



SAMPLE

**EXAMINING  
OUR FAITH**



# THE ORDER OF SERVICE

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

## THE LESSON

- I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell — silence

## THE CLOSING

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Rev. Dr. Roderick Belin, Publisher  
Rev. Faith Waters, Lessons  
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## THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

## THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my AME Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

SAMPLE

# Sustaining Our Faith

Lesson Scripture: Jude  
Focus Scripture: Jude 17-25

SAMPLE

**KEY VERSES:** Beloved, 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

## WORDS TO KNOW

**APOSTLES** – the chief disciples of Jesus Christ

**SCOFFERS** – people who voice ridicule of those who choose to believe God and his Word

**DEVOID** – entirely lacking the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

**MERCY** – undeserved compassion or forgiveness from God

**DEFILED** – to spoil something

**BLEMISH** – a small mark or flaw

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JUDE 17-25**

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

**INTRODUCTION**

During this spring quarter, we will focus on *Examining Our Faith*. We explore the fullness of faith as a response to God’s desire to be in a relationship with us. To be faithless is to turn away from God and to put trust in something, or someone, other than God. In the Old and New Testaments, there are examples of spiritual faithfulness and unfaithfulness. The lessons of the spring quarter guide us into a reaffirmation of our confidence in God because “without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

The first five lessons focusing on “Faith-FULL Versus Faith-LESS” are drawn from Jude, Second Corinthians, First Peter, Acts, and Mark and they invite us to turn the challenges of life into opportunities for nurturing our faith instead of giving up, turning away from God, or rejecting faith. In today’s lesson, Jude appeals to us to strive for the same faith that was once entrusted to the saints.

*Discuss an occasion when unbelievers challenged your faith. How does*

*one maintain their faith in God while living in a world that opposes all we view as sacred?*

SAMPLE

## BIBLE STORY

The author, Jude, was the brother of James, who was the leader of the Jerusalem church and writer of the Epistle of James (Jas. 1:1; Mk. 6:3). And also, the half-brother of Jesus. At first, Jude was an unbeliever (Jn. 7:3 – 5). Ultimately, he became convinced of Jesus’ deity (Acts 1:14). The letter is dated about A.D. 65. Jude desired to remind the church of the need for constant vigilance to keep strong in the faith and to defend it against heresy. From the first century on, the church has been threatened by heresy and false teaching. We must always be on our guard.

Jude’s message to Jewish Christians and believers everywhere was the same. We have to expect opposition to come and godless teachers to arise, but Christians should “contend for the faith” by rejecting all falsehood and immorality (v. 3; vv. 4 – 19). We must remember God’s mighty acts of rescue and punishment and the warnings of the apostles (vv. 5 – 11, 14 – 16, 17 – 19). Jude gives us instructions on how to take a stance against false teachers and remain faithful to God.

Christians must fight for God’s truth. The apostles of Christ, as well as other apostles, warned the believers about false teachers who would seek to turn them away from the truth of the Gospel (vv. 17 – 18; Acts 20:29; 1 Tim. 4:1 – 6; 2 Tim. 3:1 – 10; 2 Peter 2:1 – 22). We must evaluate and be careful about whom we choose as our spiritual leaders. If they are false teachers, we are to make it known that the person “divides,” and “follows mere instincts,” without being new creations in Christ, and does not have the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:8 – 9). This simply means they are unsaved.

First, believers are to cultivate their spiritual growth by having an intimate prayer life with God (v. 20). We need to pray in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit knowing he intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26 – 27). Moreover, the Holy Spirit opens our minds to Jesus and teaches us about him (Jn. 14:26; 15:26). This results in a more intimate relationship with Christ. Second, we are urged to keep close to Christ (v. 21). This means we are to live in a close relationship with God as

well as other believers. If we do, false teachers cannot lead us away from God (Jn. 15:9 – 10). Third, we have to witness to others about Christ to save them from God's judgment (vv. 22 – 23). Witnessing can come through our actions of kindness and compassion. And we are to love the sinners but hate the sin. Jude closes the letter with a glorious benediction of praise to God (vv. 24 – 25).

