

**Hebrews 13:3-5**  
**October 2, 2016**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Imagine being an Israelite. Judaism is all you've known, and all of your family and friends are Jewish as well. You've gone to the Temple each week to worship God, and you've trained your children in it. Then Jesus comes along. People are amazed at his teachings and his ability to perform miracles. Even the Jews are wondering if He is the promised Messiah. And then Jesus is ultimately crucified and then resurrected from the dead, which got the attention of both Jews and Gentiles, including some of your family and friends. Jesus was even seen by over 500 people, and he revealed himself to Mary and some of the very people he disciplined before he was crucified.

They couldn't deny what they observed! And then NT church is birthed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost after Jesus ascended into heaven. People began following Jesus. The group was called The Way. I want you to imagine what it would have been like if you were an Israelite who was convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. You left Judaism, which means you are not worshipping with your family and friends. Your family is beside themselves! They can't understand this decision you made. You can just hear them say, "Are you crazy?!!"

But you're not crazy. Your parents and grandparents laid eyes on Jesus. They shared powerful accounts of what Jesus did among the people. You are sold out for Jesus, so you join The Way. At first this was exciting. You were willing to take the heat for this decision. But after suffering persecution for this decision and seeing how hard it is stay the course and keep following Jesus, you are tempted to return to Judaism. You are so discouraged that you are starting to drift away from your commitment to Christ. You're not even sure you care about the consequences. You just want peace and to return to a faith system that was familiar to you, whether it was broken or not.

So here you are. You're done. You want to be reunited with your family and friends. The cost of following Jesus is greater than the perceived benefits that can be gained in Christianity – so you think.

The author of Hebrews is deeply concerned that you're getting ready to make a big mistake by returning to Judaism. We have been studying Hebrews since Valentine's Day. We have watched this author work his tail off to convince you that Christ is superior over the Prophets, over the Angels, over Moses, over priests, over the Old Covenant, and over any temporal sacrifice or sanctuary.

He encourages you to ***hold fast to your confession of faith in Christ***. He goes thru numerous inductees of the Hall of Faith and reminds you of those who have gone before you as a great example to each of us. He tells you the importance of enduring in your faith, much like persevering as you run your race.

The last thing this author wants is to see a large group of young Hebrew Christians who are discouraged turn their back on Jesus and return to Judaism. He doesn't want you to even consider this! So in today's passage, the author describes ways to strengthen, encourage and support one another as a fellowship of believers.

**Transition:** *I want us to consider that all of us CAN make a meaningful difference with our fellow believers BY applying the SUGGESTIONS offered by this author.* By the time this hour is over, it is my prayer that you will know not only "what" the suggestions are, but leave with some ideas on how to best **apply** these suggestions. If all of us apply these suggestions consistently, then we will have made a meaningful contribution toward strengthening and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's begin.

### **BOOK (NIV 1984):**

V.3:

- Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

V.4:

- Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

V.5:

- Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

V.6:

- So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.3a: What is the next suggestion you see in this passage? [Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners]

Q: What does that look like? [Let people engage this - Love also expresses itself in *concern* (Heb. 13:3). It was not unusual for Christians to be arrested and imprisoned for their faith. To identify with these prisoners might be dangerous; yet Christ's love demanded a ministry to them. To minister to a Christian prisoner in the name of Christ is to minister to Christ Himself (Matt. 25:36, 40)]

Observation: In our free country we are not arrested for our religious beliefs; but in other parts of the world, believers suffer for their faith. ***How we need to pray for them and share with them as the Lord enables us!***

Q V.3b: What is the next suggestion you see in this passage? [Remember those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.]

Q: Who would be good examples of those who are being "mistreated" in our culture? [Children, the elderly, the poor, and the oppressed.]

Q: What are ways we can help the mistreated beyond prayer? [Let people engage]

Q V.4: What is the next suggestion you see in this passage? [Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure]

Q: The author could have stopped with “marriage should be honored by all,” but he doesn’t. He focuses on the marriage bed as well. So why is sexual purity important? [First, because God says so in the Ten Commandments! Second, *the home* is the first place where Christian love should be practiced (Heb. 13:4). A Christian home begins with a Christian marriage in the will of God. This means loyalty and purity. Sex outside of marriage is sinful and destructive. X-REF I Thess 4:3-5, 7 As Christians, we are to live a purified life because we have been made holy by the exchange of our sin for the righteousness of Christ on the cross and have been made completely new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17–21).]

Q V.5: What is the next suggestion in this passage? [Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”]

Q: Have you ever met anyone who doesn’t like money? [No! We all “like” money.]

