

The Book of Hebrews, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: Sacrifices of Praise and Love

Hebrews 13:1-25

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This final chapter brings the soaring theology of Hebrews home to everyday Christian living, and the teacher should help the class feel that movement from doctrine to life. The practical exhortations are not a change of subject but the intended fruit of everything that came before. Because Christ is the great high priest who has perfected us by one sacrifice and brought us into an unshakable kingdom, we now live a transformed life: loving one another, showing hospitality, remembering the suffering, honoring marriage, keeping free from the love of money, and resting in God's promise never to leave us. The chapter models the truth that sound doctrine is always meant to produce holy, loving living.

Two doctrinal anchors stand out. First, the great declaration that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever, the unchanging center of the faith amid changing leaders, shifting teachings, and a passing world. This grounds the warning against being led away by strange teachings and the call to imitate the faith of faithful leaders who taught the word of God. Second, the teaching on sacrifice in verses 15 and 16, which gathers up the whole letter. The old animal sacrifices are finished and fulfilled in Christ; the sacrifices God now desires from His people are the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips acknowledging His name, and the sacrifice of doing good and sharing. This reframes the whole of Christian worship and life as an offering presented to God through Jesus, our one mediator, and fits a heritage that understands worship and service as spiritual sacrifices offered through Christ rather than through any continuing earthly altar.

The chapter also speaks of going to Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach, and of seeking the lasting city that is to come, which encourages faithful endurance and a willingness to bear the cost of following Christ. Aim to send students home seeing that the towering truths of Hebrews come down to a life of grateful praise and practical love, anchored in the unchanging Christ. As this is the final lesson, help the class look back over the whole book and name how its great vision of Christ is reshaping the way they will live and worship.

Question 1

Student Question:

In verses 1 through 3 the writer calls for brotherly love, hospitality to strangers, and remembering those in prison and the mistreated. What do these commands teach about how the love of Christ is meant to take concrete shape in the life of the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Note how the writer turns immediately from the heights of chapter twelve to the practice of love. Let brotherly love continue, he says, assuming it is already present and urging that it

persist. The love created by the gospel is meant to be an ongoing, durable reality in the church, not a passing feeling.

Draw out the concrete forms love takes. Hospitality to strangers, welcoming those we do not yet know, even with the reminder that some have entertained angels unawares. Remembering those in prison as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, entering into their suffering with real solidarity. Christian love is not abstract; it opens the home, visits the cell, and shares the burden.

Apply the principle. The love of Christ takes concrete shape in specific acts toward specific people, especially the stranger and the suffering. A church marked by this love embodies the gospel it professes. Encourage the class to see love not as sentiment but as costly, practical action.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Brotherly love as a durable, continuing mark of the church.
- Hospitality and care for strangers and the suffering.
- Solidarity with the imprisoned and mistreated.
- Christian love as concrete action, not mere sentiment.

Discussion Prompts

- What concrete forms does the writer say love should take?
- Why does he link remembering prisoners to being in prison with them?
- How can our church embody this kind of practical love?

Question 2

Student Question:

The writer urges hospitality and remembering those who are suffering or imprisoned. Who is one specific person God may be putting on your heart to love in a concrete way, and what would it look like to actually do it this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the command to love from principle to practice. The writer names specific objects of love: strangers, prisoners, the mistreated. Real love always has a specific object; it is not love in general but love for this person, in this need, now.

Help students identify one specific person. Perhaps a newcomer to welcome, a lonely neighbor to invite in, someone suffering to visit, or a person in need to remember. The exercise of naming a specific person guards against love that stays comfortably vague.

Move toward concrete action. Loving that person might mean a meal, a visit, a note, a phone call, or an invitation. Encourage each student to name one person and one concrete act of love this week, turning the chapter's command into actual obedience.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love directed toward specific people and needs.
- Moving from love in principle to love in practice.
- Concrete acts of hospitality and care.

Discussion Prompts

- Who is one specific person God is putting on your heart?
- What concrete act of love could you show them this week?
- What tends to keep good intentions from becoming actual deeds?

Question 3

Student Question:

Verses 4 through 6 address honoring marriage, keeping free from the love of money, and being content because God has said He will never leave us. What do these commands teach about how trust in God shapes our view of relationships and possessions?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Take the commands in turn. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed kept pure, reflecting God's design for sexual faithfulness within marriage. Honoring marriage is part of a life shaped by reverence for God's order.

Address the warning about money. Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have. The love of money is a rival trust, promising the security that only God can give. Contentment is the fruit of trusting God rather than wealth.

Show how God's promise grounds contentment. The writer roots contentment in God's word: He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, so we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper; I will not fear. Trust in God's faithful presence frees us from anxious grasping. Both our relationships and our possessions are to be governed by reverence for God and confidence in His care, not by lust or fear.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Honoring marriage and sexual faithfulness as part of a God-fearing life.
- The love of money as a rival trust to God.
- Contentment grounded in God's promise of presence.
- Trust in God shaping our view of relationships and possessions.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the love of money compete with trust in God?
- How does God's promise never to leave us produce contentment?
- How does reverence for God shape the way we view marriage and money?

Question 4

Student Question:

The writer ties contentment to God's promise never to leave or forsake us. In what area are you most tempted toward discontentment or anxious grasping, and how does God's promised presence change the way you hold that area?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the contentment of verses 5 and 6 to the heart's anxieties.

Discontentment and anxious grasping usually arise where we feel insecure: finances, the future, status, possessions, relationships. We grasp because we fear we will not have enough or will be left alone.

Help students locate their specific area of grasping. Naming it honestly exposes the rival trust beneath it. Often the love of money or the fear of lack is really a search for the security that only God can provide.

Point to the promise as the cure. God's pledge never to leave or forsake us means we are never finally alone or unprovided for. This does not remove all difficulty, but it removes the foundation of anxious grasping. Encourage students to set their specific worry next to God's promise and to practice contentment and trust in that area this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discontentment and anxious grasping as symptoms of misplaced trust.
- God's promised presence as the ground of contentment.
- Practicing trust in specific areas of insecurity.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted toward discontentment or grasping?
- What fear lies beneath that grasping?
- How does God's promise never to leave you change the way you hold it?

Question 5

Student Question:

Verses 7 and 8 tell us to remember our leaders who spoke the word of God and to imitate their faith, and then declare that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. What does this passage teach about the role of faithful leaders and the unchanging nature of Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Address the place of faithful leaders. The writer tells us to remember those who led us and spoke to us the word of God, to consider the outcome of their way of life, and to imitate their faith. Godly leaders who teach God's word and live it faithfully are gifts to be remembered and imitated. Their example, not a personality cult, points us to Christ.

Note the deliberate placement of verse 8. Right after pointing to leaders who come and go, the writer anchors everything in the One who never changes: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and

today and forever. Leaders are mortal and will pass, but the Christ they preached endures unchanged.

Draw out the comfort and stability of this truth. In a changing world, with changing leaders and shifting circumstances, Christ is the fixed point. The same Jesus who saved the faithful of old and who these leaders preached is the same Jesus we follow now and forever. This verse gathers up the whole book, whose entire purpose has been to display the unchanging glory and sufficiency of Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithful leaders who teach God's word as examples to imitate.
- Imitating leaders' faith while anchoring ultimately in Christ.
- The unchanging nature of Christ amid changing leaders and times.
- Jesus as the fixed point gathering up the whole letter.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to remember and imitate faithful leaders?
- Why does the writer place verse 8 right after speaking of leaders?
- How is the unchanging Christ a comfort in a changing world?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. In a life and a world that are constantly changing, what would it look like for you to anchor yourself more firmly this week in the One who never changes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the great declaration of verse 8 into personal practice. Everything in life changes: circumstances, relationships, health, fortunes, even our own moods and convictions. The unchanging Christ offers a stability nothing else can give.

Help students feel where the instability of life presses on them. A season of change, loss, or uncertainty can make everything feel unsteady. The truth that Christ does not change is meant to be an anchor precisely in such seasons.

Move toward concrete anchoring. To anchor ourselves in the unchanging Christ might mean returning to His promises when feelings shift, building life on His word rather than on circumstances, or fixing our hope on Him rather than on things that pass. Encourage students to name one way they will anchor in Christ this week amid whatever is changing around them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unchanging Christ as an anchor amid life's changes.
- Building life on Christ rather than on shifting circumstances.
- Returning to His promises when feelings and fortunes change.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you most feel the instability of a changing life right now?
- What does it mean to anchor yourself in the unchanging Christ?
- What is one way you will do that this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Verses 9 through 14 warn against being led away by diverse and strange teachings, and call us to go to Jesus outside the camp, bearing the reproach He bore. What does this teach about staying grounded in the truth and being willing to bear reproach for Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Address the warning against strange teachings. The writer cautions against being led away by diverse and strange teachings, urging that the heart be strengthened by grace rather than by external ceremonies that do not profit. Staying grounded means holding to the gospel of grace in Christ and not being blown about by novel or false doctrines. This is a fitting place to affirm that the apostolic teaching, now preserved in the New Testament, is our anchor against error.

Explain the image of going outside the camp. Just as the bodies of the sin offerings were burned outside the camp, so Jesus suffered outside the gate to sanctify the people by His own blood. The writer calls us to go to Him outside the camp, bearing the reproach He endured. To follow Christ may mean leaving the safety of the familiar and accepting the reproach that comes with identifying with Him.

Draw out the willingness to bear reproach. Following the crucified Christ has always carried a cost, the misunderstanding or rejection of the world. The writer frames this not as defeat but as fellowship with Christ in His reproach. We bear it because we belong to Him and because, as the next verse says, we seek a lasting city. Staying grounded in truth and bearing reproach for Christ go together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Staying grounded in the gospel of grace against strange teachings.
- The apostolic word as our anchor against error.
- Going to Jesus outside the camp and bearing His reproach.
- Fellowship with Christ in the cost of following Him.

Discussion Prompts

- How do we stay grounded against diverse and strange teachings?
- What does it mean to go to Jesus outside the camp?
- How is bearing reproach for Christ a form of fellowship with Him?

Question 8

Student Question:

The writer says we have here no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. How does keeping your eyes on the lasting city help you bear reproach or hardship for following Christ now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the pilgrim hope to present endurance. The writer reminds us that this world is not our lasting home; we seek the city that is to come, the eternal city of God. This is the same hope that sustained Abraham and the heroes of chapter eleven.

Help students see how an eternal perspective changes the weight of present reproach. When this world is all we have, its rejection and hardship feel unbearable. When we know our true and lasting city is yet to come, present reproach becomes light and temporary by comparison, something we can endure for the sake of Christ.

Apply it concretely. Keeping our eyes on the lasting city steadies us to bear the cost of following Christ now, whether misunderstanding, loss, or hardship. Encourage students to identify a present cost of following Christ and to let the hope of the eternal city strengthen them to bear it faithfully.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- This world as a temporary home, not our lasting city.
- The eternal city as the hope that steadies present endurance.
- Bearing present reproach in light of eternal hope.

Discussion Prompts

- How does remembering this world is not our home change present hardship?
- What present cost of following Christ do you most feel?
- How does the lasting city to come help you bear it?

