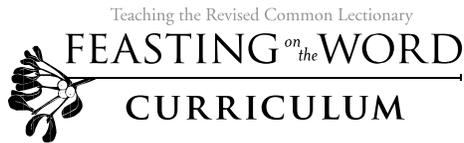


September 1, 2019
Welcome!



Adult Resource
Sheet 1

Focus on Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16

Semicontinuous Jer.
2:4–13
Ps. 81:1, 10–16
Complementary Sir.
10:12–18 *Ps. 112*
Heb. 13:1–8, 15–16
Luke 14:1, 7–14

WHAT is important to know? —From “*Exegetical Perspective*” by David R. Adams Hospitality (v. 2) is one way, obviously enough, in which this love becomes concrete. The author strengthens the injunction that hospitality not be neglected by grounding it in biblical precedent: in providing for strangers “some” have entertained angels (divine emissaries) unknowingly. The allusion is presumably to Abraham and Sarah, who entertained three “men” who turned out to have supernatural qualities (Gen. 18:1–15), though Lot, Gideon, and Manoah may also be in view (Gen. 19:1–14; Judg. 6:11–24 and 13:3–23). How does this precedent function? It seems to promise more encounters of this kind and perhaps to warn that their significance is easily overlooked.

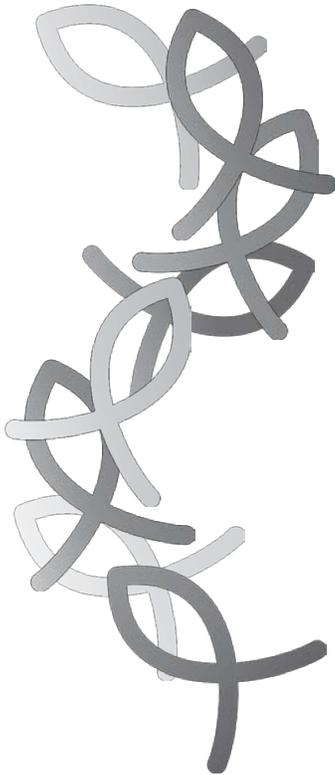
WHERE is God in these words? —From “*Theological Perspective*” by Gray Temple Suppose your congregation, or any other, were to face into and lay claim to the energies with which we have voiced contentious discontent, asking God’s forgiveness only for its target, not for its voltage and amperage? Suppose we were to direct that same energy into passionately adoring Jesus Christ in church? Suppose we applied the judgment that formerly shaped our gossip into appreciating the excellence of potential friends in the congregation? Suppose those energies made us brave in the face of the world’s many needs? Just imagine it. There would be no institution quite like *that* church anywhere in the world—not even in America.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives? —From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by Lanny Peters The writer goes on to mention another unlikely place to entertain angels without knowing it (echoing Jesus’ words in Matthew 25), with those in prison. It is a challenging word to remember those in prison, “as though you were in prison with them,” and even more demanding to remember “those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.” If we took this passage seriously, we would all be joining organizations that would help us identify in an empathic way with victims of torture, whether in Guantánamo Bay or Beijing. The pastoral word may have to be a prophetic word today.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do? —From “*Homiletical Perspective*” by Frederick Borsch

Being able to offer hospitality to strangers comes from a new kind of reaching out in love. This is empathetic love that also enables one to put oneself in the shoes of those in prison and to *feel in one’s own body* what it is like for another to be tortured (v. 3). Today, when torture can be rationalized and nearly two million American brothers and sisters are shut away in our grim penal system, one realizes painfully what an adventure of love it is to try to participate fully in the good life—to participate in eternal life and to act as the Good Samaritan and Jesus did.

Hebrews



Today's focus text is from the 13th chapter of Hebrews. Before examining the text, it is helpful to consider whom the author had in mind, and what the previous chapters were about. Scholars believe that, despite its ending, Hebrews is not really a letter but rather is probably a written sermon. The author was likely a second-generation Jewish Christian, familiar with Greek culture and language, who wrote the sermon somewhere between 60 and 90

CE in the period prior to the persecution of Nero or before that of Domitian. The recipients had earlier been persecuted and were again facing the risk of persecution. They had recently suffered ill treatment because of their faith, and were in danger of abandoning their allegiance to Christ because of the threat of persecution or because of strange, erroneous teachings that had been introduced into their community. They seemed to know and respect the Old Testament, and were probably conservative Jewish Christians. Some scholars hold that the recipients may have lived near Rome, since Hebrews 13:24 implies that people from Italy knew the recipients.

Other scholars have argued that the recipients may have lived in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Ephesus, Caesarea, or Antioch. Wherever their location, the author wrote to encourage them to remain true to the faith.

Hebrews begins with the finality of God's revelation in Christ, the superiority of the gospel over the law, and Christ as the exalted and merciful high priest whose perfect sacrifice forever gives us free access to God. The author indicates the coming end of the old sacrificial system yet the certainty of God's promises and the trustworthiness of Christ. The author calls on the recipients to persevere in the faith without wavering and to follow the examples of Old Testament heroes of stalwart faith, as well as Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

With the blessedness of Christian hope before them, and surrounded by so many faithful witnesses, the Christians are called to live in the present. This leads the author to describe what life in the Christian community should look like in the here and now. The ethical life of the faithful is a life of mutual love.