*What is the warning that Jude is giving to the Christians? How can we fight for God's truth?*

## **SANKOFA**

Ronald McNair (1950 – 1986)

Ronald McNair was 9 years old when a South Carolina librarian told him he could not check out books from a segregated library in 1959. Refusing to leave, a determined McNair sat on the counter while the librarian called the police, as well as McNair's mother. The police arrived and told the librarian to let the young boy have his books, and McNair walked out alongside his mother and brother.

McNair went on to earn his Ph.D. in physics at MIT and became one of the first black Americans selected as an astronaut by NASA, alongside Guion S. Bluford, Jr. and Frederick Gregory.

McNair's first spaceflight was the STS-41B mission, aboard the Challenger shuttle. He successfully maneuvered the robotic arm, which allowed astronaut Bruce McCandless to perform the first space walk without being tethered to the spacecraft.

The second space flight for McNair would be his last. He, along with six other NASA astronauts, were aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger when it exploded one minute and 53 seconds after takeoff in 1986. Everyone on board the shuttle was killed. This included McNair along with Michael J. Smith, Judith Resnick, Francis "Dick" Scobee, Ellison Onizuka, Christa McAuliffe, and Gregory Jarvis.

Today, the library in South Carolina where McNair was refused books is named after the heroic boy determined to make a difference. In honor of Dr. McNair, Congress provided funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. It encourages

minorities from low-income families and first-generation college students to pursue graduate studies. Dr. McNair was survived by his wife, Cheryl, and their two children.

*What did Ronald McNair do to protest against segregation? How do you think his actions impacted others?*

Sources: Jackson, J. (2011, May 21). Ronald E. McNair (1950-1986). BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/mcnair-ronald-e-1950-1986/>  
 "Astronaut Bio: Ronald E. McNair 12/03." NASA – Johnson Space Center. National Aeronautics Space Administration, Dec. 2003. <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/mcnair.html>; "Ronald E. McNair's Bio." The University of Arizona Graduate College. Arizona Board of Regents. <http://grad.arizona.edu/mcnair/mcnair-bio>.

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

Silently read Jude 5 through 16. Write down the conflicting values that Jude mentions which demonstrate rebellion against God. The false teachers had influenced the believers to disobey God. Identify the conflicting values that can be seen in today's society.

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Social media influencers have millions of followers on Instagram; TikTok; X (formerly known as Twitter); and YouTube. People buy clothes and products advertised or used by the influencer. The influencer can make millions of dollars. Who influences you? Using your cell phone, scroll to the sites of people you follow. They have the power to change who you are based on what they say and do. You desire to be like them, so you compromise a little to do so. Then you continue to compromise your faith a little more. Eventually, you completely abandon your faith. There will be consequences for your disobedience. How can other believers influence those who have strayed away from God? Name three ways to be an influencer for Christ.

## SUMMARY

God's Word and the gift of eternal life have infinite value and have been entrusted to Christ's faithful followers. Many people live in opposition to God and his followers. They twist God's truth, seeking to deceive and destroy the unwary. But God is depending on us to tell the world about the truths contained in his Word. Most importantly, they can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. We must share the Word and defend its truths. This may result in beatings, imprisonment, rejection, and other suffering. It is worth enduring because Jesus died on the cross for us.

How important is prayer in your daily routine? Think about who you can join together with to start a prayer group. How can you be an agent of change in the AME Church, in your neighborhood, in the world, or your own life?

