



Parkway Fellowship

Don't Forget • Don't Forget That People Matter • Hebrews 13:1-16 • 03/24/2019

Main Point

Because all people matter to Jesus, we are called to sacrifice ourselves for others by doing good things and sharing what we have.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a favorite photo on your cell phone. What memory does this photo bring to mind for you?

Do you ever take pictures to remember things now instead of taking notes (i.e. recipes, something you want to purchase, something interesting you see and want to tell someone about later)? Give an example.

In this week's message, we talked about how pictures serve as powerful reminders to us. We considered the question, "What would God's photo album look like if He wanted to use pictures to remind us how He instructs us to live?" We need to be reminded how to live, because what we focus on become convictions that shape our conduct. Without a relationship with Christ, a person cultivates self-serving convictions that encourage self-indulgent behavior. However, people who genuinely trust in Christ as Lord nurture convictions that center on Him. As a result, the Holy Spirit guides believers to behave in ways that reflect the character of Christ. Specifically, this means we view others as God does and treat them with the same love, grace, and integrity with which the Lord treats us. Today's study will help us answer the question, "How can I remind myself every day that people matter?" so that we can behave toward others in ways that reflect Christ's heart.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 13:16

What does the writer of Hebrews exhort believers to do? Why?

What are some reasons we might "neglect" to do those things, as the writer indicated?

Can you please God without sacrificing for other people? Explain.

When we started to examine this passage in the sermon, we circled "do good things", "share what you have", and "sacrifices" in Hebrews 13:16. Those instructions reflect God's view of what's most important. God sees behind the veil of a person. He sees their need. He sees their loneliness. He sees ours as well. When we don't see people as God sees them, but take on a worldly view of life and others, then we only see our time, pressures, and schedules. When we see as He sees, the desire grows in us to sacrifice for others by doing good things and sharing what we have. Verse 16 sums up verses 1-15, which give us some great pictures of practical ways to sacrifice for other people.

| Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 13:1-15.

What specific ways of doing good and sharing do you find in the passage?

Is it possible to remember to carry out these commands all the time? Explain.

Letting love continue, showing hospitality even to strangers, remembering those who are in prison and mistreated, honoring marriage, remaining sexually pure, not giving money too big of a priority in your life, being content with what you have, remembering your leaders, imitating their faith, not giving in to wrong teachings, living for your eternal home, and continually offering up a sacrifice of praise to God—it's a tall order! Each one of those commands relates to sacrifice in some way.

Why is God's presence an antidote to materialism and self-centeredness (v. 5)?

Contentment comes through an ongoing relationship with God through faith in Christ. This contentment is fueled by God's promises to be present with every believer. When we are content in God's presence, it reminds us that people matter, frees us to think about their needs instead of our own, and to act on those needs.

Refer to verse 6: "What can man do to me?" What fears sometimes keep us from doing good and sharing with others?

In the sermon, sacrificing for others was defined in the following three ways: pray for others diligently, serve others consistently, and give to others painfully. What is hard for you about

those instructions? What in Hebrews 13:1-15 do you see as examples of ways you can do those three things?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Based on the instructions you find in Hebrews 13:1-16, does your life currently demonstrate a belief that people matter? Explain.

Praying diligently requires you to set aside your time and devote it to others' needs. Practically, how can you apply this principle to your life this week to show that other people matter?

Serving consistently requires both time and energy from you, and will sometimes push you out of your comfort zone. Practically, how can you apply this principle to your life this week to show that other people matter?

Giving painfully to others pleases God, and it means that you can't have everything you want to buy for yourself. Practically, how can you apply this principle to your life this week to show that other people matter?

Pray

Thank Jesus for His great sacrifice for us that showed in the most amazing way just how much people really do matter. Ask Him to help your group demonstrate God's heart for people. Invite Him to make Parkway Fellowship become a church known for its love expressed in tangible ways to others.

Commentary

| Hebrews 13:1-16

13:1. In many ways verse 1 acts as a theme verse for this section of Hebrews. It is no accident that the writer of Hebrews begins with the exhortation for believers to love one another. In keeping with Jesus' expression of the second "Great Commandment" (see Mark 10:31; compare Lev. 19:18), the writer urged his readers twice prior to this verse to love and encourage one another (see Heb. 3:13; 10:24).

The command to love other believers is a call to action, a call to meet one another's needs and to look out for others' well-being (see Phil 2:4). In short, love acts. This is a summons to meet one another's needs and to show one another—and a watching world—what the love of Jesus looks like. Believers are to care for one another.

The focus of brotherly love is toward other brothers and sisters in Christ. We are a family. Jesus is the firstborn Son who brings believers to glory. In Christ, believers are children of God, brothers and sisters to one another in the Spirit, and the church of the firstborn. God's people are a family. We are God's household, and as such we are to love for and care for one another in practical ways.

Many of us as believers can give testimony of having been part of a loving church congregation in which someone helped us in a significant way. We can show love for one another by praying for someone, by getting to know a new family, and by helping when possible to meet a physical or spiritual need of someone. Often God uses us to meet the needs of others in ways that we did not think possible.

13:2. Whereas verse 1 focused on demonstrating love for other believers, verse 2 focuses on demonstrating loving hospitality to strangers. The idea of God's people showing hospitality to strangers has roots in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 10:19, the Lord commanded the Israelites to show love to foreigners, or sojourners, out of a remembrance that they too once lived as strangers in a foreign land.

In the first century A.D., showing hospitality to traveling strangers was common among Christians. A first-century inn was not always a safe place to stay the night. It is likely that in Hebrews 13:2, the reference applied particularly to other believers who may have been traveling—or fleeing—within the Roman Empire. For example, in 3 John 5 we read of some itinerant Christians who had been taken in and cared for other believers as they journeyed for the sake of the Lord's name. Quite often, such acts of hospitality also had a missional purpose. Traveling missionaries would be able to stay in believers' homes while preaching the gospel in their area.

