

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: Good, Random Truths from Hebrews, Hebrews 13:1-19

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INTRODUCTION: After months of study in the Book of Hebrews, I believe I've come to the conclusion that it was written by the Apostle Paul. This fact means very little to most of you, probably, but it means a lot to a few of you. If you've studied Paul's writings, you might realize similarities in his other writings and this closing chapter.

In the closing verses, we get somewhat of a review of the whole book. I've divided the book and our study into four specific points:

1. Guard your relationships with others.
2. Guard your relationship with money.
3. Guard your faith.
4. Guard your attitude toward your leaders.

First, In Hebrews 13, the people were told: GUARD YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.

We have five types of relationships here:

- the church family
- strangers
- people in jail
- the mistreated
- marriage

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 13:1-4 ¹*Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.* ²*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.* ³*Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

⁴ *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

EXPLANATION: Many times in the New Testament, the **church family** is compared to one's earthly family. And, there are many similarities. Remember, this was written to Jewish people. In their Jewish background, faith and family were one and the same. But, now that these particular Jews had become followers of Christ, they found themselves with people who did not have their Jewish background, and in fact, they found themselves with people who traditional Jews wouldn't even speak to.

And, so now, the scripture tells them to treat each other as brothers and sisters since they are all part of the same family.

APPLICATION: Look around. This is your church family. In fact, probably in most cases, those of us here this morning know each other better than we know our own families.

Next, we have entertaining strangers. Some of you have been waiting for this topic since many months ago when I preached on angels. I trust it's not been a build up for a letdown.

Now, let's look at the **entertaining strangers**. In the context in which this was written, the idea of entertaining a stranger was basically showing hospitality to those passing through. In our Sunday night study recently, we looked at what happened when a Jew from one tribe was not treated with hospitality by Jews from another tribe. If a stranger passed through town, they'd likely be offered a place to stay for the night. Today, this is probably not so wise.

Now, some people think because of the next part of this scripture they're obligated to put themselves in harm's way because they might be entertaining an angel.

I've thought about this scripture through the years. I don't think angels are playing dress up to see who is kind to them and who is not. I think this scripture means there are angels watching what we do, and they are fascinated with our actions. There are other scriptures which indicate this. Let me review something I said early on in this study, which left some people dumbfounded. When we die, we do not become angels and come back to earth to do good works. If you believe this, you've

watched too many movies. This makes for a good movie plot, but this is not theologically sound. People and angels are different.

So, ladies, if you see people hitchhiking, do not pick them up because you think they could be angels hitchhiking.

I believe what the scripture means is to be sensitive to show hospitality at the right time. The context in which this was written reflects a period of time when, for the first time in history, diverse races and cultures set aside their differences because of their unity in Christ. This alone would be enough to entertain angels.

Next, there is an encouragement to remember **those in prison** as if we were in prison. I do not know much about what prisons were like in this day, however, it's clear from just a general knowledge of the history of this period people were in jail for just about anything. It sounds to me like this book was written by someone who had experience with jail and knew the loneliness of it.

ILLUSTRATION: I went to visit a young man in jail recently. The conversation was a stretch because we didn't have much to talk about. When I asked him if there was anything else I could do for him, he said, "Can you come back and visit me again?" Later, I was saddened to learn there were no organized volunteers to lead jail ministry. Perhaps this is something Christians should do more of.

Then, there is an encouragement to keep **marriages** strong by being faithful to one another. The cultural context of the day wasn't much different than today. Immorality was in style. The tone of the admonition in verse 4 is favorable toward marriage. I do not see ugly judgments for those whose marriages are suffering or for those who've been divorced. What I do see is the encouragement for couples to be faithful.

Second, the people were told: GUARD YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 13:5-6 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."* ⁶ *So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"*

EXPLANATION: All of this is spoken within the topic of money. Underline “be content with what you have.” Don’t we need to learn to be content? Discontentment with what we have seems to permeate all age groups and social backgrounds.

ILLUSTRATION: I told you once about a friend of mine who was a missionary in Africa. She said the people lived in mud huts. One person found an old Ford hubcap when he went to the market, and he embedded it in the mud of his hut. Soon she noticed other huts with hubcaps.

EXPLANATION: Now, think about the context of Hebrews 11. Within the Church, there were now people from different parts of the world, different backgrounds, and different socio-economic standings. They saw what the others had and were encouraged to be content with their own belongings. It takes effort to learn to be content with what you have, but I believe it’s possible.

Third, the people were told, GUARD YOUR FAITH.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 13:7-16 ⁷ *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.* ⁸ *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

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 eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so.* ¹⁰ *We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.*

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.* ¹² *And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.* ¹³ *Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.* ¹⁴ *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

¹⁵ *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.* ¹⁶ *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

APPLICATION: If you ever struggle with faith matters, read those mentioned in the Bible who had the same problems. I don’t think any of us have any doubts or struggles which were not experienced by someone in the Bible. So, let’s look to

them and imitate their faith. Let's follow them in their faith journeys. Don't you appreciate the fact that the Bible records people who struggled with their faith?

Look back over Verses 11-14. We have once again the mystery of the blood of Christ. Let me explain this as best I can. When a person before Christ sought forgiveness of sin, the shedding of blood was required. The sacrifice was held outside the Holy Place, and only the blood was taken into the Holy Place. In other words, the suffering took place outside of the Holy Place, and the price had already been paid when the priest entered the Holy Place.

APPLICATION: And, so it is with Jesus. He died on this earth in my place and your place, and when we enter heaven someday, the price will have already been paid.

Fourth, the people were told: GUARD YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD YOUR LEADERS.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 13:17-19 ¹⁷ *Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.*

¹⁸ *Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.* ¹⁹ *I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.*

ILLUSTRATION: This week, I read several detailed accounts about a pastor who had abused his authority. Over a period of time, he had brainwashed people into doing nearly anything he wanted them to do. In fact, he was known for having pastors' conferences where he would have his deacons stand up and sit down on command, thereby demonstrating to everyone he was in charge. I mean, really, that's crazy. And, this was a man who was known for his Bible preaching and teaching.

Truly as your pastor, I don't want stool pigeons. I have no desire to manipulate people. I have no desire to demonstrate my authority by having people to stand up and sit down on command. But, I do have a desire that, as pastor: (1) I follow what I believe to be the Lord's leading and then, (2) I have a church who follows me in that direction. If you've noticed, I am not easily swept in by what other churches

and pastors are doing. I feel each church has a unique mission. According to the scripture I just read, I must give an account.

EXPLANATION: Why did Hebrews tell the people to have confidence in their leaders and submit to their authority? Look in the last part of Verse 17. *So their work would be a joy.*

ILLUSTRATION: Now, let me tell a true story. And, I want to be clear here: I am NOT talking about this church. A friend of mine pastors a church here in Tennessee. When the church called him, they were directionless. They met with a young, excited pastor and told him they needed leadership. After several talks, they called him as pastor. They resisted most of the things he wanted to do, and now, after five years, it seems they've finally decided to follow him. I really wonder about things like this. Essentially, they are about five years behind where they could have been. When I talked with him recently, I heard joy in his voice for the first time.

In my experience here, I feel that, overall, people have been encouraging and supportive of new directions I've suggested to the church. I cannot imagine the misery for both a pastor and a congregation who had no joy in each other.

Next week, we'll finish Hebrews with a charge.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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