



## NG Study Guide: Hebrews 13:1-7 :: “Jesus Inspires Greater Love” [1.28.24]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** Here, we find some of the attitudes and actions inspired by Jesus’ greater love. To the extent that we seek to live these virtues we discover whether we’ve been inspired by Jesus.

**Subject: Christlike attitudes and actions (the evidence of faith)**

**Object: Be like Jesus**

**Context:** Exhortation to commit to wholeheartedly follow Jesus because of His greatness, and the better new covenant.

**1. Be loving (1)** *Let brotherly love continue.*

**a. What this means in context:**

The author uses the term *philadelphia* literally brotherly love, a reference to meaningful friendship and partnership in advancing the gospel. There are four Greek words translated “love.” *Eros* refers to sexual intimacy. *Storge* is familial love generally shared among family members. *Agape* refers to sacrificial, committed and unconditional love displayed by God towards man. *Philadelphia* type of love is exhorted throughout the Scriptures. For example:

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10).

“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1Thessalonians 4:9).

“Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

They are urged to *continue*. So it was a present reality and they are exhorted to continue. Why? What difference might it make? These Jewish Christians were being scorned by the unbelieving Jewish culture that was prevalent. They were tempted to renounce their faith in Christ. An antidote for that temptation was to demonstrate a genuine sacrificial love for other believers.

**b. How Jesus modeled:**

Jesus consistently demonstrates agape love that is unconditional, undeserved, committed and selfless. And He raises the bar by commanding us to do likewise, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

**c. How does the love Jesus inspires differ from the world?** The world's love tends to be transactional (e.g. what is my return?); and tends to be subject to minimal personal sacrifice or discomfort. Consider the paradigm shift of coming to church to worship God and love others. Engaging other believers to love them like Jesus does.

## **2. Be hospitable (2)**

### **a. What this means in context:**

*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.*

*Entertain strangers* is literally "show love to strangers." This could include opening the home, offering a meal. In the first century there were no hotels or vacation rentals. There were few inns, and they were often associated with immorality. Christians could show love to one another by offering hospitality.

The reference *unwittingly entertained angels* reminds of the time that Abraham provided food and hospitality to three men who he later discovered were actually angels (Genesis 18:1-5). The Greek term *angelos* translated "angels" can also be translated "messengers." Thus, the idea or moral is that showing hospitality to other believers yields a mutual godly influence that results in blessings.

### **b. How Jesus modeled:**

Jesus ate with sinners, marginalized people, turned water to wine to encourage a feast, practices times of solitude, but doesn't isolate from people. Following Jesus is to imitate Him.

### **c. How does the hospitality Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

The world tends to extend hospitality for affinity, and perceived gain. Contrast welcoming strangers, neighbors who aren't yet friends to share a meal or coffee, opening your home for a NG, or serving refreshments to bless others.

## **3. Be Compassionate (3)**

### **a. What this means in context:**

*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.*

This likely refers to Jewish Christians who were persecuted for their faith in Christ. There would likely be a fear of persecution by associating with or visiting these prisoners. These prisoners were not to be forgotten. Believers were to show compassion as if chained with them. It is an appeal to the Golden Rule, to do to others what you would have them do to you (Matthew 7:12). Historically, Christians responded so lovingly towards their persecuted brethren that ultimately Rome passed a law forbidding the bringing of food, supplies, and the extent of visits to prisons .

### **b. How Jesus modeled:**

Jesus encouraged us that when you visit a prisoner, or show compassion to marginalized people, it is just as if you did it to Jesus directly (Matthew 25:36-40). Jesus was moved with compassion as he looked out at the multitudes. So He taught them many things and then fed them (Mark 6:34).

### **c. How does the compassion Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

Unbelievers can be kind, empathetic and compassionate. Believers should also be moved to love suffering people, because that is what Jesus does. We should also have compassion for persecuted believers, and likely should be praying for them. We should have compassion for unbelievers and be moved to engage them.

## **4. Be pure (4)**

### **a. What this means in context:**

*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*

*Marriage is honorable* corrects the wrong view that it is more spiritual not to marry. While it is true that single people have more liberty to serve God that doesn't mean marriage is dishonorable. Marriage is ordained by God

as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman (Genesis 2). A husband and a wife are to hold their marriage in honor. God's desire is for a man and woman to experience emotional, spiritual and physical intimacy or oneness (unity). To become one with another requires married people to in some sense die to themselves. Similarly, to become one with Christ, we the Bride of Christ, must die to self (Ephesians 5:21-33).