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: God, give me wisdom as I pray and read your Word. Give me the strength to not compromise my faith for the temporary pleasures of the world. My faith is in you. Amen.*

*Hymn: "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"*

# Testing Our Faith

Lesson Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:1-11

Focus Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5-11

**KEY VERSE:** Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? 2 Corinthians 13:5b, c

## WORDS TO KNOW

**EXAMINE** – to inspect in detail to determine their nature or condition

**TRUTH** – agreeing with fact or reality; steadfastness

**AUTHORITY** – the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience

**APPEAL** – to make a serious or urgent request to others

**PEACE** – a state of security and tranquility

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-11**

- 5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test!
- 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed.
- 7 But we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed.
- 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth but only for the truth.
- 9 For we rejoice when we are weak but you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may be restored.
- 10 So I write these things while I am away from you, so that when I come I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.
- 11 Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Be restored; listen to my appeal; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

**INTRODUCTION**

Tests are given as a part of school grading systems. We have to take a test to get our driver's licenses. If we go to the doctor, they question and examine us. Friends often test our loyalty. Our lives are full of tests and examinations. It can be difficult to meet all the standard requirements and maintain our principles.

Everyone has principles they are challenged to uphold. In today's lesson, the apostle Paul challenges believers to examine themselves as they rely on the power of Christ in keeping the faith imparted to them.

*How does it feel if you do not meet the standards of others? How and where do we find the courage to live authentically, keeping true to our ideals?*

**BIBLE STORY**

The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians about A.D. 55 – 57, from Macedonia. He was writing to the church in Corinth, and Christians

everywhere. Paul had written three letters to the Corinthians, but two had been lost. In 1 Corinthians (the second letter), he used strong words to correct and teach the believers. Most responded in the right manner. But there were a few who denied Paul's authority and questioned his motives. Paul's letter provides a defense of his life and ministry (Chs. 1 – 7). In chapters 8 and 9, Paul's focus is on the collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem. He also gave instructions on proper giving. Chapters 10 – 13 are dedicated to Paul's further defense of his apostleship and authority against false legalistic teachers.

As we look at chapter 13 for today's lesson, this is Paul's final advice to the believers in Corinth. Paul reminded them that his upcoming visit would be his third. A true minister, Paul was not a coward. He was ready to fight against sin. Paul stood firm against the false teachers and did not back down. Anyone who charged Paul with sin had to have two or three witnesses to confirm their accusations (v. 1; Deut. 19:15).

When Paul arrived for his third visit, he would act against the sinners. Paul had the option to 1) publicly confront the sinners and denounce their behavior; 2) call the sinners before the church leaders for discipline; or 3) excommunicate them from the church. Paul strongly hoped that the false teachers would cease their spreading of falsehoods and turn towards repentance. But if they did not, Paul would act. Paul had proven that Christ spoke through him and that the power of God operated in him (vv. 3 – 4).

Paul pleaded for the people to do a self-examination (v. 5). This means to take stock of one's spiritual condition. Believers can fail the test in the race before them (vv. 5 – 6; 1 Cor. 9:27). What is the outcome of failing? A believer can face the loss of a reward or possible physical death (1 Cor. 3:14 – 15). Paul desired the Corinthians to grow into mature believers whose faith increased daily. Spiritual maturity can help us avoid the pitfalls of the enemy. He closes the letter with a sense of hope that the Corinthians will respond to his appeal and live in peace (v. 11).

*Why does Paul urge the Corinthians to do a self-examination? Do self-examinations lead to lasting transformations? What can those*

*in positions of authority do to assist us in our spiritual growth and development?*

## **SANKOFA**

(1875) John Wesley Cromwell, *“Address on the Difficulties of the Colored Youth, in Obtaining An Education in The Virginias”*

Twenty-nine-year-old John Wesley Cromwell, born into slavery in 1846, was by 1875 an attorney, politician, educator, newspaper editor, and a rising leader in Virginia’s Reconstruction-era African American community. On August 23, 1875, he addressed the Colored Educational Convention meeting in Richmond. His reflections come after a close examination of the education system for colored youth.

Please take a moment to review the article and pay attention to John Wesley Cromwell’s concerns regarding the education of colored youth. It is crucial to understand his perspective and consider his suggestions for improving the education system for this demographic. To what extent has the education of minority and disadvantaged students evolved since 1875? What can you do to enact change?

