



INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 13:1-6

From the beginning to the end of Hebrews, the abiding concern of the author has been to so instruct the tiny Hebrew church that it would stay afloat on the increasingly hostile seas of first-century Roman culture. Their ship was a microscopic dot on the massive billows of the official pagan/secular enterprise—and eminently vulnerable. It appeared to outside eyes that the external forces could sink it at will.

But the author knew that the internal threat to the church was far more deadly. In fact, he knew that it could ride out any storm if things were right on the inside. That is why, in our preceding study (13:1–3), the preacher so strongly emphasized ecclesial ethics, instructing his people on how to treat those on board the ship—the church. Specifically, he advised, first, brotherly love, then hospitality, and then the necessity of sympathetically identifying with those in the church who were undergoing suffering.

Now in the present text, verses 4–6, he becomes even more intimate in his advice, giving very personal ethical directives about marriage, money, and one’s mind-set. He knows that nothing will sink a church faster than moral wavering in respect to sex, materialism, or mental outlook. Here is intimate advice regarding how to keep our ship afloat. It is so essential that any church that ignores it will founder and possibly even sink.¹

Watch It Bible Principles

Watch Bible Principles #22; Heb. 13:1-6 www.villagebible.church/bibleprinciples

Open it

1. In one or two words, how would you describe your relationship with your brothers or sisters growing up?

Read it

Hebrews 13:1-6

¹ Hughes, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word*. Crossway Books, 1989.

Explore it

2. To whom should we show hospitality?
3. Why should we remember fellow believers who are in prison or mistreated?
4. What should our attitude be towards marriage?
5. What should our attitude be towards money?
6. What should our attitude be towards God's help in our lives?

Apply it

Brotherly Love

Hebrews 13 contains many practical commands. We need to remember that it rests on the first 12 chapters, which are largely doctrinal in nature. That's the usual pattern in the New Testament epistles: first, doctrine; then application. If you focus on the doctrine without application, it leads to spiritual pride. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1, literal translation).²

7. What sort of brotherly or sisterly love have you seen in the lives of your Christian friends?

² Cole, Steven. Lesson 51: Let Love Continue (Hebrews 13:1-3). <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-51-let-love-continue-hebrews-131-3>

8. What are some threats that would prevent brotherly love from continuing in your small group or at your church?

Hospitality to Strangers

...in the first century, inns were notoriously dangerous and immoral. They were targets for thieves and prostitutes. So Christians would welcome traveling believers, especially those laboring in the gospel (3 John 5-8), into their homes, even if they had never met them before. The author adds that by showing hospitality to strangers, “some have entertained angels without knowing it.” He is referring to the stories of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 18 & 19). These men welcomed strangers and treated them as family, not knowing (at first) that they were two angels and Jesus Christ in preincarnate form. The author’s point is not that we should be hospitable to strangers in the hopes of meeting an angel. Rather, he is saying that we often do not “know how important or far-reaching a simple act of helpfulness may be” (John MacArthur, *Hebrews* [Moody Press], p. 426). And, as Jesus said, when we minister to the needy, we are actually ministering to Christ Himself (Matt. 25:35-40).³

9. What are some of the concerns that come to mind about inviting strangers into your life and your home for a meal or lodging?

10. What are some of the possible benefits of hospitality for you and your guests?

³ Ibid.

11. What is one way you can be hospitable this week?

Remember Those in Prison

The command to “remember” not only prisoners as though chained alongside them but also those publicly abused for Jesus’ sake is an encouragement to continue what the hearers had done during an earlier wave of persecution (Heb. 10:32–34). After all, “you also are in the body,” equally vulnerable to captivity and mistreatment. By going to and being with such victims, despite the stigma, the hearers bear the reproach of Christ (11:24–26) and encourage their suffering siblings. In chains and nearing martyrdom, Paul was similarly refreshed by Onesiphorus, who sought him out and “was not ashamed of my chains” (2 Tim. 1:16–18).⁴

12. We don’t see many believers imprisoned for our faith here in America, but what does the command, “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them...” mean for us regarding imprisoned believers around the world?

⁴ ESV Expository Commentary

Honor Marriage

Because of the importance of godly marriages as the foundation of our church and society, our text is extremely important. The connection with the preceding context is that love of the brethren (13:1) must start in the home, between Christian couples. To practice biblical love, husbands and wives must guard themselves against sexual infidelity. To restrict sex to marriage was a novel idea to many in the first century. Men often had mistresses or could go to temple prostitutes. To call people to lifelong fidelity to a single spouse was radically counter-cultural. It has become so again in our culture. We have an opportunity, through moral purity and godly marriages, to shine in the darkness around us for Jesus Christ. We can sum up our text: Since God ordained marriage and sex within marriage, He will judge those who practice sex outside of marriage.⁵

- 13. How did you see marriage and intimacy honored or dishonored in your parents' relationship?**
- 14. If you are married, how have you invested in strengthening your relationship? Talk with your spouse about areas you can invest in this year.**
- 15. Are there any changes you need to make in your relationships or habits to reflect God's ideal for your sexual purity? If so, ask God to work in your heart to empower you to make those changes, and open up with someone in your group as appropriate.**

⁵ Cole, Steven. Lesson 52: The Right and Wrong Place for Sex (Hebrews 13:4). <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-52-right-and-wrong-place-sex-hebrews-134>

Don't Love Money

Though wealth has its intrinsic disadvantages, the preacher here is not forbidding wealth but the love of money. In one sense, such love is no respecter of persons. It can equally afflict a homeless man sleeping on a grate or the man occupying the penthouse sixty stories above him. But, this said, it is difficult not to love what you have spent your life collecting. Paul warned Timothy, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:10).⁶

16. Why can the accumulation of wealth become an idol so easily?

17. Read Psalm 118:1-9. How can focusing on the steadfast love of the Lord change your perspective about your finances?

18. Write down one action step that has stuck out to you from this practical scripture passage and ask God to transform you in that area.

⁶ Hughes, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word*. Crossway Books, 1989.

This study was compiled and questions were written by David Wood (Aurora Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup