

Faith to Action  
 Hebrews 13:1-6  
 Bellevue Baptist Church  
 March 8, 2026

The novelist Robertson Davies once wrote:

***A truly great book should be read in youth, again in maturity, and once more in old age. –Robertson Davies***

Why would someone read the same book three times across a lifetime?

Because the book stays the same, but the reader does not.

And that is exactly why the Bible never grows old. Every time we return to Scripture, we are not the same people who read it before. We have lived a few more days. We have carried a few more burdens. We have learned a few more lessons.

So when I say that today, we finish our study in the book of Hebrews, I use those words cautiously because if I were to preach this same book again, even one year from now, I would preach it differently. If you were to read through this book again in one year, you would read it differently.

But indeed, my series of sermons from this theologically rich book reaches its end today. And, as most letters in the back of the Bible do, Hebrews becomes increasingly practical toward the end. In Hebrews 13, the final chapters, the author moves us from belief to behavior, from doctrine to duties.

Let's read the first six verses of Hebrews 13 together:

**Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it. <sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison, as though you were in prison with them, and the mistreated, as though you yourselves were suffering bodily. <sup>4</sup> Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. <sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you. <sup>6</sup>**

Therefore, we may boldly say,

**The Lord is my helper;**

**I will not be afraid.**

**What can man do to me? Heb 13:1–6**

I want you to think of this passage as a To-Do list from God. Now that you have come to believe this book's contents—that Jesus is better than all the world's offerings; now that you subscribe to the doctrine that Christ is superior to all earthly pursuits, how now should we live? What does holiness look like?

Here are five things that happen when we apply what Hebrews has said:

## **When We Apply the Truth of Hebrews**

### **1. Our church becomes a place where we learn how to love. (v.1)**

Notice the first thing on our to-do list, v.1: "*Let brotherly love continue.*"

In other words, treat the people in your church like family. That guy sitting next to you is not some random joe. Treat me like a brother. In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul says something similar:

***Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. Romans 12:10***

That lady sitting in front of you is not some random jane. Treat her like a sister. Notice how this verse from Romans puts the pressure on you, to take the first place trophy, in showing respect toward your brothers and sisters.

No church you will ever attend, including Bellevue, will meet all of your expectations. No church you attend, including Bellevue, will cater to all of your personal preferences. God did not bring you here to sit in a massage chair and to have your feet rubbed. He sent you here to serve sinners, to pour courage into other peoples' hearts—and this principle applies to those who go with the grain of who you are as well as those who run against the grain.

Educator Parker J. Palmer once said:

**Community is that place where the person you least want to live with always lives. Parker J. Palmer**

When you enter into a community, your patience will be tested.

Thank God for the people who God uses to help you grow. If all relationships were easy, how would you be stretched? Jesus said in Luke 6:

*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?...*

*If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you?...*

*And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full. **35** But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High.*

Did you hear that? A big part of being a child of God is learning to love those who get on what I call your “everlovin’ last nerve.” First on the to-do list: let brotherly love continue. We all need to watch the way we treat one another.

When I was a pastor in Jackson, TN, years ago, I had to run an errand mid-day and popped into Best Buy to get a cord for my computer. I was in a hurry, and had to get back for a meeting, so this was supposed to be a quick-in quick-out. Praise God! I found the cord fast and rushed to the counter to check out. My eyes lit up: no line had formed.

Behind the counter, the Best Buy worker, a teenage girl was on her cell phone, chatting it up with her BFF. I made sure she saw me—that I was ready to make this purchase and run. I provided the appropriate body language, showing her my cord: I’m ready to check out.

But the two of them clearly had a few more topics to tackle while I listened. My blood pressure began to rise, and my engine was about to overheat. I had some stern, parental words sitting on the tip of my tongue, when she finally hung up the phone, looked right at me and said, “Oh my gosh, I love your sermons. I never miss a Sunday.”

And under my breath, I repeated Psalm 141:3:

*Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. Psalm 141:3*

On that day, I was five seconds from proving what a bad big brother I was.

When Hebrews says we should show brotherly love, the Greek word is *phileo*, the kind of love shared between good friends, or loyal siblings. This word describes the people who walk through life with you, easing your burdens. As Proverbs says, “there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”

Church is supposed to be a place where you find friends who often stick even closer than brothers. Church is supposed to be a place where you find allies, not enemies, and some of these siblings may vote for different politicians, eat at different restaurants, and read different books than you prefer.

Paul writes,

***“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10***

So, in case you missed it: the abundant Christian life cannot be lived by holding other Christian people at arm’s length. It takes more than sitting in a seat on Sunday morning, then quietly exiting the building. No, this is why we challenge all of you to be in a life group, where you can keep learning how to love God’s children. Become part of the family.

So, there it is. Point one: when we apply the message of Hebrews, the local church becomes a practice field for loving people.

Second, when we put our faith to action...

## **2. Our homes become a place for hospitality. (v.2)**

*V. 2: Don’t neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it.*

That word for hospitality means to welcome strangers into your home. Though it’s uncomfortable, we are called to invite new faces into our spaces.

Way back when these words were written, there were no holiday inns, or chain of Marriott properties. When first-century Christians traveled, they often stayed with someone who had a spare bed in their house. This is why Joseph and Mary couldn’t find an inn on the night Jesus was born. There just weren’t very many, and they went to Bethlehem at a busy time of year.

Letting new people into your personal space was a big deal in Ancient Near Eastern culture. Kind people did that sort of thing.

I find it interesting, in 1 Tim 3, when the qualities of a potential pastor are listed, one of those is hospitable.

**An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach... 1 Tim. 3:2**

Interesting, huh? Before a man could be considered as a pastor, he and his wife had to be known as people who frequently invited strangers into their house! They couldn’t be the kinds of people that were protective of their personal space.

To be hospitable was part of what it meant to be a godly man. And then, In 1 Tim 5:10, it lists the qualities of godly older woman and it says that she is a lady who has washed the feet of God's people, and has shown a lot of hospitality.

So we see here a very different Christianity than the punch in, punch out kind that we often see today—the early church invested in relationships Monday-Saturday, not just Sunday.

When Lynley and I were church planters in Denver, we moved to a massive city where we knew very few people. It felt a little scary to leave a church family full of familiar faces, and to start over in a brand new place.

How do you start a church from zero? We wondered. And we didn't have an answer. You can't just post signs in your front yard and expect strangers to file in for a service.

So we did the only thing we knew to do? We looked for every opportunity to have people into our home. When Christmas came around, **Lynley invited our neighbors to make Gingerbread houses at our kitchen table.** We got to know the parents of the kids ours ran around with, and we made memories. There's a principle in ministry that is true: women love to get together and talk. Men like to talk and do. If there's something they can do with their hands, men are more relaxed. So we did these kinds of things.

At Halloween, we asked our neighbors to **bring their kids to our front yard** and bring a pumpkin. We carved out the eyes, the triangle nose, the teeth, and we made new memories. And we made friends, and most of these people didn't attend our church and showed zero interest in spiritual conversations. Having people over builds community, and there were certainly times when I was ready for these people to go home, where they belonged.

But God taught me something there in Denver. A simple truth: once you have someone into your home, or perched on your front yard with a pumpkin, the relationship is forever changed.

It's odd but once people see the inside of a place where you live, what books and photos sit on your shelves, how many dogs and cats and goldfish you own—something magical happens. There's power in practicing hospitality, when we invite new faces into our spaces.

A pastor's wife, Karen Mains once wrote about a day when she didn't feel like having a woman over because she was tired of cleaning her house. It had been a busy season

and her house was a mess, but one day, a church member popped by unannounced, and Mains writes:

**I welcomed the woman with warmth, invited her into the unsightly rooms and refused to embarrass her with apologies. I consciously let go of my pride and the woman's response surprised me. "I used to think you were perfect," she said, "but now I think we can be friends." –Karen Mains**

That day a true friendship was forged when one woman had another into her not-so-tidy home.

So, there you have it: application point #2. Here's what happens when we apply Hebrews: our homes become a place for welcoming strangers, some of which may be angels. #3...

### **3. Our hearts become soft toward the suffering. (v.3)**

Look in your Bible at v.3:

*<sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison, as though you were in prison with them, and the mistreated, as though you yourselves were suffering bodily.*

Here we find the Christian concept of sympathy. Notice how we are called to care about those who are in jail, as if we shared a prison cell. Try to put yourself in a hurting person's shoes.

Of course, we live in a day when we consider it persecution if we are mocked for our beliefs. Back then, Christians were beaten or killed for being professing faith in Christ.

Just read the letters of Paul, and you will see how often he is run out of town, and tossed into jail. Once, he was put under house arrest and wrote to his protegee Timothy. In 2 Tim. 4:13, he says: When you come to see me, bring my coat and my reading materials. My cloak and my parchments.

Paul was in a time of need and called upon his brother in Christ. This is how it's supposed to be.

We should look for ways to serve one another, especially those who are walking through seasons of suffering.

No story illustrates this better than Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. A shocking little tale about **a man who was left beaten on the side of the road.**

Several people pass that man by, but it's an unlikely Samaritan that actually stops. The Jews hated the Samaritans and didn't believe there was such a thing as a good Samaritan. But God was not concerned with the man's country of origin. He was

concerned about the state of the man's heart, and nothing shows kindness like ministering to the physical needs of others.

Nothing Bellevue does, perhaps, demonstrates our commitment as a church to serve the sufferer, like [Mission of Mercy](#).

I just want to thank all of you that served in such a selfless way in this year's event where hundreds of hurting people received free dental work and went home without nagging pain in their mouths. Many of these people slept outside, wrapped in a blanket, so that they could be seen by a dentist.

When we say that Bellevue Loves Memphis, we truly mean it, and we show it. There's a place for everyone here to serve, if you're looking for it.

Number 4...When we put our faith into practice...

#### **4. Our marriages become prized and protected. (v.4)**

*V. 4 says: Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.*

This may seem obvious—that the local church is a community where marriage vows are taken seriously. If you're hearing my voice, and you're married today, this passage calls you to move that relationship back up to the top of your list, if it's fallen from its preeminence.

Marriage vows are much easier said than done, and most couples enter into the covenant thinking that this relationship will require very little effort. They think: my spouse will be the one person on the planet that is easy to love.

But according to research, the euphoric feelings of falling in love last up to 18 months, and that's when the new wears off. This is why, marriage expert Jimmy Evans once wrote new marriage vows for the couples he married. He called them:

#### **Reality Marriage Vows**

**I do solemnly swear to take you as my lifelong patient.  
To bandage and to medicate you as long as we both shall live.  
I will love you for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, in  
sickness and more sickness, because you are one sick puppy.**

**I don't see you getting well anytime soon,  
but I am hoping for some modest improvement today.**

**I realize that these pretty clothes I am wearing right now,  
on this our wedding day, are rented and will have to be returned.  
You also will probably never look this good again.  
This is why we are taking so many pictures to preserve this rare moment.**

**I also understand that reality is waiting for me at our hotel room,  
where tomorrow your powerful morning breath will announce the dawn of our  
lifelong journey together,  
and the harsh morning light will reveal the real you.**

**In spite of all of this, I love you with all of my heart  
and wholly commit myself to this marriage,  
until death do us part,  
so help me God—  
because I'll need all the help I can get.**

According to Jimm Evans, those are realistic words to be spoken at weddings. Those better capture the struggle of loving the same person over the span of a lifetime.

When the new wears off, you'll need the New Testament. You'll need Hebrews 13:4:  
*Marriage is to be honored by all...*

When we put our faith into practice, we protect our marriages.

Finally, one more...

#### **5. Our possessions become less important to us. (vv.5-6)**

*Vv.5-6...Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you.*

Notice how the reminder to let money have no power over you is clearly rooted in God being the best banker on Earth. Just look at v. 6: The Lord is my helper. In this context, you might say: "The Lord is my banker." He's my provider. He will make sure I have a shirt on my back and a meal on my table.

Like most people, Lynley and I have gone through seasons when money seemed to show up out of nowhere. A check in the mail—we overpaid a bill. Free money!

And of course, we have had those seasons when the dishwasher leaked and the kitchen floor was ruined. As a wise person once said, "Money talks. It says, "bye bye."

But your life, Jesus says, consists of more than the abundance of possessions. When we are loving God well, we are not obsessing about our money. We're happy to share

our money with others, by giving our tithe to the church so that ministry can happen. Sometimes we use our money to purchase a meal for someone who is sick, or to help a young person go on their first mission trip. Jesus said we are more blessed when we are givers rather than when we are receivers.

Maya Angelou famously said:

**“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Maya Angelou**

And there are few things a person can do that cause another to feel loved like sharing their possessions or their dollars with another person.

The happiest people on the planet are those who have learned the joy of sharing.

So there you have it—the five ways that we live, when we apply what we’ve learned throughout Hebrews...

### **When We Put Our Faith to Action**

- 1. Our church becomes a practice field for sacrifice.**
- 2. Our homes become places of hospitality.**
- 3. Our hearts become soft toward the suffering.**
- 4. Our marriages become prized and protected.**
- 5. Our possessions become less important to us.**

Now with my time remaining, how about I answer a few questions that come from this passage.

#### **A Seasoned Christian Asks:**

**You mentioned that a man must have a track record of being hospitable in order to be qualified as a pastor. What does hospitality have to do with leadership?**

The word *pastor* means shepherd. And a good shepherd smells like sheep. An effective pastor builds relationships. Trust is built on the highway of relationships. This is true in every leadership position, not just pastors.