Q: So what’s the difference between the people who like money versus those who “love” money? [Let people engage this. People who love money focus on obtaining more? They will sacrifice relationships to pursue dollars.]

Q: The author tells these Hebrew Christians to “be content with what you have.” And if you read Phil 4:12, Paul says, “I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I’ve **learned** the secret of contentment in every situation.” So contentment must be learned. How do you learn contentment? (I think a big hint is in the last half of this verse.) [Evaluate where you’ve placed your trust. If you believe that the Lord will never leave you or forsake you, then whether you have little or much, you know that the Lord will take care of you.]

Q: What is the next suggestion in this passage? [Say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”]

Observation: Remember that these Hebrew Christians were experiencing rejection and persecution. When the heat is on, the author directs their attention to the Lord who is their helper. If the Lord is their helper, what can man do to me?

Transition: The next three verses refers to the spiritual leaders of the local assemblies.

**[Read Heb 13:7-9]**

V.7:

- Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

V.8:

- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

V.9:

- Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.7: What suggestion does the author make regarding our spiritual leaders? [**Remember** your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.]

Q: The author suggests why we should remember them. What do you see? [Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.]

Q: Let's keep in mind that these Hebrew Christians were living during the beginning of the Church age. How did key spiritual leaders die when the NT church was being launched? [Crucified upside down, beheaded, martyred, stoned]

Transition: By God's grace, we live in a country where we don't face persecution for our faith, but you go to other countries who are hostile to Christianity, those spiritual leaders are facing death for sharing the gospel.

Q: Can you think of a spiritual leader in your life who has had the greatest impact on you such that you imitate their faith? [Let people share]

Observation V.8: When the author reminds his readers that "Jesus is the same yesterday and today and tomorrow," he's basically saying Church leaders may come and go, but Jesus Christ remains the same; and it is Christ who is the center of our faith.

Q V.9: What does the author want them to avoid? [Being carried away by all kinds of strange teachings]

Q: What were some of the strange or false teachings that floated around during their time? [The Jews had dietary laws that governed food. They were required to stay away from certain foods so they wouldn't be defiled. Another false teaching was by the Judaizers who tried to convince these Hebrew Christians had to be circumcised in order to be justified by the Law. Paul said, "Don't fall for that!" It is justification by faith alone in Christ Jesus!]

Q: How do we protect ourselves from being drawn away by strange teachings? [We gather to study God's Word. We test what we hear to the Bible, our source of truth.] Some recipients of the Letter to the Hebrews were considering going back to Jewish laws that governed foods. The writer warned them that these dietary regulations would not profit them spiritually because they never profited the Jews spiritually!

**[Read Heb 13:10-17] Sharing in Spiritual Worship**

V.10:

- We have an altar [does not suggest a material altar on earth, for that would contradict the whole message of the epistle. In the Old Testament sanctuary, the brazen altar was the

place for offering blood sacrifices, and the golden altar before the veil was the place for burning incense, a picture of prayer ascending to God (Ps. 141:2)] from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

V.11:

- The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp

V.12:

- And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

V.13:

- Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

V.14:

- For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

V.15:

- Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

V.16:

- And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

V.17:

- Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.10-14: According to these verses, who experienced social rejection? [Jesus!]

Q: So what is the author's suggestion to his readers? [They should not hesitate to share in **the disgrace He bore** (cf. 12:2) by abandoning **the camp** of Judaism and identifying with Him.]

Q V. 15: What is the next suggestion you see? [Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.]

Q: What does it look like to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise?” [Let people engage]

Q V.16: What is the next suggestion to strengthen our fellowship? [do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.]

Q: That's pretty broad, isn't it?! How intentional are we in doing good and sharing with others?

Q V.17: What is the next suggestion? [Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.]

Q: Why is it important to obey or submit to your spiritual leaders and their authority? [They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.]

Observation: This does not mean that pastors should be dictators. “Neither [be] lords over God’s heritage” (1 Peter 5:3). Some church members have a flippant attitude toward pastoral authority, and this is dangerous. One day every pastor will have to give an account of his ministry to the Lord, and he wants to be able to do it with joy.

### **[Read Heb 13:18-25] Sharing in Spiritual Worship**

V.18:

- Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

V.19:

- I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

V.20:

- May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,

V.21:

- equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

V.22:

- Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter.

V.23:

- I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

V.24:

- Greet all your leaders and all God’s people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

V.25:

- Grace be with you all.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.18-19: As the author concludes his letter, what is his request? [Pray for us!]