Source: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1875-john-wesley-cromwell-address-difficulties-colored-youth-obtaining-education-virginias/>

## **REAL TALK, FAITH WALK**

We have to do a self-examination to see if we are living according to God’s standards. For this part of the lesson, look at yourself on your cell phone. Take a selfie and add a filter of a facial mask, and then take a selfie without it. Ask yourself, “What do I look like with a mask on? Do I hide behind a mask so no one will know I’m a Christian? Do I act like my friends so I can fit in?”

Look at your selfie without your mask on. It’s always good to reflect on who you are and how you present yourself to the world. When in the company of others, ask yourself if your life reflects Christ. What does God see? How can one align their actions and beliefs with Christian values?

## SUMMARY

Completing a self-examination is not easy, but necessary for our spiritual growth. We may have past failures (sins) that need to be dealt with through prayer and repentance. It is only then that we can begin to transform into the person God desires us to be. We can maintain and continue our spiritual growth by seeking God daily.

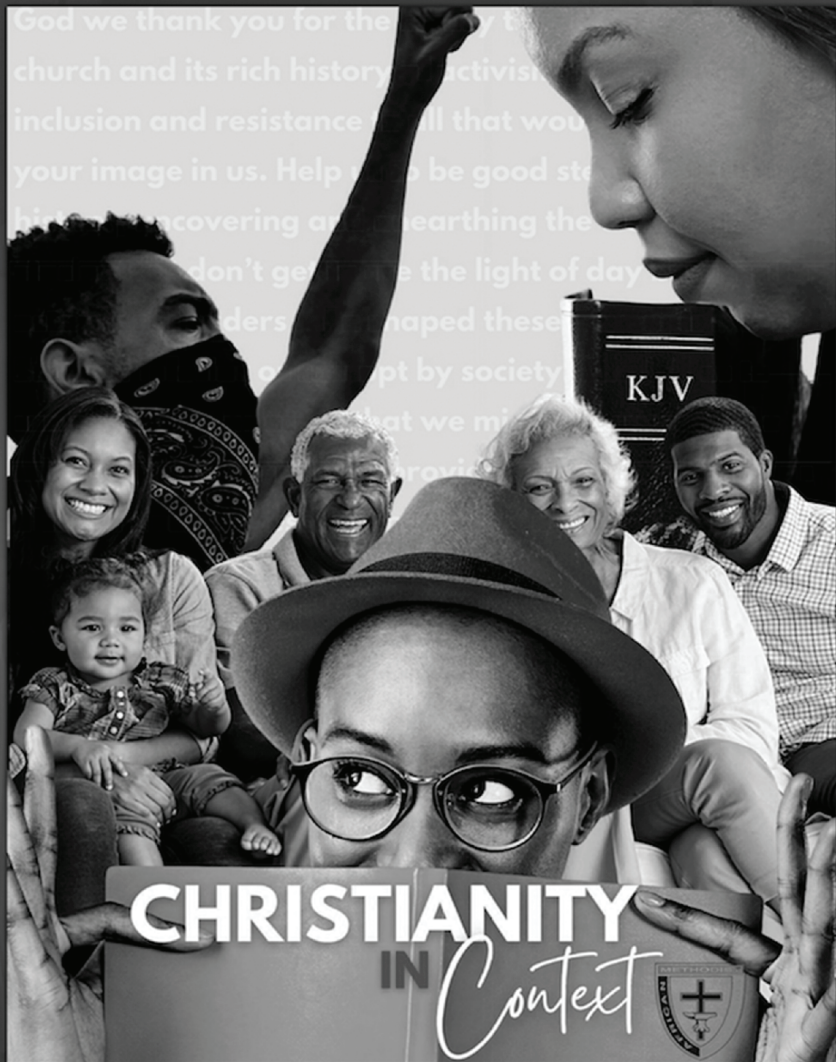
*Is there a way for mature Christians to assist you in conducting a self-examination? Moreover, what steps are necessary for spiritual growth?*

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: God, let me see myself as you see me. Every day guide me so I can reflect godliness in all I do. Amen.*

*Hymn: "Down at the Cross"*

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