



## Calvary LifeGroup Leader's Guide

Week of 12/12/21

### Warm Up

It's the finish line! Here we are at the final week of our series in Hebrews. What a great, but very dense book! Hebrews is not a light read, and at times it may have made us wonder what its significance is for our lives at "street level." If you've felt that way, chapter 13 might be a relief to you as it is loaded with practical instruction. It also serves to remind us of what it means to worship in all of life, not just Sunday mornings.

We hope that you and your group will take time after this week to rest, recharge and celebrate Jesus before we start back up in January. Questions will be available for our next series beginning January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Icebreaker: What's your all-time favorite Christmas movie? What do you love about it?

### Discussion Questions for Hebrews Chapter 13

Read the passage, then select 2-3 questions from below to discuss together.

1. It's likely that chapter 13 unpacks what the author means by "acceptable worship" in 12:28. When you think of worship, what kinds of actions or attitudes come to your mind? *It's common for us to think of worship as what we do on Sunday mornings, or, more narrowly, the part of the service when we sing. While these certainly include worship, they are just a part of a life of worship. Commentator William Lane proposes that our understanding of worship should "be expanded to include a lifestyle that is pleasing to God at every level" (Word Biblical Commentary).*

Looking at this chapter, what areas of life does worship include?

*The passage includes our relationships with strangers, with those in prison or who are enduring some form of shame. It includes marriage, sex, and money. Within the church, it includes how we relate to one another, including our leaders. It expands as well to how we use our money and resources.*

*Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.*

2. “Brotherly” (or “sisterly”) love among non-siblings is a distinctively Christian idea.<sup>1</sup> As you read the verses that follow, how do the numerous commands correspond to this idea of brotherly love?

This love is to be expressed in the same areas highlighted in the previous question. Brotherly love is the overarching principle behind our worship. This might raise the question of how our treatment of others can be deemed “worship”; however, we should keep in mind passages like Matthew 22:36-40 (love God and love people) and Matthew 25:31-46, which remind us that our love for God is interwoven with our love for people.

3. Christians are called to live in a way that demonstrates hospitality, even to strangers. What does it mean to be hospitable? How does hospitality compare to the desire to impress people?

Hospitality includes welcoming others into your home to provide shelter and care. Practically speaking, in the ancient world the stakes could be high since hotels and other options did not exist as they do today. Hospitality was a means of protection. Theologically, it was an expression of gratitude over God’s work in making strangers and foreigners into Kingdom citizens (see Eph 2). In our day, hospitality can be hindered by a desire to impress others. We may think we need to have a beautiful and spacious home, an impressive meal, and an entertaining environment in order to be “hospitable.” Could these actually obscure true hospitality?

What does hospitality look like in your LifeGroup and other communities you’re a part of at Calvary?

4. Marriage and money are two areas of life where many encounter struggles and pain. What can we learn from verses 4-6 that can help us live according to God’s design for both?

These are areas that people in your group may presently be wrestling with or may have in the past. In short, it could be good to point out the countercultural nature of what’s said here about both marriage and money. Marriage is often not held with the kind of honor today that it should have. The same could be said about “the marriage bed,” as sex is so often distorted as a purely physical act that has no boundaries among consenting partners. How would marriage be different today if it was held with the kind of honor that God designed for it? How would it be different if sexual activity was limited to one man and woman bound together by the marital covenant? Please note that marriage would still be hard at times! These would not make marriage simple or perfect, but they would (or do) make a difference that strengthens and protects marriage.

Regarding money and contentment, it could be argued that our hearts are inclined toward excessive accumulation and discontentment. Society reflects this as it tends to reward discontentment, defined as not settling for “good enough” or whatever one has in

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<sup>1</sup> NT scholar, William Lane, explains that the term for brotherly love in the first century “was restricted to the love of those who were actual brothers and sisters...The expansion of the term to include men and women beyond the immediate family was considered ludicrous.” Its application to fellow believers stems from Jesus’ ministry (see, for example, Matt 23:8).

the present moment. We can feel the lure of continually striving to achieve a higher level of wealth (then we could be even more “hospitable,” right?!) and accumulation.

5. Verses 7 and 17 instruct us on how to think about our leaders, past and present. What is the rationale for remembering and imitating them in verse 7, and for obeying and submitting to them in verse 17?

The text tells us that these leaders serve as examples worth imitating. Their consistent, Jesus-centered instruction (v. 8) is a safeguard against the “diverse and strange teachings” being propagated by others. In v. 17, the leaders are worth following because they are like spiritual shepherds, caring for and protecting those under them. These leaders bear a level of responsibility that is worthy of obedience and submission.

Are these instructions welcome reminders to you, or do you find them difficult to follow? Why?

Suffice it to say that we’ve all had different experiences with leaders. Some have likely been positive, but some may have not. If you’ve felt burned by a bad leader in the past, it’s likely that you’re less willing to embrace these instructions. Please note that the assumption behind these commands is that these leaders are worthy of their respect and imitation! These are not tyrannical, self-seeking, incompetent, or charlatans.

6. “Outside the camp” was the place away from God’s presence and where unclean or dishonoring things were discarded. What do you think it means, then, in verses 13-16 for us to “go to [Jesus] outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured”?

It’s difficult for us to appreciate how radical these ideas must’ve been for the original audience. Nothing less than social status and the perception of others—including loved ones—was at stake. Verses 9-16 address a situation related to food that threatened the faith of these first-century believers (perhaps related to old covenant dietary laws). Our lives today include struggles that are different from theirs, but the remedy in verse 13 remains. Jesus was crucified just outside the “camp” of Jerusalem, which the author relates to the dishonor of crucifixion. Following Christ means we choose his shame over the acceptance of others.

Has there been an area of your life where following Christ led to some form of disgrace or insult?

The answer to this may be “no.” Our society has arguably become increasingly secularized, but we still enjoy an environment of relative privilege with regard to religious liberty and rights in comparison to other periods of history and/or other locations in the world. Even so, we might still encounter some form of insult or disfavor due to our faith in Christ.

7. We’ve covered a lot (and skipped over a lot) in this series! What’s one thing from Hebrews that you want to remember or put into practice?

## **Wrap Up**

*Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.*

Verses 20-21 are a wonderful benediction (i.e., a final blessing) to the book of Hebrews. We encourage you to take a couple minutes to read these words aloud as a group as a blessing to pray over each other. For example, think about the significance of God being the God of peace (see also Luke 2:14). Consider how Jesus is our Shepherd. Celebrate how awesome it is that God equips us ***with everything*** good for doing his will. Praise God that he is at work in us for his glory!

We would love to hear from you about how this series has gone for your group. What did you like? How could we have done things differently? Please reach out to Jay or Cyndee in Erie, Matthew in Thornton, or Perry or Steph in Boulder.