Study Guide

Session 8: Following Jesus

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea
Following Jesus requires us to love God and the people around us with acts of service.

Head Change
To know God has placed us in our communities to be agents of his love.

Heart Change
To feel empathy for those in physical and spiritual need.

Life Change
To seek to serve the people in our spheres of influence through acts of service, both big and small.

OPEN

Who is one person that changed your life in a positive way? What did that person do that made such an impact on you?

Love changes us. Sometimes that love comes through a prolonged relationship with a family member or close friend. Other times, love comes in the form of a small act of kindness that changes our day. No matter how it shows up, love has a profound effect on our lives.

The most powerful love we can ever receive is the love of God. It changes our eternity! But his love should not stop with us. When we follow Jesus, God commands us to love others the way that he loves us. We should let God's love change us and flow through us so that it changes those around us as well. In the final video of this study, Derwin Gray will show us some practical ways we can serve the people around us and show them the love of Jesus.

READ

Hebrews 13:1–6

[Note: If you would like to read through the whole chapter, you can find a reading plan in the Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of each session of this study.]

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Derwin Gray's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What is Christian "brotherly love"?

What is our motivation for loving others?

What does it look like to serve those in your church and your broader community?

Session 8: Following Jesus (13 minutes).

DISCUSS

Each of us has been positioned by God to show the world his love. The book of Hebrews ends with a series of commands for the church that give us a clear picture of how we can love God and the people around us in practical ways. Read Hebrews 13:1–3.

What do you think it means to show "brotherly love"?

We might assume brotherly love is a nice feeling of friendship toward people. But God's idea of brotherly love is much deeper than being nice. In the video, we learned that the Greek word for "brotherly love" is *philadelphia*, which also means to "cherish" one another. **What do you think it looks like to cherish a person?**

Is God's command to cherish one another asking too much of us? Explain your answer.

God wants our love to reach beyond our inner circles. In verse 2, we are commanded to love in a way that invites all people—even strangers—into our daily lives. **What can make the command in verse 2 difficult to follow?**

What could you do to become more hospitable and welcoming to the people you are around on a daily basis?

Many of us live in neighborhoods or apartment buildings that aren't very hospitable. It's common not to know the people that live next door to us very well. **In what ways could you become a hub of brotherly love in your neighborhood or building?**

How might practicing hospitality open doors to share the gospel with the people around you?

In verse 3, we are called to care for people most of our society would rather forget. True *philadelphia*—the kind of brotherly love Jesus showed to us—causes us to go out and find the people that slip through the cracks of society. Derwin reminded us of the incarcerated, a group of people that are very often forgotten during their imprisonment and disregarded after their release. But they aren't the only forgotten people in our communities. **Who do you think are the "forgotten" in your community?**

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Are any ministries serving those people? If so, what would it look like to partner with them?

If no one is serving the forgotten in your community, how might God be calling you to serve them?

Hebrews 13 encourages us to be controlled by the love of God and to let that love overflow into our communities. But there are two things this chapter warns us about that can control us instead of God. Read Hebrews 13:4–5.

The first thing we are warned about is sexual immorality. Instead of being controlled by sexual desire, God calls us to be pure. But our society doesn't share God's view of sex. Instead, our culture tells us to follow our sexual desires, no matter what they may be. But what might seem like freedom is actually enslavement to our sexual desires. **In what ways do you see our culture being controlled by sex and sexual desire?**

According to our culture, why God's view of sex unusual?

Seeking to be sexually pure is difficult in a society that tells us to indulge in our desires. **What has it looked like for you to seek purity in your singleness or marriage?**

The second thing we should not be controlled by is money. **How have you seen money influence our lives in unhealthy ways?**

In what ways can it be easy trust in money, rather than God, to save us from our troubles?

Money can ease some problems in our lives, but it cannot save us. God is our provider who takes care of our needs, including our finances. **What practices help you control your money instead of letting it control you?**

What does it look like for you to worship God through the way you use your finances?

Both sex and money can control our lives. In other words, they are idols that can distract us from loving God. When we are tempted by sexual desire or money, we can easily forget all of Jesus's work, his goodness, and his provision for us. Read Hebrews 13:5–6.

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What is God's promise to us when we are tempted by idols?

According to verse 6, how should we respond to temptation?

Idols tell us that God either cannot or will not meet our needs. They tempt us to think God has forgotten or abandoned us. But these lies ignore his promises to us and the work of Jesus. **What are some promises of God that you have learned while studying Hebrews?**

What have you learned about Jesus and his work that combat the lies idols tell us?