Question 9

Student Question:

Verses 15 and 16 say that through Jesus we should continually offer a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name, and not neglect to do good and to share, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. In light of the whole book, what does it mean that the old animal sacrifices are fulfilled in Christ and that the sacrifices God now desires are praise and practical love, and how should this shape our worship and daily life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, and a fitting capstone to the whole book, so develop it fully. Begin by gathering the argument of Hebrews. The letter has shown that the old animal sacrifices were shadows that could never take away sin, and that Christ has offered one perfect, once-for-all sacrifice that has perfected His people forever. The old sacrificial system is finished, fulfilled and set aside in Christ. There is no more animal sacrifice for sin, because the one true sacrifice has been offered.

Now show what the writer does with that truth. He does not say that sacrifice is over altogether, but that the kind of sacrifice God now desires from His people has changed. Through Jesus, he says, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. And, do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. The sacrifices God now seeks are the praise of grateful lips and the goodness of generous hands, offered through Christ our mediator.

Stress the phrase through Him. Our praise and our good works are offered to God through Jesus, our one high priest and mediator. We do not come to God through an earthly altar or a continuing animal sacrifice, but through Christ, presenting spiritual sacrifices of worship and love. This is consistent with the rest of the New Testament, which calls us a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, and which calls us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, our spiritual worship.

Draw out how this shapes our worship. Christian worship is the offering of praise to God through Christ, the fruit of lips that confess His name. When we gather on the first day of the week to sing, to pray, to remember the Lord in the Supper, and to give, we are offering the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving that God now desires, all through our great high priest. Worship is not the repetition of an old sacrifice but the grateful response of a redeemed people to the one sacrifice already offered.

Finally, show how it shapes daily life. The writer joins praise to practical goodness: do good and share what you have, for such sacrifices please God. Worship is not confined to the assembly; it overflows into a life of generosity, kindness, and love that is itself an offering to God. The whole life of the believer, lips and hands together, becomes a continual sacrifice of praise and love offered through Christ. Send the class away seeing that the entire towering argument of Hebrews comes home to this: a redeemed people, resting in the finished sacrifice of Christ, now living lives of grateful worship and practical love, offered to God through Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The old animal sacrifices fulfilled and finished in Christ's one offering.
- The sacrifices God now desires: praise from our lips and goodness from our hands.
- Worship and service offered to God through Christ our mediator, not an earthly altar.
- The biblical picture of believers as a priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices.
- Worship overflowing from the assembly into a daily life of generosity and love.
- The whole argument of Hebrews coming home to grateful worship and practical goodness.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the sacrifices God now desires are praise and good works?
- Why is it important that these are offered to God through Jesus?
- How should this shape both our gathered worship and our daily life?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter and the whole book of Hebrews. The letter ends by calling us to live a life of grateful worship and practical love, anchored in the unchanging Christ. Name one specific way your study of Hebrews is changing how you will live and worship, and one specific sacrifice of praise or goodness you will offer this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone closes both the chapter and the entire study, so invite the class to look back over the whole book. Hebrews has displayed the surpassing greatness of Christ, our prophet, priest, and king, and has called us repeatedly to draw near, hold fast, and not drift away. The final chapter brings all of this home to a life of worship and love.

Help students name how the whole study is changing them. Perhaps they see Christ more clearly and love Him more deeply, perhaps they have been sobered to hold fast and not fall away, perhaps they rest more fully in His finished sacrifice, or perhaps they live with more confidence as members of the unshakable kingdom. Encourage them to name one specific change.

Then move to one concrete sacrifice of praise or goodness this week, a deliberate act of worship, gratitude, or practical love offered to God through Christ. Close the entire study by returning to the heart of the book: through Him, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise, and let us not neglect to do good, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Send the class away anchored in that unchanging Christ and living lives that are themselves an offering to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Looking back over the whole message of Hebrews.
- The greatness of Christ reshaping how we live and worship.
- Offering concrete sacrifices of praise and goodness through Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How is your study of Hebrews changing the way you see and follow Christ?
- What one sacrifice of praise or goodness will you offer this week?
- What truth from Hebrews do you most want to carry forward in your life?