


# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 24



# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 24  
NOVEMBER 13, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.




# WEEK 24

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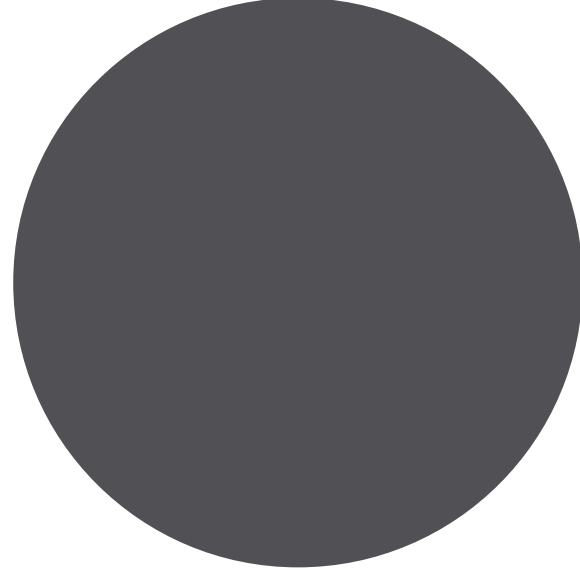
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# DAY 1

## THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE

### First read Hebrews 13:1-3.

Love seems like common sense. Along the various spectrums of ethics, politics, religion, and culture in modern American society, love is about the only thing we agree on. Yet, somehow love continues to elude us. Artist and activist Bono recently told the hosts of the podcast *Smartless* that “America is the greatest idea that doesn’t exist yet.” He went on to explain that the idea of America is love or peaceful coexistence with the other; the unity of diversity. Perhaps that’s because while we agree on love we have yet to agree on its definition and embodiment.

The command to **“Let brotherly love continue”** is a command to persist in behavior that is born out of our identity (v.1). The Apostle John understood that the evidence of being children of God was our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ (see 1 John 3:10). However, it’s not a tribal love. Our familial affection is meant to overflow into our love for others. The phrase **“to show hospitality to strangers”** is a single word in the original language (v.2). It’s a compound term, bringing together *philo* (love) and *xenia* (stranger). Specifically, Hebrews teaches us that the free should love the incarcerated and those in power should love the marginalized and mistreated.

We are called to love the familiar and the foreign. *Why?* Well, because that’s the type of love that reflects the love of God. The God who was free, loved us who were trapped in sin (Romans 5:8). The God who was wrapped in glory and honor, drew near us who were separated from him by sorrow, shame, and death (Philippians 2:6-11). God himself defines and embodies love. After all, God is love.

# DAY 1

## THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE

1. How would you define love through the nature and character of God?
2. How does God's love differ from the way you love your spiritual siblings and strangers?
3. How does Jesus' love heal our broken hearts? How does Jesus' love empower you to love like him?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Your love goes beyond my failures, anxieties, and sins. Your love for me, a stranger, has brought me healing, meaning, and family. Your love defines love. Your love embodies love. Enable me to love like you today*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 2

## THE SACRIFICE OF MARRIAGE

### First read Hebrews 13:4.

On the surface, the writer of Hebrews articulates a sizable limitation on human genital sexuality (see Marva Dawn, *Sexual Character*). Sex is reserved for marriage.

This ethic has two direct implications which both hold marriage in honor and ensure **“the marriage bed be undefiled”** (v.4a). First, unmarried people should not have sex at all. “The bed” or sex is for marriage. Second, married people, who are not married to each other, should not have sex with each other. By definition that’s adultery, a breaking of the seventh commandment (v.4c, see Exodus 20:14). While these are plain enough, curiosity remains. *Why would God care what we do with our own bodies? It’s just sex.* Or perhaps we might wonder, *Why would God give us desires (in this case sexual) that must be limited?*

Marriage is for us, but it’s not about us. The same is true of genital sexuality. The merging of two lives into one is a mystery that **“refers to Christ and his Church,”** mirroring the covenant between Jesus and his people (Ephesians 5:32). Not only so, but the merging of two bodies nurtures the covenant through intimacy and pleasure and has the capacity to create new life. All this being the case, because of sin we desire to make sex about our pleasure and even our identity, rather than God’s glory and purposes.

Therefore when it comes to sex (as well as various other desires and impulses), we’re invited to trust God with our unmet desires. When we are unmarried, we trust God with all our impulses for genital sexual expression. In marriage, we trust God with our desires for sex when our spouse does not want sex or when our desire is for someone who is not our spouse.

