

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**

# Forever Faithful

## Goal for the Session

*Tweens will examine how the author of Hebrews proclaims confidence in Jesus and commit to expressing Jesus' love in tangible ways.*

## ■ 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

Tweens are experiencing many changes. Their bodies are changing with puberty's onset. They may be changing school buildings as they complete the elementary grades. Social relationships change as tweens further define their identities; old friendships may grow stronger or weaker. Some tweens start thinking about dating. Navigating any one of these changes is challenging enough; tackling them all at once, as adolescence often seems to demand, may seem overwhelming. What a privilege to help tweens claim the good news that Jesus Christ's love for them is changeless!

*Faithful Jesus, may your Spirit strengthen me to show these young people your unchanging love for them, and to encourage them to show that same love to others. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- ☐ green cloth
- ☐ battery-powered candle
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2019–2020; CD player
- ☐ pens or pencils
- ☐ Color Pack 1, 2, 27
- ☐ fresh fruit

**For Responding**

- ☐ option 1: writing paper, pens or pencils
- ☐ option 2: Resource Sheet 3, scissors
- ☐ option 3: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2011; PG), media player

## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, being mindful of food allergies, bring a small serving of fresh fruit for each learner. Place a Bible and a candle on green cloth in the center of your meeting space. Cut apart the cards on Color Pack 1 and 2. If you are using option 2 in Responding, cut apart the scenarios on Resource Sheet 3 (Act It Out). If you are using option 3, be sure your church has a viewing license for movies.

Welcome learners as they arrive. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Gathering Prayer) and gather around the candle. Point out the green cloth, noting that the church is in the season of Ordinary Time (also called season after Pentecost). The church uses the color green during this season to signify growth. Ask for two volunteers to read the Leader parts of “Gathering Prayer.” Save the sheets for use in upcoming sessions.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Time Line Interview) and pens or pencils. Ask learners to form pairs to interview each other, writing their partner's answers to the questions on the resource sheet. When pairs finish their interviews, ask learners to introduce each other to the entire group by telling about one of their partner's responses.

### EXPLORING

Tell learners that the Bible reading for today is from the book of Hebrews. To better understand why this book was written, invite learners to close their eyes and listen as you read aloud:

You are a Christian living in Rome about seventy-five years after Jesus' death and resurrection. You meet each week with other Christians to praise God, study the



# FEASTING on the WORD

## CURRICULUM

**Forever Faithful**

It may be helpful to review with learners how to locate a Bible passage: Look up the name of the book in the table of contents and turn to the page where the book begins. Look for larger chapter numbers at the top of the page. Use the small verse numbers to find where the reading begins.

Bible, and eat a meal together. Over the years, group members have supported one another in good times and bad. Lately, though, they seem less enthusiastic about meeting each week. Some have stopped coming altogether. Some are beginning to doubt that Jesus will ever come back. You've heard rumors that the Roman emperor won't tolerate groups of Christians meeting together much longer. It's harder than ever to follow Jesus. You wonder, "Is it still worth it?"

Distribute Bibles and ask tweens to find Hebrews 13:5–8. Ask a volunteer to begin reading with the second half of verse 5 ("for he has said . . .") and continue through verse 7. Have learners read verse 8 aloud in unison. Discuss:

- ✧ What does the writer want this group of Christians to remember about Jesus?
- ✧ Why do you think the writer emphasizes that Jesus never changes?

Point out that the book of Hebrews says many things about Jesus. Lay the cards cut from Color Pack 1 and 2 in three rows, facedown. Form two groups to play a game that reveals more of what Hebrews teaches about Jesus. Have one team turn over two cards. If two beginnings or two endings are turned up, the team returns the cards to their places and play passes to the other team. If one beginning and one ending are turned up, the team must decide if the cards form a correct, complete verse. If the team thinks they do and is correct, it scores a point, the cards are removed from play, and the team gets another turn. If the team is incorrect, the cards are returned to their places and play passes to the other team. The team that completes the most verses wins.

After the game, discuss:

- ✧ Based on these verses, how would you describe the writer's feelings about Jesus?
- ✧ How do you think the writer hopes readers will respond to the love that God has given to them through Jesus?

Ask two volunteers to read aloud Hebrews 13:1–5, 15–16, alternating verses. Ask:

- ✧ According to these verses, how are Christians to treat one another? (v. 1) What are signs of this love?
- ✧ Why should Christians welcome others and practice hospitality? (v. 2) When have you witnessed this happening?
- ✧ The word *angel* means "messenger." How might offering hospitable welcome to strangers help keep church members open to God's messages?
- ✧ Do you agree with the teaching in verse 3? Why or why not?
- ✧ Why do you think the writer says it is important for all Christians to honor and support married couples? (v. 4)
- ✧ Do you think greed can get in the way of faithfully loving and following Jesus? (v. 5) How so?
- ✧ Why is it important for Christians to worship together?
- ✧ What gives you the confidence to extend the love of Christ to others?

