

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

Living Life Well

Goal for the Session

Third- and fourth-graders will list ways of living in Christ's love named in Hebrews 13 and identify how they might practice these.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16

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.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

**Hebrews 13:1–8,
15–16**

Focus on Your Teaching

Third- and fourth-graders like to know the “rules” of any given situation, including being church members. The concrete instructions in Hebrews 13 may appeal to their desire to know what to do and speak to their life experiences. Perhaps they have experienced hospitality as a new student. They may recognize suffering in the eyes of a bullying victim. Picturing people they encounter as angels in disguise may encourage them to consider others in a new way. Today’s session may help children define more clearly what it looks like to live in Jesus’ ways.

*Amazing Lord, thank you for loving me when I don't feel very lovable.
Remind me to spread your sweet love each day. Amen.*

YOU WILL NEED

- small table or large box
- green cloth
- battery-powered candle
- Bibles
- assorted game pieces
- self-stick name tags
- markers, pencils
- Singing the Feast*, 2019–2020; CD player
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 4, 27
- scissors
- zip-seal sandwich bags
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- clear tape

For Responding

- option 1: construction paper, scissors, glitter glue
- option 2: Resource Sheet 2, scissors
- option 3: writing paper, pencils, markers

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, for every three children, assemble a set of five pieces from different games, such as cards, tokens, or spinners. Cut the jewels from Color Pack 3 and 4, and place them in a zip-seal sandwich bag. If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut a 5" square of construction paper for each child.

Before the children arrive, create a worship center by covering a small table or sturdy box with green cloth. Place the candle and a Bible on it. Display Color Pack 1 in the meeting space.

Introduce yourself to each child as he or she arrives. Ask each learner to make a name tag, including a drawing that tells something about himself or herself, such as a pet or a favorite activity.

Gather the group around the worship center and invite learners to take turns telling about what they drew on their name tags. Point out the green cloth and explain that this is the color for the church season called Ordinary Time (or the season after Pentecost). Show Color Pack 1 and read aloud the information. Light the candle, saying it is a reminder that Jesus Christ is present with your class. Sing together “Give Me Joy in My Heart” (Color Pack 27; track 6 on *Singing the Feast*, 2019–2020). Pray aloud, having the children repeat each phrase:

Dear God, / be our guide / as we learn more about you / and how to follow / in the ways of Jesus. / Amen.

All: Amen! (Clap twice.)

Give Me Joy in My Heart

Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Give me joy in my heart, I
pray—hallelujah!
Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Keep me singing till the
break of day.

Sing hosanna, sing
hosanna, sing hosanna
to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing
hosanna, sing hosanna
to the king.

Repeat three times

The focus scripture contains many instructions. This session emphasizes the ones that are most meaningful for third- and fourth-graders.

Resource Sheet 1 answers: caring, angels, money, faith, praise, share

Form groups of three or four. Give each group a set of the unrelated game pieces. Without offering any help, ask each group to play a game with its pieces. Allow several minutes for groups to play. Afterward, discuss:

✧ What made this activity difficult? What would have made it easier?

Comment that today's Bible reading includes some instructions for Christians.

EXPLORING

Open your Bible to Hebrews 13 and explain that the author of Hebrews was trying to encourage new Christians to keep following in Jesus' ways. Distribute Bibles and help the children locate Hebrews 13.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 1–2. Discuss:

- ✧ What does it mean to offer welcome or hospitality?
- ✧ How could our group offer welcome and hospitality in church?
- ✧ How might you offer welcome and hospitality in your neighborhood or school?
- ✧ What do you think the writer means by welcoming angels without even knowing it? Has this ever happened to you?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 5–6. Discuss:

- ✧ What does it mean to be content with what you have? Why would God want that for you?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 7–8. Discuss:

- ✧ Who has taught you about being a Christian? How can you imitate them?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 15–16. Discuss:

- ✧ In what ways do Christians praise God? Why do you think the writer says it is important to do this?
- ✧ The writer says that it pleases God when we do good things and share what we have. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Words of Wisdom). Ask children to work individually or in pairs to unscramble the word to complete each sentence. Encourage them to use their Bibles if they need help. After all have finished, invite a discussion about which ones are most important for third- and fourth-graders. Remind the children that Christians do not try to follow instructions like the ones in Hebrews to “look good” or earn God's love. Christians do these things as a response to the love and grace that God has already shown to them. Ask learners for examples of what they could do to follow these instructions.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Angel Bookmarks** As they make these bookmarks, children can ponder living in Christ's love and treating others as though they were angels in disguise. Give each child a 5" square of construction paper. Demonstrate how to make bookmarks, pausing after each



**EASY
PREP**

Option: With the learners' permission, make a display of these poems in a hallway or publish them in the church newsletter.