# DAY 2

## THE SACRIFICE OF MARRIAGE

1. How is God's character and love expressed through the creation of humanity, marriage, and sexuality?
2. What about God's sexual limitations are hard for you to accept? Why?
3. How do marriage and genital union within marriage point us to Jesus' glory, grace, and salvation?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Forgive us. We have made a mockery of what you have called to be held in honor and undefiled. We've made sex about us and called it freedom rather than what it is, rebellion. Heal our hearts and anchor us in an identity that is richer and more durable than our fulfilled desires.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



# DAY 3

## THE SACRIFICE OF CONTENTMENT

### First read Hebrews 13:5-6.

Money is not destructive. But loving money is. The Apostle Paul warns Timothy that ***“the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil”*** (1 Timothy 6:10). *But what does it mean to love money?* Well, we can logically deduce from this passage that loving money is about looking to money to say, do, and be for us what only the Lord can say, do, and be.

We trust money to never leave us, but only the Lord can say that (see Matthew 28:20).

We trust money to be our helper, but only the Lord can do that (see Psalm 54:4).

We trust money to drive out fear, but only the Lord be that (see 1 John 4:18).

Ultimately, when we love money we believe that money will love us back. Our idols never love us back. Only the Lord does that. In fact, it's better than that. God doesn't love us back. God loves us first (see 1 John 4:19). And his prevenient love is always faithful. His love never leaves us (v.5). His love helps us (v.6a). His love drives out our fears (v.6b).

When we love money we're replacing the Lord with our money. The result is a deep discontent. Of course, money is just a thing. It's not evil. But when our hearts are wrapped around *something* as if it were more than a thing, we're never satisfied.

# DAY 3 THE SACRIFICE OF CONTENTMENT

1. Why is God better than money?
2. In what ways are you tempted to love and trust money?  
How has it led to discontent and fear?
3. How does Jesus release you from the love of money? How does he love you better than money every could?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Free me from the destructive love of money and hold me fast in your love; the love that loved me first.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 4 THE SACRIFICE OF FAITHFULNESS

## First read Hebrews 13:7-10.

The three-fold command to remember, consider, and imitate leaders is a timeless picture of discipleship. The particular leaders Hebrews has in mind are those who **“spoke to you the word of God”** (v.7). Ostensibly readers are invited to recall former ministers of the gospel who served them well not only by faithfully pointing them to Christ but also by trusting in Christ.

Having good examples helps us to not **“be led away by diverse and strange teachings”** (v.9). Every generation of believers faces what Paul calls a fresh **“wind of doctrine”** (Ephesians 4:14). It is easy to be tossed from one extreme to the next, one fad to the next, and one lie to the next. And so previous generations of faithful saints or **“a cloud of witnesses”** is given to us so that we can see what it looks like to stay faithful amidst the shifts in culture and church life (12:1). But ultimately good leadership and godly examples are not our hope.

In contrast to the inevitable changes in society's values, morals, and view of truth, **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”** (v.8). Theologians call this the immutability of God. He does not change. He doesn't mature. He doesn't grow. He's the same. He's steady. He's whole. He's perfect. In other words, the faithfulness of leaders is meant to point us to the ultimate faithfulness of Jesus.

# DAY 4 THE SACRIFICE OF FAITHFULNESS

1. How have you experienced the faithfulness of Jesus?
2. Whose faithful example has pointed you to the faithfulness of Jesus?
3. How does Jesus strengthen us and help us stay faithful in an ever-changing world?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. They have modeled humble faithfulness. They have pointed me to you. Help me to learn from their example and trust your faithfulness in every season, situation, and shift in my family, neighborhood, society, and world.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 5

## THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

### First read Hebrews 13:11-16.

The writer of Hebrews draws on a common relational tension. True friendship is about embracing joys and burdens. If we only share in someone's happiness, the genuineness of our love is never tested. If we only share in suffering, we're prone to bitterness, resentment, and codependency. A real relationship always has both.

In a similar way, friendship with the Lord is a participation in his joys and burdens. Though we **"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,"** we draw near **"outside the camp"** where we **"bear the reproach he endured"** (10:22,13:13). The region outside city gates was marked with shame. "It was a place where carcasses were disposed of and criminals executed" (O'Brien, 524).

Following Jesus brings us life, but it also leads to death. Jesus says, **"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"** (John 10:10). But he also invites his disciples to **"deny himself and take up his cross"** (Mark 9:34). Or as Paul puts it, we put on the new self and put off the old self (see Ephesians 4:22,24).

As worshippers we **"offer up a sacrifice of praise to God"** (v.15). A brand of worship that brings life (praise) and death (sacrifice). *Why?* Well, because the shame outside the gates was ours in the first place. You see, before we're invited to embrace the joys and burdens of Christ, our true friend embraced us completely. After all, **"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends"** (John 15:13). And so we offer worship to God that reflects our Friend's love for us.


# DAY 5 BEING IN AWE

1. How has God been your friend?
2. Are you more prone to embrace the joys or burdens of others? Why do you think?
3. How has Jesus identified with your joy? How has he carried your burdens?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Thank you for not choosing my joys or burdens. Thank you for loving me completely and wholly. Help me to embrace joys and burdens today. Living in the newness of life with you. Putting to death the old self. Offering a sacrifice of praise to you.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



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