

**RECAP OF SESSION 4: REMEMBER AND REMAIN (JUDE 17-21)**

In our previous session, we shifted our focus from identifying false teachers to understanding how believers can actively persevere in their faith amidst such challenges. Jude exhorted us to “remember the predictions of the apostles” regarding scoffers in the last times, reminding us that their appearance is a fulfillment of prophecy [1]. He then provided three vital actions for spiritual steadfastness: “building yourselves up in your most holy faith,” “praying in the Holy Spirit,” and actively striving to “keep yourselves in the love of God” while awaiting Christ’s return [1]. This session now builds upon that foundation, guiding us on how to interact with those who have been affected by false teaching or are struggling in their faith.

EXEGESIS OF JUDE 22-23: SHOWING MERCY IN A BROKEN WORLD

After instructing believers on how to maintain their own spiritual integrity, Jude turns to the crucial and often challenging task of ministering to others who are in various stages of spiritual compromise or doubt. He outlines a nuanced approach, emphasizing mercy and discernment in dealing with different groups of people affected by the pervasive influence of ungodliness [2].

JUDE 1:22-23 - A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TO MERCY

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. [3]

Jude presents three distinct categories of individuals and prescribes a specific pastoral response for each, all rooted in the overarching principle of mercy:

1. Have mercy on those who doubt: This first group consists of believers who are wavering in their faith, perhaps confused or unsettled by the false teachings, but not yet fully committed to error [2]. Their doubt may stem from intellectual questions, emotional struggles, or the deceptive arguments of the ungodly. For these individuals, Jude calls for compassion and understanding. The response should be one of gentle persuasion, patient teaching, and empathetic support, aiming to restore their confidence in the truth without condemnation [1]. This approach recognizes that doubt, in itself, is not always apostasy but can be a stage of spiritual struggle that requires tender care.

2. Save others by snatching them out of the fire: This second group represents those who are in grave spiritual danger, teetering on the brink of destruction due to their entanglement with false teaching or immoral practices [2]. The imagery of “snatching them out of the fire” conveys extreme urgency and the perilous state of these individuals. It suggests a more direct, forceful, and immediate intervention is required to rescue them from imminent spiritual ruin [1]. This is a call to courageous evangelism and discipleship, where believers must actively confront error and call people to repentance, pulling them away from the destructive consequences of their choices. It implies a bold and courageous effort to pull them away from destructive paths.



3. To others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh:

This final group represents those who are deeply corrupted by the false teachers and their immoral practices. While mercy is still to be extended, it must be done “with fear” (Greek: phobos) [2]. This “fear” is not a fear of the individuals themselves, but a holy reverence for God and a cautious awareness of the contaminating power of sin [2]. Believers are to hate “even the garment stained by the flesh,” meaning they must detest the sin and its defiling effects, even as they seek to minister to the sinner [1]. This approach emphasizes the need for spiritual purity and vigilance, ensuring that in the act of rescuing others, one does not become defiled by the very sin they are trying to combat. It calls for a careful balance of compassion for the person and uncompromising abhorrence for their sin and its consequences [2]. These verses collectively highlight the diverse pastoral responses required in a church facing apostasy. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a discerning application of mercy, urgency, and spiritual caution.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Jude instruct believers to “have mercy on those who doubt” (v. 22)? What kind of doubt might he be referring to?

2. What is the difference between “those who doubt” (v. 22) and those who need to be “snatched out of the fire” (v. 23)?

3. What does the imagery of “snatching them out of the fire” convey about the urgency and nature of the intervention required?

4. How can believers practically “snatch” someone from spiritual danger today?

5. Explain the meaning of showing “mercy with fear” (v. 23). What kind of fear is Jude referring to?

6. Why is it important to “hate even the garment stained by the flesh” (v. 23) while still showing mercy to the person?



7. How does Jude's instruction in verses 22-23 demonstrate a nuanced approach to dealing with different levels of spiritual compromise?

8. What are the potential dangers for believers who attempt to minister to those deeply entangled in sin without exercising "fear" or caution?

9. How do these verses challenge a purely judgmental or a purely permissive approach to those influenced by false teaching?

10. What role does discernment play in applying Jude 22-23 in a contemporary church context?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Jude 22-23 provides essential guidance for navigating a world where spiritual deception and moral compromise are prevalent. It calls us to cultivate a compassionate heart for those who are struggling, recognizing that not all who stray are equally culpable or entrenched in error. We are challenged to be actively involved in the spiritual rescue of others, exercising both tender mercy and firm conviction. This means being willing to engage with those in doubt, to urgently intervene for those in grave danger, and to do so with a holy fear that guards our own hearts against the defilement of sin. Our aim is always restoration, but never at the expense of compromising God's truth or our own spiritual purity.

TAKE-HOME CHALLENGE

This week, identify someone in your sphere of influence who might be struggling with doubt or is being drawn into ungodly influences. Prayerfully consider which of Jude's three categories they might fall into. Then, with wisdom and sensitivity, determine one concrete step you can take to show them mercy, offer guidance, or, if necessary, courageously intervene to help "snatch them out of the fire." Remember to guard your own heart and convictions as you do so.

POINTS OF REFLECTION

How does Jude's call to mercy shape your perspective on those who hold different beliefs or struggle with sin?

What are the practical implications of distinguishing between different types of spiritual struggle (doubt, deep entanglement, severe corruption)?

How can you develop the discernment needed to apply Jude 22-23 effectively in your relationships?

What does it mean for you to "hate the garment stained by the flesh" while loving the person?

How does the urgency of "snatching them out of the fire" motivate your evangelism and discipleship efforts?

References

[1] BibleProject. "Jude." BibleProject Guides, <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-jude/>. [2] Enduring Word. "Jude – Contending for the Faith." Enduring Word Bible Commentary, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/jude-1/>. [3] The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. (Used for direct scripture quotes for accuracy and consistency).