



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

In the Meantime

Hebrews 13:1–6

Tim Badal | April 25, 2021

We've been studying Hebrews, this letter that was written to a group of Christians who were struggling with persecution and troubles because of their relationship with Christ. As a result, this anonymous church leader is writing to this group of first-century Hebrews. He's telling them, "I want you to know that running the race is going to take perseverance. The life of a Christ follower is going to be hard."

We've been learning from Hebrews 12 what it means to run the race with perseverance. We've seen that along the way there will be obstacles that will hinder us, sins that entangle us and distract us from running the race well. But all this running needs to get us somewhere. As we learned last week, the end of Hebrews 12 describes the finish line, a place called Mount Zion. Mount Zion is a symbolic name for heaven. After we've run this race on earth, after we're done with this life, we will enter into the presence of almighty God and experience no more sin, no more sorrow and no more pain. The old things will be gone and only the new will be there. We'll be with God and the angels experiencing festivities God has prepared for His people and we'll enjoy all of eternity in heaven.

As the people who were struggling with the here and now heard about this heavenly city, I wonder if some of them started to grow wings a little bit, thinking, "I want to be there. I don't like my life right now. I'm going to focus only on that future place." The writer will now bring these people back down to earth. "You're not done running this race yet. In the meantime, between now and when you get to heaven, you have some work to do."

These things that are part of our running may seem very earthly and even mundane when compared to what we'll experience in the future, but God wants us to run our race well. In order to do this, three things need to become a reality in our lives. All of these flow out of love. So let's look now at Hebrews 13:1-6 where we'll learn what we're to do as we're running this race between the present here on earth and our future in heaven.

¹ Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

As you run your race, participate in familial hospitality.

The first thing we need to do "in the meantime," on the road that leads to heaven, is we need to participate in familial hospitality. We need to look at the world as if it's our family. The author is telling us, "As you're running this race, you need to run it with love." Why is love such an important thing? As followers of Jesus Christ, we are in the family of God and God says He is love. We read in 1 John that if we love God, we have love for others. If we don't love others, then the love of God is not in us. Part and parcel of running well is running with an attitude and with actions of love.

That's not hard to do—until you ask, "Whom do I have to love?" You see, we live in a world that is infatuated with self. Our generation has been coined the "selfie generation." In my day, you called people on the phone. Then we got cell phones and started to text people. This generation now is all about pictures, so most of the pictures you see on kid's cell phones are "selfies" of themselves. Not even full selfies, but half-selfies of their faces. I don't mean to demonize this, but there is an obsession with how we look and



who we are. Let's be honest. In the church—both in the days of Hebrews and in our day—the church had a selfie mindset. We're too involved in who we are and what we need, with our wants and desires.

Many of you came to church today with a list of things you needed from this church service, things you wanted to bless you. You weren't thinking so much about what you needed to do for others to be blessed. You were just thinking, "What is there for me?" The writer says that if you're going to run this race well, if you're running toward Mount Zion, then you need to let brotherly love continue. He adds this word "brotherly." In the Greek, it's the same word found in Philadelphia. When I say Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love, you know what that means. It's a word that literally means "comes from the same womb." We are to extend familial love to a group of people. The question is: who are we to show this kind of love to?

First and foremost, we're to let this brotherly love be seen in the church. We're brothers and sisters in Christ. That means when we come to church, we're not here as co-spectators or co-participants in an event; we're a part of the same family. You might look at the church and think, "That's a big family and it just continues to grow. How in the world am I supposed to interact and spend time with this family?" Well, have you ever been to a family reunion? Do you say hello to everybody? Probably not, especially as the reunions get larger. I'm a caterer and have catered some large family reunions. What binds them together? It's who their mom and dad are, who their ancestors are.

We have spiritual ancestors. Our God in heaven is our Father. He's given us the right through Jesus to become His children. The book of Hebrews says that Jesus Christ is our elder Brother, Who is our model and example and Who is serving us. Then just as we have given our lives to Jesus, so have others. What happens is we merge together as a family. Now, getting together as a family can be difficult. The larger the family gets, the more logistics are going to be needed. Let me explain.