One of my favorite illustrations of relational leadership comes from a book called *The Culture Code*, where the author describes a study that was done of NBA coaches and which ones were the most successful, and why?

One of the names that rose quickly to the top was **Gregg Popovich**, head coach of the San Antonio Spurs. This guy had a long history of building strong, unselfish teams—teams that won a large percentage of their high-pressure games. When researchers studied Popovich’s methods, they found that in most areas he was remarkably similar to other coaches. His practices looked the same. His starting lineup strategy looked the same. But one thing was weird about the San Antonio Spurs.

The author writes:

**“The Spurs eat together approximately as often as they play basketball together. First there are the team dinners, regular gatherings of all the players. Then there are smaller group dinners, handfults of players getting together. Then there are the coach’s dinners, which happen every night on the road before a game. Popovich plans them, picking the restaurants, sometimes two a night, to explore. These are not meals to be eaten and forgotten.”**

What has made Greg Popovich an elite leader in the NBA? Here’s his secret: he spends quality time with the players and coaches. He eats with his leaders a lot.

Whether you’re a pastor, a business leader, a coach—whatever form of leadership the Lord has called you to do—just remember that the principles of biblical leadership work in every arena.

Trust is built on the highway of relationships.

**A Good-Hearted Skeptic Asks:  
Doesn’t focusing on the church community risk becoming insular or tribal?**

That’s a sharp question. And the honest answer is this: yes. It absolutely runs that risk.

Any church can become tribal when it loves insiders at the exclusion of outsiders. But Acts 2 tells the story of how the first church grew so fast. They were deeply committed to one another. They met daily in the temple courts. They broke bread in one another’s homes. They shared their possessions as one another had need. What a happy family they were.

And yet Scripture says the Lord was “adding to their number daily.” They were not a sealed off subculture. This became a test, and they passed the test. As that story unfolds, the Gentiles were coming to faith. And some of the Jews, started laying down rules for being a part of the family. This wanted to turn Christianity into an ethnic club.

But when the leaders got together, they put a stop to this. A declaration was made that God didn't care where a person's place of origin was, or what country they grew up in. God was concerned with the heart. And the church welcomed into its fellowship all outsiders that wanted in.

They loosened their grip on their long-held traditions so that they could remain relevant to new people.

Is Bellevue willing to do that? You say, "Sure we are." But most churches fail in this area. Most churches become insular over time—holding too tightly to customs and traditions of the past, but are no longer effective in reaching new people.

But the book of Hebrews calls us to find ways to bring new faces into our spaces, rather than building programs that serve us only.

To answer the skeptic's question: Yes, Christianity can become insular if the people forget the mission. In our best moments in history, the Christian church has been both deeply rooted and radically open to newcomers.

### **A Student Asks:**

#### **How do I practice hospitality if I still live with my parents or in a dorm?**

Hospitality doesn't require a home. Biblical hospitality means inviting people into your life, not necessarily to a location.

Hospitality begins with awareness. Having eyes for the marginalized. A radar for the person who just walked into the room and is wondering if and where they fit.

Practically speaking, it might mean choosing once a week to sit somewhere new instead of defaulting to "your group." Human beings are naturally cliquey. We cluster. We circle up. And we rarely notice the quiet outsider standing three feet away.

That instinct doesn't disappear with age.

I recently received an email from a grown man in our church who has struggled to find friendships at Bellevue. He wrote:

**"I had a phone conversation this morning with a long-time member of our life group who are changing hours to attend worship with their grandkids...They discovered the closed nature of fellowship in entrenched life groups, and it was**

**astounding to them. They had no idea that the problem existed. While friends socialized around them, they were ignored. They recognize that people are not intentionally ignoring them or being unkind. The people are simply inwardly focused and not aware of the need to expand their social circle. The unintended result is that it feels cold and uncaring to outsiders. I wonder: what happens to the “good-hearted skeptic” who comes into a fossilized Bellevue life group and feels like they are ignored?”**

This email came from a kind and committed member here at Bellevue. I felt like he offered constructive criticism and something we must continue to war against.

Students, my point is this: forming closed groups is not just a youth problem. It's a human problem. Hospitality says: I will widen the circle. If you're a student, you can do that tomorrow. Invite someone to study with you. Introduce a newcomer to your friend group instead of guarding your circle. Walk across the room instead of waiting to be approached.

If you're older, you can do the same. Avoid the temptation to talk to the same people every Sunday. Resist the gravitational pull of familiar faces. Hospitality is one of the clear commands of Scripture—it's how we keep growing personally. It's how we keep growing as a church.