As this study has come to an end, take a moment to meditate on the final benediction of Hebrews. It is a prayer and encouragement we can carry with us as we take all we have learned from Hebrews into our lives and out to the world. Read Hebrews 13:20–21. **What encourages you from this passage?**

[Note: To read the final encouragement of Hebrews, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.]

Derwin made a point of reminding us that following Jesus means far more than going to church on Sunday. Jesus completely changes our lives and calls us to serve him every day in a variety of ways. **In what ways have you been encouraged to follow Jesus more deeply during this study? In what ways has your faith grown?**

How has your view of Jesus changed over the last eight sessions?

What is your biggest takeaway from the book of Hebrews?

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LAST WORD

The book of Hebrews teaches us that Jesus is better than anything this world has to offer. He is our prophet, priest, and king, our good and sympathetic High Priest who served in a better temple, offered a better sacrifice, and brought us a better covenant.

Remind yourself of him when you are tempted by sin, troubled by pain, or trying to follow him in a world that doesn't value God's standards. Whenever you need grace, mercy, or encouragement, set your eyes on Jesus, boldly approach him in prayer, and rest in his sovereignty. And, whenever possible, seek to love others just as Jesus loved you in hope that they too might know the saving love of Jesus.

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GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:

1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.
2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Hebrews.

1. Hebrews Reading Plan: Week 8

Hebrews is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. This plan keeps pace with Derwin's teaching, so some weeks will have more reading than others. Feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to you and your group.

Week 1: Hebrews 1:1–3
Week 2: Hebrews 1:4–3:19
Week 3: Hebrews 4
Week 4: Hebrews 5–6
Week 5: Hebrews 7–9
Week 6: Hebrews 10
Week 7: Hebrews 11–12
Week 8: Hebrews 13

This reading guide will walk you through the last chapter of Hebrews, a list of commands and final reminders. As you read, consider how you can practice these commands and truths in your own life.

Day 1: Grace-Filled Living (Hebrews 13:1–7)
Day 2: Strengthened by Grace (Hebrews 13:8–15)
Day 3: Final Commands (Hebrews 13:16–19)
Day 4: Benediction and Greetings (Hebrews 13:20–25)
Day 4: Reread the end of Hebrews (Hebrews 13)

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2. Going Out to Jesus

Imbedded in the commands of Hebrews 13 is a passage that summarizes everything we have learned in this study and gives us a vision for how we must follow Jesus. Read Hebrews 13:8–16.

This passage is like the rest of the chapter: each verse contains a unique thought that is theologically tied to the others. To study this section, make some space in your schedule and prayerfully meditate on each verse.

Verse 8 gives us an eternal truth. You have met the real Jesus in this study, learning about his identity as the Son of God, his offices of prophet, priest, and king, and his priestly work. **Based on what you have learned in this study and in your own words, who is Jesus? What would it look like to praise him in prayer?**

Jesus is unchanging. His goodness will never alter, his love will never fade, and his mercy will never be revoked. Write down verse 8 and memorize it.

Verse 9 reminds us to be fortified in the grace of Jesus rather than looking anywhere else for assurance. **What "strange teachings" have you confronted during this study?**

In what ways has the grace of God strengthened you against anxiety, the lies of the enemy, and insecurity?

Verses 10–13 show us something new about Old Testament sacrifices. Sin sacrifices, or animals that carried the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement, were removed from the city and burned (Leviticus 16:27). Jesus's death fulfilled the Old Testament atonement sacrifices and, like the sin sacrifices of old, he was led outside of the city of Jerusalem when he was crucified.

Jesus was rejected by Jewish authorities, cast out like a sin offering. Therefore, the author of Hebrews reminds his audience that they should not expect to be welcomed by the Jewish leaders who were persecuting them. Instead, Hebrew Christians were encouraged to follow Jesus "outside the city," far beyond their comfort zones of acceptance in polite society. **In what ways has Jesus called you beyond your comfort zone during this study?**

In verse 14, we find a new hope in Jesus: a heavenly city that is coming. As we have seen multiple times in this study, God is not done with us, we can be sure of his

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promises, and what we hope for is certain. Therefore, we can have a holy optimism that the best is yet to come. **What would it look like to implement holy optimism and hope into your current circumstances? Into your prayers?**

As we follow Jesus, we will make sacrifices, though they may be different than what we think. Read Hebrews 13:15–16. **What are the sacrifices that please God in these verses?**

God calls us to tell people about him, to do good, and to share what we have. Consider the following questions as you think about what it could look like to make God-pleasing sacrifices.

Whom could you tell about Jesus?

In what ways could you talk about Jesus more in everyday conversations?

What opportunities has God given you to do good today?

What do you have that you could share with someone in need?

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