In the Badal house when I was growing up, getting together for family meals was pretty easy: Mom, Dad, Chris, Tim, Joel. Mom and Dad would say, "Dinner is at this time," and we were all there. It was pretty easy. But then my brother passed away, for those who don't know, and then Tim and Joel went and got wives. We have children. And now it's getting more difficult. Mom says, "Hey, let's get together," but now logistics have to be pulled together. What about this person? What about that person? Can they do this? Wait until those kids start having in-laws. It gets more and more difficult. Some of you moms right now are saying, "Amen." It's hard to get the family together.

The issue isn't that we're all together at once; the issue is that when we're together, there is something that binds us together. So my dad, the patriarch of the family, does a really good job of making sure of one thing he wants all the family to know. He spreads it around in different conversations.

That's what the church is like. The church is under the banner of Jesus Christ. Because He has exemplified, personalized and personified love, we who are His followers, whenever we're together—whether in small groups or serving alongside one another or sitting next to one another or even meeting one another in the parking lot—we are to show a familial love to one another. This love then filters down to others. The love we show in the church doesn't just stay in the church, where we're a group of people who all sing Kumbaya together. We are to leave this place as ambassadors of love.

Notice what it says in Hebrew 13:2. *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels..."* First of all we start with the church, where we're to love one another. Then it trickles down to strangers. Now, we all have our circle of friends and our community. For most of these people, we've made a decision to love them. We've selected the people we live life with and they're usually easy to love. Strangers are people we don't know much about, so we haven't built a trusting relationship with them. We might not even know their name. But God's Word says we're to show them brotherly love. Here He uses a different word—hospitality—the love of strangers.

The reason why we need to show this love, why He exhorts us this way, is this is a love you can get away with not showing. If you don't show love to the person in the checkout aisle, they're not going to hold you accountable. They're not going to say, "Hey, time out. I know you're a Christian. You should have shown me love." Or maybe the person in your neighborhood you walk by but you don't know; they're not going to say, "Hey, you weren't very loving." The person who doesn't even notice you're near them is not going to hold you accountable. But God says in His Word, "I'm going to hold you accountable. When you come into contact with strangers, you need to show them love." In other words, we need to extend ourselves, showing them the same kind of love we would show our families. Is that all-inclusive? No. There are certain privileges with being part of a family. But we should not hesitate to show love to one another, even to those we don't know.

Let's talk about this for a moment. This idea of love for a stranger has a contextual reason for it. One of the reasons the author brings this up is that back in the day, there were no Marriott or Holiday Inn hotels. Back in the day, there weren't places to eat along every exit of the expressway. To be a stranger in a strange land meant you were on your own. There's a good chance you didn't have the right money or the right language. You might not have known the right customs. You were open to all kinds of issues. Back in the day, inns were known to be brothels and hide-outs for bandits. So as a traveler, you ran the risk of ending up around the wrong crowd, especially if you were a Christian. You could be prey to those who wanted to hurt you. One of the things the author says is, "Let's be kind to one another. If someone needs a place to stay, let's give it to them."

The idea of hospitality means opening your home, your heart and your hands to those who have need. Why do we do this? There are a couple reasons why hospitality is such an important thing. First, we have an example in our belief system that screams "hospitality."

Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem, where she gave birth in a manger. Why? Because there was no room in the inn. O little town of Bethlehem, could you not find room for a woman about to give birth? Could you not find room to give a couple in need? They weren't there because they wanted to be. They weren't there because of bad planning. They were there because the government said they had to be. Circumstances brought them to the place where their baby had to be laid in a manger in a stall, because there was no hospitality in Bethlehem. Say it isn't so, Village Bible Church, that we would fall prey to the same lack of hospitality. Little do we know that what we may be doing is "entertaining angels." The author brings this up, because in the book of Genesis, Abraham and Lot—on two different occasions—entertain strangers without being aware that they're entertaining people from heaven.

