



GO! CHRIST'S COMMUNITY

Session 4 – Out of Our Same Community
Into Christ's Diverse, Yet Connected, Communities
Hebrews 13: 10-16 (NRSV)

Key Verses: *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*
Hebrews 13:16 (New Revised Standard Version, NRSV).

INTRODUCTION

Session 4 encourages Christ-communities to embrace diverse, yet connected, communities of believers. When unity is achieved in the midst of uniqueness and diversity, by Christ-followers from every walk of life and from every place on earth, it is a true reflection of God's kingdom on earth that is in heaven. We collectively are exhorted to do acts of kindness and share together in Jesus' name, because such sacrifices are indeed pleasing to Almighty God, our heavenly Father.

INTERPRETATION OF HEBREWS 13:16: (Have Scripture passage read aloud)

Christ-followers are exhorted to not abandon doing good things in Jesus' name. Christ-communities are reminded to share what they have (and not be stingy or grumpy about giving—be cheerful givers! Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). To make sacrifices from the heart and for the right reasons are pleasing and acceptable to God. Not as works that “earn” us a place in heaven, but rather as James 2:26b reminds us, “Faith without works is dead.” We are called to eternal life through Christ now and always; as a result, our actions should reflect Christ fully in our lives and deeds.

Exploring Other Texts: *Divide the group into pairs and assign one scripture text and questions to each pair. When everyone has had a chance to read and respond bring the whole group back together. Ask each/pair to read their scripture passage and share their insights.*

- **Hebrews 10:24-25** – *What are ways to provoke each other to love and good deeds? How do we encourage one another? Why should we? With lives having over-filled schedules, why is it important to meet together within Christ's community regularly? Does this only mean on Sundays on church grounds? When else might we “meet?”*
- **1 Peter 3:8-18, 4:7-10, 16-19** – *How does this passage correlate to the Hebrews 13:10-16 passage studied in these four lessons? Reflect on doing good, even in the midst of adversity or suffering. Highlight some positive aspects of sacrificial service as Christ-followers from 1 Peter passages.*

REFLECTION

I had the honor and privilege to attend the 2015 CPC General Assembly in Cali, Colombia as a minister delegate. Cumberland Presbyterians from around the world came together to worship, serve, encourage, fellowship and conduct business under the banner of Christ, who calls us to go into the entire world in the name of the Triune God. I will forever be grateful for the international worship and service of Cumberland Presbyterians, from Japan and Hong Kong, to the multi-ethnic and cultural USA and the Choctaw Nation, to Central and South America. Christ is Lord! To share just one story of how we do good and share what we have, please read a Facebook posting on December 28, 2015, by Michele Gentry, our Cumberland Presbyterian Church 185th General Assembly Moderator:

“Had a telephone conversation with pastor Henry Angulo today. You may remember that Henry and his brother Bernabé are PAS-Colombia students who live in Limones and pastor up and down the river

between around Guapi. They're the ones who need a boat. Three weeks ago they really needed the boat when Henry got very seriously ill in the middle of the night. Since Limones doesn't have a hospital the family and the CP community scraped up the equivalent of 100 dollars to hire a boat to take him down river to the hospital in Guapi. Perhaps 100 dollars doesn't sound like much but it is a lot of money here where an ordinary worker earns about 300 dollars a month. (I doubt the pastors earn anywhere near that much.) After a week in the hospital in Guapi there were fears of a cardiac complication so Henry was flown to Cali and then to Armenia where my (cardiologist) husband volunteered to run all sorts of specialized tests. Henry stayed with us most of the week until the results came in and it became clear that, thank God, there were no cardiac complications. Then it was back to Cali to stay with colleagues there while the other two health conditions were seen to. Today Henry informed me that one problem is now on the point of being resolved and the other is pretty well under control, although he will be taking medication for the rest of his life. But, he will be able to return to pastoring his congregations along the river. Looking over the past three weeks I see how this situation required the combined efforts of Cumberland Presbyterians in Limones, Guapi, Cali and Armenia. And, because we are a connectional denomination, these efforts came together; Cumberland Presbyterians responded as a family when needed. It makes me proud to be a Cumberland Presbyterian." [Use with permission by Michele Gentry]

- When have you seen combined efforts of your church family? Your presbytery? The Cumberland Presbyterian Church?

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

The Session hopefully has reminded us that God knows the sacrifices Christ-followers and Christ-communities make by doing good and sharing what they have. It's all too easy to keep what we possess, believing we've earned it by ourselves, and thus become materialistic and consumeristic. It is a sacrifice for human beings to serve selflessly like Christ did and does. But as long as Christ is head of our lives and we seek to be Christ-followers in word and deed, God will be pleased. Hallelujah! Thanks and glory be to God! Amen!

Each Session's closing prayer is the Benediction found in Hebrews 13:20-21. Please read first the NRSV translation aloud, then read aloud one by one or together in community, the modified prayer of Hebrews 13:20-21. May this be your affirmation of faith and commitment to live out these words to the glory of God.

BENEDICTION

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our [my] Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you [me/us] complete in everything good so that you [I/we] may do his [God's] will, working among us that which is pleasing in his [God's] sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. (NRSV) – Hebrews 13:20-21