In his reference to believers unknowingly welcoming angels, the writer of Hebrews alluded to Genesis 18–19, a passage in which Abraham showed hospitality to three strangers. One of the visitors turned out to be an appearance of the Lord Himself (see Gen. 18:2,9-10)! The other two were angels. They traveled on to the city of Sodom, where they were shown hospitality by Abraham's nephew, Lot (see Gen. 19:1-2). Neither Abraham nor Lot knew at first that the strangers were angels.

13:3. Another application of Hebrews 13:1 is the care of prisoners. Evidently, the first readers of Hebrews knew of and had cared for some Christians who were in prison because of their faith in Christ (see 10:32-34). The first readers also would have known the story of a Christian leader such as Paul, who was imprisoned

multiple times for the sake of the gospel. The basics of life such as food, water, and clothing were not always provided when one was in prison, so it was especially important for believers to meet the physical needs of those who were imprisoned for the sake of Christ.

Believers in some parts of the world even today suffer imprisonment (and worse!) for the sake of Christ. One example is that of an Iranian pastor who recently was arrested for preaching the gospel of Christ and confined to one of Iran's worst prisons. Credible reports tell of the pastor being tortured but also of his leading dozens of fellow prisoners to Christ.

13:4. Verse 4 begins a section (13:4-6) that focuses on personal behavior. The section centers on matters that are inward and less public—in that the writer dealt with the believer's attitudes about sexual behavior and money.

In verse 4, the writer of Hebrews places marriage in its rightful place of honor. In Christianity, marriage is highly valued. The marriage bond must be honored, and spouses are to love one another. Verse 4 reflects the importance of purity in marriage in the earliest teachings of Christianity.

Marriage is a mystery that is now revealed (see Eph. 5:22-33); the husband-wife relationship is to be a reflection of the pure, loving relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. Therefore, the marriage relationship should be adorned with purity and faithfulness.

The pure marriage bed is a reference to the husband and wife remaining sexually faithful to each other. Adultery and other forms of sexual promiscuity were all too common in the Roman Empire. A Christian marriage that reflected purity, faithfulness, and sacrificial love stood out against the culture like a diamond in a vein of coal.

So it is in our day too. Sexual immorality is epidemic in our culture and too often among churchgoing families. In contrast, a godly marriage that is honored by both husband and wife showcases a grand and beautiful truth to our culture. Marriage glorifies Christ and reveals the impact of the gospel in a Christian home.

13:5-6. Verses 5-6 focus on our character as Christians, specifically in the area of money. The Scriptures clearly warn against the love of money. Proverbs 23:4-5 says, "Don't wear yourself out to get rich; stop giving your attention to it. As soon as your eyes fly to it, it disappears, for it makes wings for itself and flies like an eagle to the sky." Money itself is not evil. Rather, it is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil (see 1 Tim. 6:10). So first, we are to be free from the love of money. We can only do three things with money: save it, spend it, and give it away in helping others. A balanced life seeks to do all three.

Second, we are to be content with what we have. The apostle Paul taught the same principle in Philippians 4:10-12. Paul had learned to trust Jesus Christ to provide for his needs; thus he learned to be content whether he had little or much. Being content is a spiritual watermark, and is proof of the believer's trust in God.

13:7-8. Verses 7-8 describe how the believing community should relate to its pastors and leaders. Leaders in our churches do many things, from preaching in the services to visiting those in the hospital and counseling members who are facing difficulties.

The focus in verse 7 is specifically on the act of teaching. There are many things that pastoral leaders do, but teaching church members the Word of God is of special importance. Every generation since the church first began has seen its share of false teachers who lead believers' hearts away from their first love, Jesus (see 13:9).

Those who lead faithfully in local Christian congregations need to be respected and followed, with specific regard for how they live and what they teach (see 13:7-14). Leaders are to be obeyed (see 13:17) and prayed for (see 13:18). To be a faithful pastor is a noble thing (see 1 Tim. 3:1), but the meaning here in Hebrews 13:7 is broader and refers to any teacher of God's Word in the church. There are many necessary ministries in our churches, but none is so critical as the rightly understood and effectively preached Word of God. It should be the high point of the church's gathered worship and the apex of our week as believers to gather and hear the Word of God proclaimed with power and relevant application.

Verse 8 might seem to be out of place at first, despite how wonderful a verse it is. The verse declares that Jesus never changes! But in context, the point is that the message that is preached today—if God's Word is preached faithfully—is the same message that was preached at first. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Since Jesus is the same, the message about Him that was first preached must be the same message that is preached today. Those who preach and teach the true Word of God declare the message of Jesus Christ. He never changes. Neither does His truth. Jesus is the changeless High Priest who is always interceding for us. Since He does not change, we can look back on all the Lord has done for believers in the past and trust Him with our present. Moreover, we can look to the future in hope and with faith that He will guide us all the way to the end He has prepared for us. He is our Great Shepherd (see Heb. 13:20)!

13:7-16. The author addressed specific ways in which Christians should revere church leaders. (1) Christians should observe the lives of their leaders and imitate their faith. (2) Christians should remember that Christ is always the same and judge every teaching according to the gospel. (3) Christians should recognize their church may not be appreciated by the world because the Christian community is gathered to worship their Lord, whom the world despises. (4) Christians should continually offer their own sacrifice of praise in appreciation for the sacrifice of Christ by confessing His name. (5) The church should be active in doing good works and sharing with one another. (6) Christians should obey their leaders and submit to them, because they are accountable to God for caring for Christian souls. (7) Christians should pray for their leaders to have clear consciences, conducting themselves with honor in everything.