If we would just show hospitality, we might be more blessed because of what we get in return. Not from a material or financial standpoint, but we might be part of something God is doing in our midst. The author is saying we must open our hearts and hands and our homes to others. But there's also another theological reason, which makes our lack of hospitality inexcusable.

Our whole understanding of salvation goes like this: Jesus Christ owned all of heaven. Nothing was mortgaged or on credit cards. God owned heaven. Even though Jesus knew He could keep it all to Himself, He doesn't. He shows hospitality by opening His home, His heart and His hands, inviting you and me to join His family.

Do you see why, for the Christian, hospitality is a must? "Well, you haven't seen my house." I don't care about your house. "You don't understand. I've got this. I've got that." Hospitality is something we should live every day of our lives. Why? Because that's exactly what God did for us in our salvation. He opened His heart, He opened His hands, and yes, He opened Mount Zion—heaven, His home—so that we might join Him there. Where are you regarding hospitality? How closed off are you when it comes to your home, your heart and your hands?

Then the author pivots and says, "There's one more place." It's trickling down. First we love the church, then the family, then strangers. But he finishes with, "*Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.*" He's asking them, "What about those who are in prison?" Why does he bring them up? Just two chapters earlier, he alluded to the reality that some of the Hebrew people were no longer attending on Sunday morning because they had been incarcerated for their faith. He's saying, "Remember Bob? He used to be with us, but he started sharing his faith at work and his boss put him in jail. Don't forget about Bob." Why would the church forget about Bob? Because associating yourself with Bob meant you had a greater chance of being in prison yourself. People would forget about Bob in order to keep themselves out of trouble. So the author says, "I want you to remember those in prison as if you're the one who is there." The idea is that we need to be on the lookout.

I'm glad to be part of a church that has not forgotten prisoners. I'm thankful for the ministry of Wayside Cross, which we partner with and Master's Touch ministry that addresses men who are coming out of incarceration, helping them get a new lease on life. I'm thankful for the dozens of teams we've sent down to the Danville State Penitentiary where we as men have been able to teach and train the prisoners what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to be fathers from behind bars to their children. I'm thankful for the Saturdays when a team of men from this church go down and minister to the people in the Kendall County jail, sharing the gospel in a chapel service with them.

We at Village Bible Church have not forgotten the prisoners. This idea of prisoners isn't just people who are in because of their faith, but all types of prisoners. All of this love hinges on us doing some things. Love is not nice, warm, cuddly thoughts about doing something; it's about actually doing it.

This biblical mandate takes energy.

First, for this biblical mandate to work takes energy. *“Let brotherly love continue”* (13:1). This means it’s an ongoing thing. Each day we need to get up with the idea, “I’m going to show love to the world around me. It may change my schedule. It may change what I do. It may mean I have to take a detour along the way. It might mean I have to involve myself with people I don’t usually get involved with, but I am going to do what it takes to live in a spirit and lifestyle that shows hospitality.”

It’s going to take energy. You can’t do this sitting on your hands and wishing and hoping. You’ve got to get up and do something.

This biblical mandate means extending your reach.

This also extends your reach. The idea of Philadelphia expresses concern for someone else regardless of any earthly distinctions. Hospitality—biblical brotherly love—says, “Red, yellow, black and white—if they’re precious in the sight of God, they’re precious in my sight.” There’s no regard for race or ethnicity. That’s what makes the church such a glorious place. We can gather together, not because we’re all white or we’re all black or we’re all yellow or red or purple or whatever. We’re all here because we are sinners in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We gather together and tell the world, “It’s not about race here. We’re only about one thing and that’s a sinful race being saved by the Savior, Jesus Christ.” So be careful that you don’t allow your comfort to keep you from reaching out and ministering to other people.

I need to pause for a second, because I know someone is going to call me this week and say, “Tim, I love the desire to be hospitable, but we have to use wisdom. We have to use discernment.” Yes. If you’re a petite little lady and you see Tim Badal on the side of the road with a flat tire, maybe don’t stop. You may be putting yourself in some danger you’re not ready for. There’s discernment that needs to be used. But can I tell you, church? We discern way too much. We don’t extend our arms as we should.

