

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
July 6, 2014
“Brotherly Love”

Memory Verse

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” Hebrews 12:28, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: Hebrews 13:1-9
Sermon Title: Receiving God’s Unshakable Kingdom: Part 3: LOVE

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 13:1-6
Sunday School Title: “Brotherly Love”
Big Idea: To glorify God and demonstrate His love to a watching world, Christians must love one another.

REVIEW: This week, we are in our third lesson in a five part series about receiving God’s unshakable kingdom. What have you learned from the previous 2 lessons? (Week 1 was about God’s voice; Week 2 was about worship).

Have you ever done something for someone out of a sense of obligation? How is that motivation different from love? How can you tell if someone really, genuinely cares for you?

Today, we’ll talk about the simplest, most practical way to live out our faith: loving others.

As we’ve studied the book of Hebrews over the last few months, you may have noticed that the majority of this book focuses on doctrine (the supremacy of Christ, the superiority of the New Covenant, the role of Christ as High Priest, etc). In fact, the first 11 chapters of Hebrews are heavy with doctrine. Then, in chapter 12, the author begins to make some general commands – run the race of faith with endurance; value God’s loving discipline; live holy lives; pursue peace with all men, etc. Now, in the final chapter of the book, the author makes some specific applications and gives some explicit commands. So the progression of the book of Hebrews has been from the foundation of doctrine to the call to duty; from a statement of position to a progression of practice. In other words, in chapter 13, the author tells his audience, “*it’s time to apply what you’ve learned. This is where the rubber hits the road. We’ve talked about Jesus and our faith in Him. Now let’s live it out.*”

READ Hebrews 13:1-6

The first six verses of Hebrews 13 discuss how a Christian should love others. In this lesson, we’ll investigate the command to love, the purpose for love, and the practical ways to love.

THE COMMAND TO LOVE

1. WHAT?

In Hebrews 13:1, the writer encourages his audience to “keep on loving each other as brothers.” The Greek word for love used here is *philadelphia*, meaning brotherly love. It comes from 2 separate words: *phileo* meaning to have great affection for; and *adolphas* meaning brothers born from the same womb. The idea here is that Christians would love other Christians, who are saved by the blood of Christ and born of the same spirit. Though Christians may not share physical blood or family trees, Christians are indeed brothers and sisters because all believers have been adopted into God’s family as sons.

Have you ever encountered another Christian who was difficult for you to love? What was it about this person that made it hard for you to love him/her?

The command is to *continue* or *keep on* loving others. This means that the capacity to love others already exists, and the habit of extending that love is already being practiced to some extent. In 2 Peter 1:3, we see that God has given Christians “everything we need for life and godliness.” As Christ-followers, we are already equipped to love others. We simply need to exercise the ability that God has given us! Now let’s admit that there are times when it’s difficult to love certain people. Even some Christians can be hard to love. I call these people “Extra Grace Required” persons. The good news is that God has already “poured out HIS love into our hearts” (Romans 5:5). So in those situations when it’s hard to love someone, we can rely on God’s love within us. We can pour out God’s love, even when we can’t muster any of our own to spare.

2. WHOM?

If we continue reading in Hebrews chapter 13, we find out that we are to extend brotherly love to several different types of people. In addition to loving our fellow believers, Christ-followers are also to love:

- **Strangers** (verse 2). Hospitality was important for believers in the New Testament times. One of the ways in which believers served and loved others was by opening their homes and providing meals to other believers, even when they were strangers.
- **The Separated** (verse 3). Believers are encouraged to remember and support those believers who are separated from family, friends, and the church because of imprisonment or persecution.
- **Our Spouses** (verse 4). The author reminds his readers of the love that should be shared between a husband and a wife. A marriage based on purity and love for one another and God demonstrates God’s love for the world.
- **Our Situations** (verse 5-6). Contentment (the opposite of wanting more) brings joy and enables us to focus less on ourselves and more on others. When we are satisfied in Christ and content with our situation, we will be able to effectively love others. On the other hand, when we are focused on money and material things, it becomes difficult for us to serve and love others.

From this list above, which is hardest for you to love? (fellow Christians, strangers, the separated, a spouse, or your own situation)

3. WHY?

So it’s clear that we’re commanded to love other Christians, especially our spouses, and even strangers. But why? What is the function of this brotherly love? Why is it so important? There are 3 main reasons.

A. **DEMONSTRATES GOD’S LOVE TO THE WORLD**

One important reason to extend brother love to others is that it shows God’s love. In John 13:34-35 Jesus tells his disciples, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Loving others like Jesus loves us is a trademark of Christianity. We live in a world where love is based on performance or appearance. When we live lives of love, selflessly serving, continually forgiving, and unconditionally loving others, the watching world takes notice.

B. **REVEALS THE FRUIT OF OUR SALVATION**

As we extend brotherly love to others, we bear spiritual fruit in our lives. Some ask how a Christian can be identified. Jesus said a tree is recognized by its fruit (Matt 12:33). We can be recognized as Christ-followers by our love for others. 1 John 3:14 says, “we know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.” When we love others, we are bearing spiritual fruit and offering proof of our salvation.