*The bed undefiled* in one sense is the idea that if you are faithful to your spouse you keep your bed pure. In another sense, married couples are encouraged to celebrate sex as an expression of love. Song of Solomon is a whole book of the Bible that celebrates love - emotional, spiritual and physical in marriage. Married couples have liberty; and should also be respectful of one another's feelings and desires (1Corinthians 7:1-16). A loving spouse is seeking to honor their spouse's feelings.

*But fornicators and adulterers God will judge.* There is no other similar warning in this section. God wants to get our attention regarding the dangers of sexual immorality. In the Greco-Roman worldview that dominated the Roman Empire almost no sexual activity was seen as immoral. Fornication and adultery relate to sexual behavior outside of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman.

Why does God limit sexual activity to a marriage relationship? In order to discover that He is the source of true satisfaction and contentment, not our flesh. To enable you and others you influence to experience unity with God and a spouse. To compel us to realize that sexual intimacy outside of marriage is an obstacle to unity with God, as well your ability to be truly united with a spouse. Or those you are sexually active with to be united with their spouse. Finally, in light of that dynamic, it is unloving to be sexually active outside of marriage.

#### **b. How Jesus modeled:**

Jesus never married, but modeled sexual purity in all of His relationships. Jesus' teaching on marriage emphasizes the sacred covenant between a man and a woman, and the ideal of unity (Matthew 19:1-12).

#### **c. How does the purity that Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

The world says "be safe" and if you are safe than most anything is okay as long as there is consent. Jesus inspires us that limiting sexual behavior is an act of worship, and if we love God and others we seek to be pure.

### **5. Be Content (5-6)**

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* <sup>6</sup> So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

#### **a. What this means in context:**

*Let your conduct be without covetousness* is interesting. Covetousness is an attitude that is manifest in actions. Coveting is yearning to possess or have something. It is associated with the vices of envy and jealousy. In our culture, we would not even know it is wrong if God had not told us (Romans 7:7). It is also noteworthy that in the Ten Commandments God declared don't covet (Exodus 20:17). Presumably most of us would not have placed that instruction in the top ten for creating a healthy community with God and people.

*Be content* (5) is contrast with covetousness. You can be content *with such things as you have* because you have discovered the sufficiency of Christ. The unbelieving Jews could boast, "We have the temple, the priesthood, the offerings, and beautiful ritual. What do Christians have?" Jesus' disciples could confidently reply that they lacked nothing because of Jesus. When Christ is your life you are content (Colossians 3:4).

Jesus is present and *will never leave or forsake* His followers (5, Matthew 28:20, Joshua 1:5-9). His Presence is more valuable than anything. Knowing that He is present and *helper; I will not fear* (6, Psalm 118:6). No harm can come to me apart from His will. Thus, my contentment and security are in Christ not material wealth, or possessions.

#### **b. How Jesus modeled:**

Jesus makes it clear that contentment is not found in material things (Matthew 8:20). Jesus modeled contentment in the *presence* of the Father (Matthew 3,17, John 5:20). Jesus modeled contentment by focusing on the present, “Don’t worry about tomorrow ...” Jesus modeled contentment by being in the presence of His followers.

**c. How does the contentment that Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

The world tries to find happiness in everything but Jesus. Believers know rest for the soul (contentment) in Christ.

**6. Be yielded (7)**

*7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

**a. What this means in context:**

*Remember* is the idea of being mindful of. *Those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you* could include parents, but appears to be primarily focused on spiritual leaders. In essence healthy spiritual role models who help you learn love and live God’s word. Healthy spiritual leaders are examples of the faith we should imitate, *whose faith follow*.

**b. How Jesus modeled:**

Jesus always does the will of God (Matthew 26:38-40). Jesus is always our perfect teacher and example that we want to be.

**c. How Jesus inspires:**

So, rather than deconstruct faith, reconstruct your faith. Find Christlike role models and teachers who have been inspired by Jesus’ greater love, yield to Jesus, and thrive in your relationship with Him so you become like Him.

**Study Guide Qs:**

**Q1. How does the love that Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

**Q2. How does the hospitality and compassion that Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

**Q3. How does the purity that Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

**Q4. How does the contentment that Jesus inspires differ from the world?**

**“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Read through the entire Book of Hebrews and review any notes you compile(d). Reflect on the greatness of Jesus, and be inspired.**

**2. Contemplate what it might look like if your attitudes and actions were more like Jesus. Pray for these virtues to be a reality in your life.**

**Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

**1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**

**2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

## Disciples who make disciples:

**1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**

**2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:**

**Consider participating in the School of Discipleship an intentional relational disciple development process.**

## Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

## Notes:

**1. Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

**3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

**5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.