This biblical mandate demands empathy.

Why is this so? It’s because we lack empathy. When the author brings up remembering those in prison, he uses an image of empathy: *“...as though in prison with them....”* It’s as if you are there as well. Everything changes when we put ourselves in someone else’s shoes.

It sure is easy to drive by a person who is on the side of the road with a broken-down car when everything in your car is working. But if you’ve ever been on the side of the road, you know what it’s like to change a tire all by yourself. The joy you had when someone stopped for you, the joy when someone reached out and extended a loving arm to you, is water to a parched soul. You’ve been there. When you see someone in this situation, can you take a moment and realize, “I could help. Two people are better than one”?

This means we’ve got to take our eyes off ourselves and turn our attention to others. If we would show this kind of love and hospitality, a whole lot more people would come to know the saving knowledge of Jesus. They would be asking, “Who are these people? They show such love.” That’s why Jesus told His disciples, “They will know you are Christians by...” what? Your doctrine? Your buildings? Your gatherings? No. By your love. So let’s start showing love. It means we extend our reach. It means it’s going to take some energy. And we’re going to put ourselves in other people’s shoes, because we will then recognize what it’s like to be mistreated.

Now, the author pivots again. He goes from hospitality to marital intimacy. How does he do that? How does that work? It all funnels through love. We are to show love to the church family, to strangers, to prisoners. Now he goes back and says, “Of all places you should show love and hospitality, married couples, it is to your spouse.”

As you run your race, pursue sexual purity.

The closest of all your neighbors is that person you live with, that person you’ve joined yourself to in marriage. They are to receive your greatest hospitality and your greatest love—and you’re to do this all the days of your life together. So the author says in verse four that we’re to pursue sexual purity, especially in the context of the marital relationship. *“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”*

His exhortation now is directed to married individuals, but first he speaks broadly to all. Marriage is to be honored by all. Those who are married in the church, you have to honor marriage. Those who are single in the church need to honor it, too. The young

people in the church need to honor it. The old people have to honor it. Men, honor marriage. Women, honor marriage. And outside the church, countries, societies, communities need to honor marriage.

Marriage is to be elevated.

Why is this? Because marriage is elevated above all other earthly relationships. Marriage was started in the Garden of Eden. Before there was sin, there was Adam and Eve in perfection and the two became one flesh. God was the officiant of that marriage, because He prescribed a specific relationship for men and women.

For all men and women? No. Marriage is not the end-all be-all. You do not have to be married to be fulfilled, to honor and glorify God. In fact some of the most godly people in the world and some of the most accomplished people in the world were and are single individuals. Let's talk about two: the apostle Paul who wrote more of the Bible than anyone else, and of course King Jesus. So marriage again is not the end-all be-all.

However, God has graced marriage for many of us as a gift in partnering with another person. Why? Because two is better than one in many facets of life. So He's given us this gift of marriage and it needs to be honored, meaning it needs to be held in high esteem. There was a recent USA Today article that had the heading, "Marriage," then at the bottom it said, "Going out of style." Marriages are being delayed more than ever before and there may be a lot of reasons for that. The article talked about many men and women who are foregoing marriage for cohabitation. As a result, even that article said there are economic and societal issues to a non-family culture. Even the unbelievers in the world realize the value marriage has in gluing society together, being the bedrock of that society. Where there are healthy marriages, there will be healthy families. Where there are healthy families, there will be healthy communities. Where there are healthy marriages, families and communities, there will be healthy countries and a healthy world.

There was an idea in the days of the Hebrews that if you're on your way to heaven, why would you mess around with something like marriage? King Jesus said we're not given to marriage in heaven, so there was this false teaching going around saying you didn't need to be involved in marriage; in fact, marriage was a sinful defilement. But the author is saying, "Hey, church, marriage is a good thing. It's been established by God as a grace He's given His people." That's why it needs to be elevated.