**EASY  
PREP**

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Write a Letter** Tweens can grow more confident in Jesus' love as they express this love to others. Discuss: What challenges you as you seek to follow Jesus faithfully? What challenges do other people face when seeking to follow Jesus? How would the writer of Hebrews urge us to address these challenges? Brainstorm points you might make in a letter to your congregation. Use contemporary language and examples. Distribute writing paper and pens, and have learners work individually or in pairs to write such a letter. Allow time for each letter to be read aloud. Deliver the letters to your pastor or other church leader. If possible, publish the letters in your church newsletter or on its Web site.
2. **Act It Out** Drama can help learners imagine what it takes to commit themselves to expressing Jesus' love in tangible ways. Form groups of three. Have each group draw a scenario cut from Resource Sheet 3 (Act It Out) and follow the instructions. Allow time for each group to present its skit. Encourage groups to explain the reasons for the response they portray in the skit.
3. **Sibling Love Cinema** Tweens can evaluate how well the portrayal of love in a contemporary medium reflects Jesus' love for all (Hebrews 13:1). If your church has a viewing license, watch a scene from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2011; rated PG)—0:83:37—0:89:40 [to “we’re brothers”]. In this scene, Greg agrees to be Rowley’s assistant, even though he fears it will be humiliating, so Greg’s mother will allow his brother to play with the band. After viewing this scene, discuss: To what extent does this scene about family love illustrate how Jesus loves us and how Christians ought to love one another? Invite learners to think of other media examples of this kind of love.

## CLOSING

Gather around the candle and light it, if necessary. Read aloud Hebrews 13:15 from the Common English Bible: “So let’s continually offer up a sacrifice of praise through him, which is the fruit from our lips that confess his name.”

Offer fresh fruit to learners, asking them to tell specific ways they plan to praise God by extending Jesus’ love to others this week.

Invite learners to join you in this closing charge, based on 1 Timothy 4:12:

**Teacher:** *And now, “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”*

**All:** *With God’s help, we will! Amen!*

September 1, 2019  
Forever Faithful

Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary  
**FEASTING on the WORD**  
CURRICULUM

Tweens  
Resource Sheet 1



**Glory to God**

Glory to God,  
Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God,  
Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God,  
Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest!

**Gathering Prayer**

**Leader 1** *lights the candle and says:*

To the king of the ages, to the immortal, invisible, and only God, may honor and glory be given to him forever and always!

—1 Timothy 1:17, CEB

**All:**       **Amen.**

**All sing:** “Glory to God” (Color Pack 27; track 7 on *Singing the Feast*, 2019–2020).

**Leader 2** *holds up the Bible and says:*

Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17, CEB

**All:**       **Amen.**

**Leader 1:** Holy Spirit, help us learn how to live as members of the body of Christ, the church.

**All:**       **Amen.**

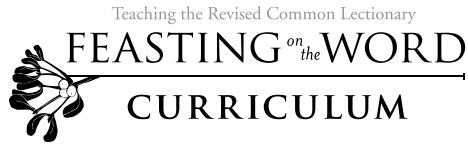
**Leader 2:** The Lord be with your spirit.

**All:**       **Grace be with you all.**

—2 Timothy 4:22, CEB

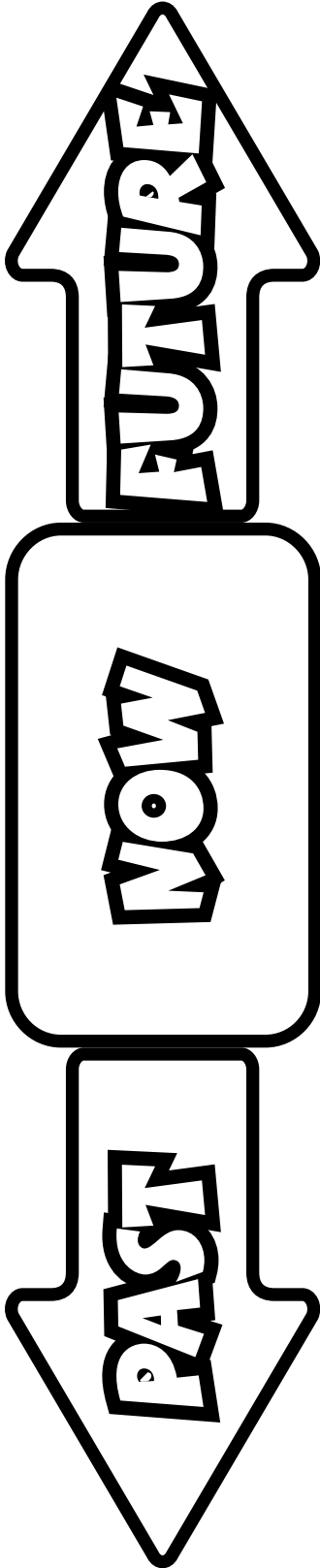
*Shake hands or give “holy high-fives” of peace.*

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Tweens  
Resource Sheet 2

## Time Line Interview



What's something you hope  
will change for you in the  
next year?

What's a change you're  
dealing with now?

What's the best thing that  
has changed in your life since  
you were in kindergarten?

## Act It Out



Two Sunday school class members had a fight at the game on Friday night. You are standing in the hall at church, talking with one of them, when the other walks in.

- Discuss: Based on the teaching in Hebrews 13:1–8, what might you do?
- Prepare to act out the situation, showing the response your group chooses.

As you're walking to the school bus stop, you see a young child standing there. She's crying.

- Discuss: Based on Hebrews 13:1–8, what might you do?
- Prepare to act out the situation, showing the response your group chooses.

Some classmates are saying terrible things about your friend's dad, who's just been arrested for drunk driving.

- Discuss: Based on Hebrews 13:1–8, what might you do?
- Prepare to act out the situation, showing the response your group chooses.

You hear a friend from church talking about how much he likes sexting with some girls at school.

- Discuss: Based on Hebrews 13:1–8, what might you do?
- Prepare to act out the situation, showing the response your group chooses.

You want the newest smartphone, but you can't afford it and your parents refuse to buy it for you.

- Discuss: Based on the teaching in Hebrews 13:1–8, what might you do?
- Prepare to act out the situation, showing the response your group chooses.