### **LOOK:**

The way we strengthen the body of Christ is to gather together to encourage and support one another. The undercurrent needs to be brotherly love. When the hard times hit, we want to know that all of these gatherings have allowed each of us to make a meaningful difference in each other’s lives.

Q: How does Jesus help us? [We can’t do it, but there’s One who can. Because of Jesus, this is possible]

### **Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pg. 327). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

**Enjoying Spiritual Fellowship (Heb. 13:3–5)**

Love also expresses itself in *concern* (Heb. 13:3). It was not unusual for Christians to be arrested and imprisoned for their faith. To identify with these prisoners might be dangerous; yet Christ's love demanded a ministry to them. To minister to a Christian prisoner in the name of Christ is to minister to Christ Himself (Matt. 25:36, 40). In our free country we are not arrested for our religious beliefs; but in other parts of the world, believers suffer for their faith. How we need to pray for them and share with them as the Lord enables us!

*The home* is the first place where Christian love should be practiced (Heb. 13:4). A Christian home begins with a Christian marriage in the will of God. This means loyalty and purity. Sex outside of marriage is sinful and destructive. Sex within the protective bonds of marriage can be enriching and glorifying to God. Fornication is committed by unmarried persons and adultery by married persons. (However, in the New Testament, the term "fornication" can refer to many kinds of sexual sins. See Acts 15:20 and 1 Cor. 6:18.)

How does God judge fornicators and adulterers? Sometimes they are judged in their own bodies (Rom. 1:24–27). Certainly they will be judged at the final judgment (Rev. 21:8; 22:15). Believers who commit these sins certainly may be forgiven, but they will lose rewards in heaven (Eph. 5:5ff). David was forgiven, but he suffered the consequences of his adultery for years to come; and he suffered in the hardest way: through his own children.

In these days, when sexual sins are paraded as entertainment in movies and on television, the church needs to take a stand for the purity of the marriage bond. A dedicated Christian home is the nearest thing to heaven on earth, and it starts with a Christian marriage.

If we love God and others as we should, then we will have a right relationship to *material things* (Heb. 13:5–6). Times of suffering can either be times of selfishness or times of service. It is not easy to take "joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Heb. 10:34). But with the economic and ecological problems in our world today, comfortable Christians may soon find themselves doing without some luxuries that they now consider necessities.

A Christian couple was ministering to believers in Eastern Europe, behind the Iron Curtain. The couple had brought in Christian literature, blankets, and other necessary items. At the church gathering, the couple assured the believers that Christians in America were praying for believers in Eastern Europe.

"We are happy for that," one believer replied, "but we feel that Christians in America need more prayer than we do. We here in Eastern Europe are suffering, but you in America are very comfortable; and it is always harder to be a good Christian when you are comfortable."

The word *covetousness* literally means "love of money"; but it can be applied to a love for *more* of anything. Someone asked millionaire Bernard Baruch, "How much money does it take for a rich man to be satisfied?" Baruch replied, "Just a million more than he has." Covetousness is the desire for more, whether we need it or not.

Contentment cannot come from material things, for they can never satisfy the heart. Only God can do that. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). When we have God, we have all that we need. The material things of life can decay or be stolen, but *God* will never leave us or

forsake us. This promise was made to Joshua when he succeeded Moses (Deut. 31:7–8; Josh. 1:5, 9); and it is fulfilled to us in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:20; Acts 18:9–10).

**Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 811-812). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

#### V. Epilogue (chap. 13)

The Epilogue can be distinguished from the body of the epistle in that the latter contains only broad, general admonitions, while the Epilogue contains specific ones. In some ways these specific instructions suggest ways “to worship God acceptably” (cf. 12:28). The Epilogue also contains the writer’s personal comments to his readers and his farewell to them.

13:1–5. The first section of the Epilogue contains moral directions for the readers. Obeying these would inculcate personal kindness to **brothers** (v. 1), **strangers** (v. 2), and **prisoners** (v. 3). The writer then called for sexual purity in which **marriage** is held in high regard (v. 4). The readers were also to avoid monetary greed and to **be content with what they have** (v. 5; cf. Luke 12:15; Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6–10).

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1838). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**13:4** Some persons wrongly see an inconsistency with this verse, which commends marriage, because elsewhere the apostle Paul commended being single above being married (1 Co 7:1, 1 Co 7:7–8). Paul, however, nowhere condemned marriage but simply said that being unmarried enables one to devote more undistracted time to the Lord (1 Co 7:32–35).