Marriage is to be exclusive.

So society says marriage can be anything now. The Bible says over and over again that this is not true. I've done a lot of theological classes regarding the whole issue of homosexuality and gay marriage and all that. But let me just say this. The Bible always, always, always and only speaks about marriage in one way: one man, one woman, for a lifetime. When it speaks about anything else outside of that—and there's a whole list of options mentioned—anything else will be judged by God. Now, that's not me saying I'm going to judge. It says specifically in verse four that *"...God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."*

This means that if you do not honor marriage in the right way, what happens? You fall into sin. What dishonors marriage? We don't just want to touch on the one issue here. Many issues dishonors marriage, especially pornography. Other things include evil thoughts, sensual thoughts not directed toward your spouse. Divorce, the breaking down of marriage.

Fornication, which is sexual activity between individuals who are not husband and wife. Homosexuality, the binding and even the "marrying" of two people of the same sex. There are a lot of reasons for this, but basically God says the only thing that brings benefit and blessing to you—both here and now and in the long term—is that you do marriage and sex the way that honors Him.

So the author is telling us, "On this race you're running, you need to understand that your sexuality has a part in it." This might be hard for older generations to understand because sexuality was not spoken of openly. But I think it's a good thing that this generation is having it brought into the open. I just don't think they're doing it in the right way.

Sexuality is very much at the core of who we are. We are sexual beings and it's deeper than just skin deep. We need to realize the deep struggles and the fall that has taken place in our sexuality. We need Jesus in this aspect of our lives now more than ever. We need Him to grace us with His wisdom, because this younger generation is struggling to understand their identity when it comes to sexuality which is to be defined as one man and one woman in marriage for a lifetime.

Here's the thing. Do you want to know how you honor God in this relationship? You're like, "I've got it. I've been married to old battle ax here for last 52 years." She's thinking, "I'm with that deadbeat. He's wrong. It's been 53 years." If you talk like that, you're

dishonoring marriage. You're in the same lot as the people who are parading around, right? You don't think you are, because you've got the "one man, one woman" part down, but you're dishonoring it because you have not made it what it was intended to be.

Marriage is exhilarating, not exhausting.

God intended marriage to be exhilarating, not exhausting. Some of you right now are living a sham of a marriage. Do you know where the Bible says that occurs? It centers around the bedroom. The marriage is to be undefiled. There is to be passion and sexuality. Why? Because the most important relationship anyone can have on earth is the relationship with a spouse.

My most important relationship is not the kids. It is, first, Jesus. Then it's second, Amanda. Then a distant third is Noah, Josh and Luke. I love them, but I love their mom a whole lot more. She is number one in my life. In that, God has given married people an adhesive that keeps them together—sexual intimacy. I've explained it this way. Sex is like concrete, bringing two people together and making them one. The only way you break concrete is getting a sledge hammer, then a lot of sparks and rocks go flying. That's why breaking up a marriage that once was bound by sexual intimacy is a nightmare when it breaks apart. What God says is, "For My glory and for your good, you need to pursue a passionate marriage."

I'm not a 20-year-old pastor anymore. Marriage and sexual intimacy at 20 is different than at 70, right? It's different and that's okay. But husbands, never let your pursuit of your wife stop. Wives, never stop loving your husband. Live as if it's the first day of your marriage. Never give that up. Fight for it. The devil wants to destroy it. In this race, if you want to run it well, keep your marriage bed undefiled to the glory of God.

I could go on, but let me say one last thing on this. Maybe today you've walked in here and I've just thrown a huge bucket of bricks on you. Maybe you're deep in sin. You're deep in pornography. You're going too far with your boyfriend or girlfriend. You're living with somebody. You're struggling with same sex attractions. Listen, we're all sexual deviants apart from Jesus Christ. We're all struggling. My word for you is the same as what Jesus told the woman caught in adultery in John 8:11: "Go, and sin no more." When you give your life and your sexuality to Jesus Christ, there may be some shame, but there may be scars along the way. The Bible tells us that now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). So get help. Find a trusted friend who can walk you through what it means to work through the scars of broken and sinful sexuality. Don't dirty the gift God has given you.