C. **DELIGHTS GOD**

Why is it important to love others? Because it makes God smile. Psalm 133:1 says, “how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.” Verse 3 of that same Psalm concludes with, “for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.” Those who love others please God and receive his blessing.

If your life had one single trademark or identifying element, what would it be? (Examples: Love, Ambition, Service, Wealth, Persistence, etc.) What would you WANT it to be?

3. HOW?

The command of Hebrews 13:1-6 to love others is clear. But how does this command take shape in our lives? What are the practical manifestations of brotherly love? What does brotherly love really look like? Brotherly love can take many forms, but the main attitude behind all the actions is the same: HUMILITY.

READ Romans 12:10

The first part of Romans 12:10 tells us to be devoted to each other in brotherly love. The second part of that verse tells us how to do that: honor one another above yourselves. When we honor others before ourselves, our focus shifts from ourselves to those around us. We can then see and take advantage of opportunities to serve and love others.

READ Philippians 2:3-4

In these verses, Paul encourages believers to put others first – to be concerned with the needs of others instead of just focusing on our own. This is the epitome of humility. Looking away from ourselves in an effort to love and serve others follows the example Jesus set when he died for us. The King of Kings came not to be served, but to serve, and He expects us to do the same.

Who/what is your life centered upon? Is it you or Jesus? Whom/what do you serve with your time, energy and money – yourself or others? Does your life follow Jesus' example of serving others?

CLOSING: To glorify God and demonstrate His love to a watching world, Christians must love one another.

APPLY IT!

- How can you express brotherly love to another Christian this week?
- How can you express God's love to your spouse this week?
- How can you focus less on yourself and more on others this week?

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your own study. This is NOT the lesson. Commentary written by David Guzik and available online: http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/guzik_david/)

Let brotherly love continue: The writer to the Hebrews uses the ancient Greek word *philadelphia* here. He *assumes* that there is **brotherly love** among Christians. He simply asks that it would **continue** among them.

In the ancient Greek language the New Testament was written in, there were four words at hand that we might translate *love*. *Eros* was one word for love. It described, as we might guess from the word itself, *erotic* love. It refers to sexual love. *Storge* was a second word for love. It refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general. *Agape* is another word for love. It is the most powerful word for *love* in the New Testament, and is often used to describe God's love towards us. It is a love that loves without changing. It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment. It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. *Agape* love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given - it gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive. *Agape* love isn't about *feelings*, it is about *decisions*.

But the word for **love** used in Hebrews 13:1 is *philadelphia*, coming from the root *philia*. This ancient Greek word speaks of a brotherly friendship and affection. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. There should always be plenty of this kind of love among Christians, and it should **continue**.

Do not forget to entertain strangers: Hospitality is an important virtue, and often it is commanded of Christians and leaders (Romans 12:10-13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7-8; 1 Peter 4:9). In the ancient world, "motels," where they did exist, were notorious for immorality. It was important for traveling Christians to find open homes from other Christians. This was simply a practical way to **let brotherly love continue**.

Strangers: The point is that we do this for other Christians who are **strangers** to us. If you invite your best friends over for lunch, that is wonderful - but it doesn't fulfill this command. A wonderful way to fulfill this command is to meet and befriend **strangers** at church, and to **entertain** them with hospitality.

The ancient Greek word for *hospitality* (used in passages like Romans 12:13) is literally translated, "love for strangers." **Brotherly love** means love for all our brothers and sisters in Jesus, not just those who are currently our friends.

For by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels: When we are hospitable to others, we really welcome Jesus (Matthew 25:35), and perhaps angels. Abraham (Genesis 18:1-22) and Lot (Genesis 19:1-3) are examples of those who **unwittingly entertained angels**.

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them: **Prisoners** here probably has first reference to those imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel. But it can also be extended to all that are in prison. This is just another way to **let brotherly love continue**.

The bed undefiled: The Bible strictly condemns sex outside of the marriage commitment (**fornicators and adulterers God will judge**). But the Bible celebrates sexual love within the commitment of marriage, as in The Song of Solomon.

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled: Perhaps through a past of sexual sin, many people have a difficult time really believing that the marriage **bed** is **undefiled**. Guilt and sexual hang-ups are appropriate to extra-marital sex, but not in marital sex. But this is where the guilt and sexual hang-ups often exist, and where they most frequently cause trouble.

The enemy of our souls wants to do everything he can to encourage sex *outside* of the marriage **bed**, and he wants to do everything he can to discourage sex *inside* the marriage **bed**. We need to recognize this strategy and not give it a foothold among us.

Though God allows real freedom in the variety of sexual expression in marriage, all must be done with a concern for the other's needs and in love (1 Corinthians 7:2-5 and Ephesians 5:21-33).

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content: **Covetousness** is the opposite of *contentment*. Often **covetousness** and greed are excused or even admired in today's culture, and are simply called "ambition."

Paul had the right idea in Philippians 4:11-13: *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* Contentment has much more to do with what you *are* on the inside rather than what you *have*.

Someone asked millionaire Bernard Baruch, "How much money does it take for a rich man to be satisfied?" Baruch answered, "Just a million more than he has."

So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper." Real contentment comes only when we trust in God to meet our needs and to be our security. It is amazing that we are often more likely to put security and find contentment in things far less reliable and secure than God Himself!