

LIFE Bible Study: Hebrews 13:1-25

For Discussion: What are some of your interests and/or hobbies? Aside from when you are directly engaging with these things, where else do they show up in your life? How easily could someone see this side of you by looking at your life?

Read Hebrews 13:1-25

For review: In Hebrews 12:18-29, the author presented again the old and new covenants through the imagery of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. While Sinai is characterized by the terrifying, unapproachable holiness of God, Zion is characterized by joyful worship and closeness with Him. Both of these realities are true, separated solely by the blood of Christ. The two mountain scenes also depict the current worldly kingdom and the coming heavenly kingdom that will one day supplant it forever. The author concluded the section with an exhortation to his readers to respond to their inheritance of such a precious, everlasting kingdom with offerings of reverent, awe-filled worship (Heb. 12:28). In the final section of his letter, the author delves into specific examples of what it means to live out this calling.

Following his exhortation to give acceptable worship to God (Heb. 12:28-29), the author goes through several relationships and areas of life where this is to be demonstrated. He begins very practically with an encouragement to continue showing brotherly love to one another (Heb. 6:10, Rom. 12:9-10). How were people to love the needy and vulnerable who were not from their immediate community?¹ How were they to love those from among their people who were facing persecution for their faith?²

¹They were to show hospitality to strangers (E.g., travelers/the itinerant, displaced believers) (v.2, **Rom. 12:13**, 1 Pet. 4:9).

¹It is in blessing others that we are blessed. People who unknowingly showed hospitality to angels (E.g., Abraham – Gen. 18:1-19, Lot – Gen. 19:1-17), invited into their homes the blessing of beings who were sent to serve them for their good (Heb. 1:14).

-More significant than the hope of meeting an angel is the fact that Christ counts these acts of love as having been done for Him (**Matt. 25:31-40**).

²Remember those who are in prison and those who are being mistreated (v.3) – “Remembering” involves bearing others in mind to actively and thoughtfully minister to their needs (**Heb. 10:32-34**).

-This care is qualified with “as though in prison with them” and “since you also are in the body” => We are to seek to identify with others as we serve them so that we can love them as we would love ourselves in their situation, even though we may be absent from them in person or in experience.

-“Since you also are in the body” is translated “as if you yourselves were suffering” in the NIV84. Being “in the body” pertains to being in this life along with those who are suffering (2 Cor. 5:6, 10). It is to have the ability to appreciate how they feel (E.g., pain, loneliness, deprivation), because you have the same faculties they do.

The author then proceeds to address two areas that frequently present challenges to keeping worship rightly focused on God, marriage and money. What attitude does the author encourage his readers to have towards marriage?¹ What are some ways for people in different life stages and with varying relationship statuses to do this?² What attitude does the author encourage his readers to have towards money?³ What is the basis for responding this way (v.5b, 1 Tim. 6:9-10), and how does that help us when we face want or persecution?⁴

¹Marriage is to be honoured by all – The institution of marriage as a whole, not only individual instances of it (v.4).

-Keeping the marriage bed undefiled (guarding the purity of it) is one way to do this. This applies to both premarital sex (sexual immorality) and extramarital sex (adultery) and it is taken seriously enough to come with a warning of judgment.

-There was possibly a false asceticism in their midst that devalued marriage and forbade it (**1 Tim. 4:1-3**).

²Pursue/guard a biblical understanding of marriage (E.g., It is a picture of Christ and the Church, not merely a human institution – Eph. 5:31-32), train up the single and support the married to value it properly and to have right expectations for it, encourage married individuals to give it the proper priority among their other relationships and responsibilities, provide practical help to couples so that they have time to invest in their marriage (E.g., babysitting, cooking, household chores).

³They were to rid themselves of the love of money (v.5).

-It is the *love* of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. It is not a matter of having it or not having it (or how much of it) but of worship (Matt. 6:24).

-Don't trust in money or the things that come with it (E.g., status, independence, security) to satisfy what only God can satisfy (Luke 12:15).

³The author presents pursuing contentment as the answer (**1 Tim. 6:6-8**). Contentment applies to marriage/singleness as well.

-Showing hospitality and sharing what you have (v.2, 16) is both a way to combat the love of money and an expression of being free from having your hope in it (generosity vs. hoarding).

⁴God promises that He will never leave or forsake us (v.5b).