As you run your race, practice material stability.

Again, love the church family, love strangers, love prisoners, make sure you really love your spouse. Now the author finishes with something you should not love. He says, "Don't love money." He gives us instruction regarding material stability. The final exhortation goes like this in verses five and six:

⁵Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

⁶So we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?"

We're going to land this plane hard and fast, all right? So stick with me.

The one thing we are not to love in this discussion of love is money. Why? Because the love of money is a trap. Money is a tool, just like sex is a tool. We can use sex, and we can use money, in ways that dishonor God and hurt us. What the author is telling us is, "Be careful of this. One thing that will easily take you off your race is to start focusing on the accumulation of material things. One thing that will slow you down in your race toward Mount Zion is the U-Haul trailer you keep loading up." Does that mean you can't possess things? No. I possess things. You possess things. We all possess things. But is our love for these things growing in such a way that our love for God is growing weaker? The author says the way to get away from this pattern is contentment.

Let me give you a couple helpful quotes. J.I. Packer puts it this way. "Contentment is essentially a matter of accepting from God's hand what He sends. Because we know that God is good, therefore what He gives us is good." C.S. Lewis put it this way, which is a great reminder for us as followers of Christ: "He who has God and everything is no different than the one who has God and nothing."

Is your sense of life, your sense of joy, your sense of happiness based on the house you live in, the cars you drive, the toys you have, and the money in the bank account? Or can you say, “God, I’m thankful for all these things, but if I didn’t have any of them, I would still be just as happy, if not more happy, because I have You”? We’ve got to ask ourselves, “Am I making more of the stuff around me than I should?” Let me give you a few thoughts to walk away with.

You must beware of greed or grasping for a little more.

First, beware of greed. Because I think I’m talking to a sensible group of people and hopefully not an overtly greedy group of people, let me just tell you where I struggle. It’s the temptation to grasp for just a little more. Do you know what happens when you sit in someone’s new car and think, “I’ve got four tires and an engine and a steering wheel and brakes—my car is working”? But then you say to yourself, “But their car talks to them. That would be nice. I’d like a car that talks to me. This car has all these bells and whistles.”

We might also think, “All houses have walls, a roof and rooms, but it sure would be nice if that room was a little bigger.” For many of us, it’s just a little more.

A study was done some time back in which a question was asked of people ranging from those in poverty to people who were Fortune 500 CEOs who owned millions of dollars and beautiful mansions. The question was this: “What would you need from a financial standpoint to make you happy?” Every one of them said, “Just a little more.”

Church, be careful that you’re not grabbing for just a little more and losing out on heaven. Don’t miss out on seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Beware of greed and grasping.

You must become generous with what you’ve got.

Contentment says, “I’ve got all I need, so surely I have a little extra I can give away.” Really, the only weapon against greed is not less greed—it’s generosity. First of all, this speaks of the importance of giving back to God. But we also need to ask, “What can I give away?”

Do you want to get rid of your greedy heart? Do you want to test your greedy heart? Start giving some stuff away and see how happy you are. You might be thinking, “Yeah, I’ll give that junky thing away, but I won’t give this nice thing.” There’s your treasure.

What are you willing to give away? Be generous with what you’ve got.

You must be grateful for what God has given you already.

What has He given us? His presence. *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (13:5). Is that enough? Is it enough that God is with you and He will never leave you for you to be filled with joy this morning? Is that truth enough or do you need just a little more?

Brothers and sisters, we’re in a race that God has called us to run with perseverance. This race is going to end in heaven and that will be a great and glorious day. But in the meantime, you and I have some work to do. We need to show love and hospitality to a whole group of people, we need to focus our time and attention on pursuing sexual purity—whether as a married individual or not—and we need to be careful not to allow the love of money to make us unstable in this race that God has called us to run here and now.