(they are committed)
— Jude 22-23	

Let's look briefly at these three categories of believers needing our help.

1. We are to **help those in our church who are confused** about what is true and what isn't.

The deceptive statements made by false teachers, coupled with their worldly lifestyles, can easily confuse some immature Christians within the church. Without much experience and teaching, they find themselves **confused**, –unsure of what is biblically true and what isn't. Jude calls upon the mature ones in the church to have mercy on ...“those who are doubting”. Like wolves stalking sheep, false teachers prey on the weak (2 Tim 3:6) and those mired in doubt. (James 1:6, Ps. 73:13-16, 77:7-9)

Those of us who are strong must show mercy to such souls as they are torn between truth and error (Eph 4:14), and commitment and non-commitment (Heb 3:7-4:13; 6:1-12). Showing mercy here means exhorting such people with the truth to help them before they are permanently caught up in heresy. This takes time, patience, and sympathy.

Now, whose responsibility is this? At this level, when we are talking about weak, immature, young, naïve brothers and sisters in our church. It is **everyone's** responsibility to be helping everyone with “the whole body, working together”. Help these believers get to the truth early on in their battles, because if someone does not...the deception gets worse

2. We must **bluntly warn those who have become convinced** of false teaching.

*“Save others, snatching them out of the fire.”*

Jesus modeled these first 2 during His ministry to those who were confused, unsure, and filled with doubts. He patiently and gently presented the gospel and His commands. But to those who were convinced of false teaching, such as the scribes and Pharisees, He was blunt, confrontive, and gave them grave warnings about the consequences.

“Snatching” is the word *harpatzo* and means “to seize or take something by force”. The picture here is seeing someone on the very edge of the cliff, convinced that jumping off is really God’s will! What a challenge, rescuing **those now convinced of false teaching**. But we must be willing to be used of God to save others. It is only His power that draws. He drew you. He draws, Pharisees, Mormons, and others convinced of false teaching. But we must contend **for** them regarding the truth.

3. We must **with great caution and wisdom proclaim the truth to those committed** to false teaching.

*“And on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh”*

Heretics are profoundly deceived individuals, deeply committed to their own deceptions. When reaching out to such people, we who know the truth must proceed with the utmost caution and wisdom. The admonition ‘have mercy with fear’ indicates the sobering, frightening nature that outreach to such people entails. This wise fear stems from an awareness that getting too close to corrupt, apostate error, could result in being tainted by those lies. This warning is repeated 5 times! (See Matt 16:6,12; 1 Cor 5:6-7; 15:33; Gal 5:7-9).

Jude used very coarse language to highlight the danger involved in this type of outreach. Garment translates “*chiton*” and refers to the clothing that the people of the day wore under their outer tunics. It was their underwear. The word translated “polluted” is form of the verb *spiloo*, meaning “to stain” or “to spot”.

To be “polluted by the flesh” means “to be stained by bodily function.” Just as no one wants to handle someone else’s dirty underwear and be defiled physically, so we should be extremely wary of getting too close to the spiritual defilement of those corrupted by false teachers. Even in bringing the gospel to committed apostates, saints must exercise great caution and wisdom. (Matt 10:16).

But, you may be thinking, I thought we were to love our enemies. How does that square with this contending with them, hating their teaching and even their presence?

Truth and love are found often together in our Bibles. How they are linked in this situation is expressed clearly by Paul in Eph 4:25. "Speak the truth - in love." Speaking truth is what we are to do, for it contains the Words of life. Love describes the way in which we are to speak it. See also 2 Tim 2:24-26 and note that **correction** is the exhortation. The manners in which correction is to be done are also noted, and important, but not the imperative.

Let us close our study by asking ourselves:

1. Am I mature enough, to discern false teaching and false teachers?
  - a. by my knowledge of Scripture.
  - b. by my relationship with the Holy Spirit.
  - c. by my lifestyle of seeking God's opinion and imposing it.
  
2. Can I help others in this fierce battle for souls? Do I study? Do I pray? Am I alert? Am I an earnest contender for the faith?

## UNIT 15 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study complete the following self-evaluation.

### Evaluating How I Am Contending For The Faith

1. I see it as my responsibility to confront error when I see it in my church, both in its teaching and in the lives of its members. Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Not really\_\_\_
2. I have contended with false teaching and sinning church members in the past.  
\_\_\_\_\_ How often?\_\_\_\_\_ How many in the last year?\_\_\_\_\_
3. I feel that I am mature enough to discern error doctrinally and am committed to doing this as the Lord leads regardless of the costs relationally.  
100%\_\_\_ 75%\_\_\_ 50%\_\_\_
4. I would rate the commitment and protection given by my church leaders against all opposition to the truth and practice of the faith as \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I appreciate those who have led me and taught me and have expressed this to them.  
Well\_\_\_ Poorly\_\_\_ Often\_\_\_ Not Often\_\_\_
6. Overall I would say that my church contends for the faith...Well\_\_\_ Poorly\_\_\_  
It could improve by\_\_\_\_\_
7. I am committed to discussing this with the leadership when necessary\_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 15 Study Session #1

1. Is contending for the faith a matter of only addressing the right doctrines of the faith, or is it also a matter of addressing our life of faith? Is it contending only against false teaching or also against wrong attitudes and conduct by believers?
2. If we see “self-love” rather than “selfless love of others” in others, is this a “contending” matter for us? When?
3. What happens to the flock if church leaders do not address the challenges their members face to “depart from error and iniquity”? What happens to a family if the parents do this?
4. How does this principle relate to sending children to schools taught by humanists? To Christian colleges with subjects taught by evolutionists?
5. What does 2 Tim. 2:24-26 say about how we are to “correct” or “contend” with error? What does this mean practically? What must we avoid?
6. Does contending for the faith mean getting involved in politics?
7. What people are MY responsibility to go and talk to about what they are doing in life and/or teaching that is not according to “the once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith”?

### Prayer Together



## **UNIT 15 STUDY SESSION #2:**

In preparation for the second study session consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share about it appropriately.

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. If you have a concern about a doctrinal issue or imbalance in your church, ask for a meeting with one of the elders and address your concern with him.
2. If you know a person at church that is clearly sinning and needs to change his or her attitudes or conduct, consider how Matt. 18:15-20 should be applied to the situation and do so.
3. If you have a leader(s) at your church who have been standing against false teaching and/or false brethren in/or for the church body, write a letter of appreciation and encouragement and/or ask to see them and bless them for their protection and example.
4. If there is a false teacher or doctrine that has “crept” into your life, seek counsel from your leaders regarding how to proceed.
5. If you know someone at church who is following a false teacher or is being influenced by false teaching consider with the Lord how to wisely address them and do so.
6. Study the following passages regarding Paul’s example and exhortations to be of good courage. Memorize at least three of them. Define courage.
7. Gal. 1:10/Phil. 1:27/Col. 1:29/Eph. 6:18-20/1 Cor. 16:13/Phil. 4:1/Rom. 1:16/2 Cor. 5:6-8

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 15 Study Session #2**

1. If you had an opportunity to pursue one of the application projects can you share with us how it went?

### **Prayer Together**