-God's presence and His provision are sufficient, both for concerns of daily bread as well as matters of life and death (v.6).
4Even when faced with severe trials, we can never lose God and He is greater than those we face in the world (Luke 12:4-7).
God is our portion, in Him we have everything we need (2 Pet. 1:3). It is easy enough to agree to His sufficiency in theory. Will He be your joy and your security when you are faced with the threat of real and meaningful losses (v.6)?

Returning to the topic of relationships, the author points his readers to their leaders. He first instructs them to consider the lives of their former leaders (v.7-9) and later addresses their relationship with their current leaders (v.17). How does the author tell his readers to respond to each group?¹ How is Jesus' unchanging nature relevant in this context (v.8)?² What godly habits, disciplines, and/or lifestyle choices do you see in your leaders that would be beneficial for your faith, and how can you begin to practice these?³

¹**Former leaders** (Those who had died in faith, not necessarily martyrs) => Think back to the way they lived and what God accomplished in them and through them. The final outcomes of their lives of faith can be seen in their entirety.

- Imitate them in their faith – Show deference and teachability.
- This echoes the call to consider Jesus and His life (**Heb. 12:3**).

¹**Current leaders** => Obey them to make their work a joy rather than a burden.

- Recognize their God-given role of care and the accountability they have before Him (v.17) – Show honour, trust, and submission.
- As the author asked of his readers, pray for your leaders (v.18).

²Jesus, who worked in the lives of the leaders of the past, is the same today and He still works in the same way now. Their outcomes can be yours because Jesus does not change.

³Note the importance of selecting good leaders because they serve as role models => Character of godliness, faithfulness, love, humility, servanthood, etc.

Following his teaching on marital fidelity, the author includes a section on doctrinal fidelity. There were “diverse and strange teachings” (v.9) circulating among them that placed undue emphasis on special foods. Rather than chase after inconsequential things (Rom. 14:17, 1 Cor. 8:8), the author encourages his readers instead to figuratively go to Jesus outside the camp (v.13). What does the author mean in telling his readers to do this?¹ In what areas have you chosen to distance yourself from Jesus and stand with the world?² What would it look like for you to stand instead with your Saviour where He suffered and be willing to bear the reproach that He bore?³

¹There is a commonality between what Jesus went through and what the Old Testament sacrifices for sin went through (Lev. 16:27). However, the reason He had to go outside the camp was not only because of His association with those animals. What took Jesus outside the camp for execution was also the rejection He experienced from sinful men (John 19:16-22).

¹Similarly, we are called to forsake the world as Jesus did and accept the suffering and rejection that response potentially brings.

- We are called to imitate Christ, to be willing to endure those same things – We can face the same scorn and reproach that He faced with confidence because there is nothing that man can do to us that is of eternal significance (v.6), God is always with us (v.5b), and we have no lasting city here (v.14, Heb. 11:10, 14-16, 12:22-24).
- Moses was as an example of, “Leaving behind the love of this world and desire for its approval, and embracing the reproach of Christ, emulating Jesus's response to his shameful sufferings” (**Heb. 11:26**, 12:2) –ESV Study Bible

³The act of turning away from what the world offers/values may be the very thing that brings reproach upon us. Going to Jesus is both an identification with Him and a statement of where we have placed our allegiance.

The altar is the one on which the offering of Christ was made (v.10). It is a heavenly altar (Heb. 8:5, 9:21-23). Like with the earthly altar, though its sacrifice is not eaten, those for whom the offering was made receive the blessings of it.

Reflection and application

The things that are important to you, that you have dedicated yourself to, will find expression throughout your life. They defy being confined. We naturally bring into other areas of our lives the things we care about the most. This is no different when it comes to our relationship with God. Acceptable worship is first and foremost a state of the heart towards God, but it also includes public acknowledgement and praise of who He is (v.15) and expressions of practical love (i.e., obedience to His will) towards others in every sphere of life (v.16).

The author's emphasis as he closes his letter is to show that an outward-facing love is an integral aspect of what it means to offer God an acceptable sacrifice of worship. In his benediction, he further reveals that it is ultimately God who must equip us and work through what He supplies to enable us to do His will for His pleasure (v.20-21, 2 Cor. 9:8, Phil. 2:12-13). Let us approach life with a focus and desire to please God, turning to Him for His enabling grace and living to honour and learn from the faithful men and women who came before us, with the goal of joining their ranks as people who point to God's greatness and worthiness of our highest praise for those who are to follow.