

Jude 1:20,21

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting eagerly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Jude wrote most of his letter (1:4-19) as a warning against false teachers, who have recently infiltrated these churches. He calls on them to discern and resist these false teachers, trusting that God will ultimately defeat them.

Now, in 1:20,21, Jude pivots to exhort his audience to maintain their own spiritual health. After all, the best defense against sickness is attention to good health. Let us seek to understand and apply Jude's spiritual health prescription by answering three questions: "What is Jude's main directive?", "Why is his directive important?", and "How can we put his directive into practice?"

"What is Jude's main directive?"

In this long sentence, Jude issues one central imperative: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." "The love of God" refers not to our love for God, but rather to God's love for us. Jude has already identified his audience as "beloved in God the Father" (1:1). Our challenge is not to merit God's love; we are already secure in His love through His Son Jesus. Our challenge is rather to keep ourselves in God's love for us – to live our lives with a firm focus on the fact that we are dearly loved by God.

Jesus gave a similar reminder to His disciples at His last supper with them: "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; *abide in My love*" (John 15:9). Even though Jesus would soon be physically absent from them, He promises that His loving presence would be continually available to them through the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-23).



The New Testament makes a similar promise to all who have entrusted themselves to Jesus:

Romans 5:5 . . . (our) hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

“Why is his directive important?”

Jude knows that when we stay focused on God’s love for us, our entire spiritual lives flourish. As the crocuses outside my window grow and bloom by abiding in the sunshine, so our souls mature spiritually as we abide in God’s love.

But there are many voices that seek to prevent us from keeping ourselves in the love of God.

- One such voice is false teaching which tells us that we must continue to earn God’s love by our religious or moral performance. Those who listen to such teaching will be wracked by spiritual anxiety instead of resting in God’s permanent acceptance through Jesus’ finished work on their behalf (Romans 8:1).
- Another voice comes from our own pride, which is not content to rest in God’s love, but which insists on boasting that we are more spiritual than others. But what does it matter how we compare to others, when the only verdict that ultimately matters is God’s? And God has pronounced the same verdict on us that He pronounced on Jesus: “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”
- Then there are the many voices from our culture, which seek not so much to deny God’s love for us as to *distract* us from it. “What you really need,” say these voices, “is another purchase, another game to master, more time on social media, etc.” But this is like drinking salt-water – the more you drink, the thirstier you become.



Yes, it is quite a challenge to keep ourselves in the love of God. But Jude gives us some practical advice that will help us to do this.

“How can we put his directive into practice?”

Look closely at 1:20,21. Notice that there are three phrases that precede and follow Jude’s central imperative to “keep yourselves in the love of God.” The first phrase begins with the word “building.” The second begins with “praying.” And the third begins with “waiting.” These words are participles, which means that they modify (or explain) the central imperative. In this case, they explain how we can “keep ourselves in the love of God.”

- “Building yourselves up on your most holy faith” – This refers to being regularly nourished and strengthened by God’s Word. “Your most holy faith” is Jude’s way of describing the content of our faith, which is the inspired written revelation of the Bible.*

When we approach God’s Word as His love-letter to us, when we look especially for what its different books and passages tell us about God’s love, we come away strengthened by this encounter. His promises assure us, and even His commands become invitations to experience more of His love.

- “Praying in the Holy Spirit” – This refers to communing personally with God as our Father and Friend. He has given us His Spirit to help us to commune with Him. He helps us to pour out our fears and sorrows. He helps us to confess our faults. He helps us to give praise and thanks for God’s many gifts. He helps us to request God’s assistance for ourselves and others as we seek to advance His will.

Such Spirit-led prayer is refreshing for our souls! Our spirits

* See Jude 1:3 – “. . . that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”



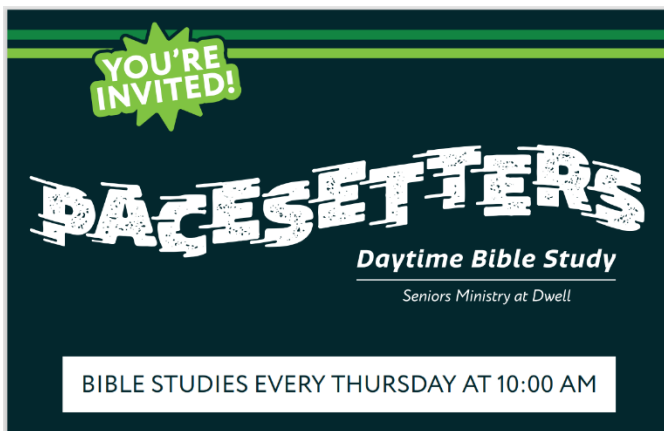
have touched God, and experienced a fresh measure of His great love. We exchange our many burdens for “the peace of God, which surpasses understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

- “Waiting eagerly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life” – This refers to anticipating Jesus’ return and our entry into His eternal kingdom. Jesus has overcome our mortality through His resurrection. Death is no longer an all-consuming destroyer. It is now the portal into our Father’s loving presence, to the home Jesus has prepared for us, to the new bodies suited to a new heavens and earth, to the great reunion and celebration with believers from throughout history.

When you are about to go on vacation, don’t you love to think about your destination and eagerly anticipate your departure? Something similar but more wonderful happens when we think about and anticipate what we will inherit in the next life. God’s love grows bigger in our field of vision, and our earthly troubles shrink to their proper size.

Father, thank You for initiating Your love toward me while I was both godless and helpless. Lord Jesus, thank You for a love that paid the full penalty of my sins so that I could be reconciled to God, and for giving me the Holy Spirit so that I can experience God’s love. Help me today to keep myself in the love of God.

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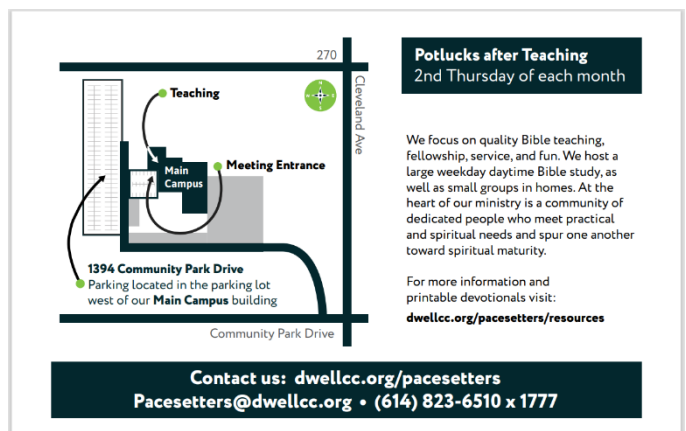


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