Save Color Pack 2 and the bag of gems to continue this activity in upcoming sessions.

step for children to complete it: 1. Fold the paper in half each way. 2. Unfold the paper and cut out one of the four small squares, leaving an L shape. 3. Refold the paper to form a small square. 4. Glue the end of the L onto the square facing it. When dry, this will form a pocket to slide over the corner of a page in a book.

Read aloud Hebrews 13:1–2. Invite learners to draw an angel on their bookmarks with glitter glue. As they work, discuss what it means to treat other people as if they were angels. Encourage learners to use their bookmarks to mark a page in their Bibles that teaches them about caring for others.

- 2. Role Play** Acting out everyday situations helps children visualize how they might enact the guidelines in Hebrews. Cut apart the situation cards on Resource Sheet 2 (Role Play Cards). Form groups of three. Have each group draw one of the situation cards, talk about possible actions to take in response to it, choose one solution that would demonstrate Christ's love as explained in Hebrews 13, and act it out for the entire class. Applaud the efforts of each group, and ask group members to explain their choice. Continue until all the situations have been addressed.
- 3. Gratitude Poems** Naming things for which they are grateful can help children develop a sense of contentment like that described in Hebrews 13:5. Allow a quiet moment for learners to think of as many things as they can for which they are thankful, which make them feel content. Distribute writing paper and pencils. Ask learners to write the word *THANKS* down the left-hand side, one letter per line. Have learners write one word or phrase about being thankful for each letter. As time allows, have them illustrate their poems with markers. Ask for volunteers to read their poems aloud. Afterward, discuss what makes them feel content and how some advertisements try to make them feel discontent.

CLOSING

Gather around the worship center and light the candle, if necessary. Display Color Pack 2. Explain that, over the next few weeks, your group will fill this treasure chest with gems of wisdom from the Bible. Take out three "gems" cut from Color Pack 3 and 4. Ask for three volunteers to each take a gem and use a marker to write a word or phrase on it that will help your group remember what it learned from Hebrews 13. (The group can help decide what to write.) Ask three other volunteers to tape the gems around the treasure chest.

Pray aloud, asking children to echo your words and actions:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, (thumbs point behind you)

Today, (hands point down by your side)

And forever! (fingers point ahead)

Thank you, God!

Words of Wisdom

Directions: The book of Hebrews offers words of wisdom for Jesus' followers. In each sentence below, what word is missing? Put the letters in the correct order and write the word on the line. Use the Bible verse clues if you need help.

RCAGIN

Keep _____ about each other.
(Clue: Hebrews 13:1)

LSAGNE

Show hospitality to people you do not know. Sometimes people welcome _____ by doing this.
(Clue: Hebrews 13:2)

MNOYE

Don't love _____ more than you love God or other people; be content with what you have.
(Clue: Hebrews 13:5)

HAIFT

Respect the people who teach you about God's Word; imitate their _____.
(Clue: Hebrews 13:7)

ISAPRE

_____ God.
(Clue: Hebrews 13:15)

ARSHE

Continue to do good things for others and to _____ what you have.
(Clue: Hebrews 13:16)

Role Play Cards



One of your best friends broke his arm and can't go in the pool at the swim party for your class. What can you do to bring God's love into this situation?

On the school bus, you see a third-grader teasing a first-grader, making fun of her clothes and calling her names. What can you do to bring God's love into this situation?

Your grandfather lives alone in a town that is 100 miles away. How can you show God's love to him?

Your pastor has taken your Sunday school class to visit some people in a nursing home. It smells a little funny and some of the people don't seem to know you are even there. What can you do to bring God's love into this situation?

You go with your mom to meet the new neighbors across the street. When they answer the door, they speak to you in another language. What can you do to extend God's love to them, even though you can't speak their language?

Your friend at school is worried about his parents, who have lost their jobs. He is afraid to tell anyone that they are out of food at home. What can you do to offer God's love in this situation?