
 Day Twenty-Eight
 Honoring Marriage & Family

If you have time, read HEBREWS 13:1-16 in your favorite Bible translation then come back to this page.

If you're short on time read this and pay attention to what jumps out at you as you read:

Keep loving each other like family. Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it. Remember prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and people who are mistreated as if you were in their place. Marriage must be honored in every respect, with no cheating on the relationship, because God will judge the sexually immoral person and the person who commits adultery. Your way of life should be free from the love of money, and you should be content with what you have. After all, he has said, I will never leave you or abandon you. This is why we can confidently say,

*The Lord is my helper,
and I won't be afraid.
What can people do to me?*

Hebrews 13:1-6

THERE ARE SOME PASSAGES THAT HAVE QUEERNESS LURKING JUST BELOW THE SURFACE if you'll just look for it. Hebrews 13 is one such passage.

The early church was a group of people bound by similar experiences, united together under a common mission and identity. They came from different backgrounds — some Jewish, some Gentile; some old, some young; some rich, some poor; some from high standing, some without title or even home; all different genders and languages and cultures. In the beginning, Christians were an oppressed minority but the growing community was numerous enough that they didn't all know each other; they hadn't all met. Much of their connection was through letters and traveling teachers.

That describes the LGBTQ+ community just as much as it does the early church, doesn't it?

Many of our families of origin don't support us like they should, and so chosen family is a deep tradition in the queer community. When you read "Keep loving each other like family" in this passage, that is a call for chosen family!

LGBTQ+ people know a thing or two about that. We "keep loving each other like family." Those of us in cities open up our homes to LGBTQ+ folks fleeing their homes to find safe haven in the city. Those of us in the suburbs and rural areas open up our homes to the newly out (or the newly outed) so they don't have to flee in the first place.

Do you know of a single LGBTQ+ person who hasn't crashed on a friend's couch or hosted a friend (or a stranger) for a night or a week or longer?

The Bible has been wielded against LGBTQ+ people so often that when we see "marriage," many people assume that means "straight, cisgender marriage." Surely when the writer of Hebrews was putting this letter together, it's doubtful he was imagining modern queer couples. But that doesn't make us any less present.

"Marriage must be honored in every respect, with no cheating on the relationship" is a value LGBTQ+ Christians can rally behind, too.

Now, no person is perfect and neither is any community. Infidelity is part of the human experience and it knows no gender, sexuality, religion, or region. But taking relationships seriously? LGBTQ+ people have that in spades. For much of modern history, our relationships have been deemed sick, sinful, perverted, and illegal.

There's a sepia-toned photograph of two young men in 1900 holding a small sign between them that says "Not married but willing to be."⁽¹⁾ Queer people have been taking marriage seriously for centuries, millennia even. You can see in the glint of their eyes that even though their relationship would be illegal for another century, they know the pure joy and holiness of it.

LGBTQ+ people form relationships in all sorts of different ways: legal marriage, civil or social partnership, queer platonic friendships, blended families, lesbians and gay men having children together, polyamory, relationship anarchy, a blurred line between friend and lover, the list could go on for pages. What is common in all of those is that we take relationships seriously. We have to. Our lives depend on it.

LGBTQ+ people don't end up in relationships by accident, we choose them because they matter to us. We take them seriously. How much more seriously can you take commitment in relationships than to pursue it in the face of a society conspiring against you?

(1) See the photo at queertheology.com/queer-marriage-photo

Pain this is a verse
about "non-traditional" family

For centuries, LGBTQ+ people have risked our lives for our marriages and relationships. We've developed our own ceremonies to honor them when the world around us wouldn't. We've fought for every single piece of religious and legal marriage that we have.

This passage doesn't say "Marriage must be heterosexual" or even "Marriage must be monogamous." Instead, it says to take marriage seriously. It says to honor your commitment to your partner (or your partners).

Queer people form families not because it's what is expected of us or by accident but by choice and with serious intention. Our families are not just those to whom we are related by blood but include those forged together through mission and community. THAT is taking marriage and family seriously. Thus, queer relationships and chosen family are an ultimate expression of divine community.

Journal Prompts

- ❖ If you are LGBTQ, what is something that your straight, cisgender friends and family can learn from the way you approach relationships?
- ❖ If you are straight & cisgender, what is something that you have learned about relationships from the LGBTQ+ people in your life?

Action Items

- ❖ If you are in a relationship, spend some time with your partner to explicitly articulate your commitments to one another, whatever stage or form of relationship you are in. Write them down.
- ❖ Tell your friends you love them.
- ❖ Host a dinner party. If you're feeling bold, invite your friends to invite a friend of theirs you don't know (yet).
- ❖ Take a QueerTheology.com online workshops on Faithful Sexuality or Christianity & Polyamory to learn more about how queer sex and relationships reflects the divine.

 Day Twenty-Nine
 Community

Read HEBREWS 10:22 - 25 below or in your favorite Bible translation then come back to this page.

And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:22-25

STAYING IN COMMUNITY IS TOUGH.

It's easier to cut and run rather than face uncomfortable truths. Sometimes, it's easier to brush off a slur hurled from a stranger than to hear from a close friend that something we did or said hurt them.

We've done a disservice to Christianity by turning it into a system of personal piety. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for "our daily bread." He taught them to ask that God's will be done all over the earth. He called his followers to be the salt of the earth and to let their light shine.

A private Christianity is understandable.

For too long, an aggressive, militaristic, sexist, homophobic version has reigned supreme in the modern public sphere. It has been used to gut social services for the most vulnerable in our society, to start never-ending wars, to undermine women's control over their own bodies. Heck, Christianity was used as a justification to steal the land the United States of America now claims through a coast-to-coast genocide.

No wonder, in reaction to that type of Christianity, we want to isolate religion to a matter of personal beliefs that have no bearing on our public behavior.

But the Gospel is supposed to be good news for all people. Even for those who don't believe in it or want to follow it.

Our faith must be communal.

Matthew 18:20 says

"Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am."

We are in this together.

The beauty of grace is that the discomfort doesn't need to last. The apostle Paul went from a persecutor of early believers to arguably the most influential evangelist. Community keeps you accountable, but community also is there to celebrate with you as you grow and transform.

That doesn't happen when you sit alone on your couch and binge the latest reality show on your favorite streaming service. At some point, we must each peek out from behind our book or podcast or computer and interact with other people, people who have their own personalities and needs and ideas and feelings. People whom we may hurt or be hurt by.

But, as it says in this passage, "Let's draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us." "Let's hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering." "Let us consider each other carefully."

Community is absolutely worth it. It's how LGBTQ+ people have survived and thrived for so long.

We are in this together.

We have an opportunity to let our faith be good news to a world in need, but we can't do it alone. We can't feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and set free the prisoners alone. The early church in Acts shared everything they had in common... you can't share by yourself.

Find community.

Create community.

Cherish community.

Allow yourself to be transformed by community.

Journal Prompts

- ❖ Who is part of your community?
- ❖ How have you been helped by your community? How have you been hurt by it?
- ❖ How have you helped your community? How have you neglected it?
- ❖ “Community” can mean many things — friends, a network of people connected by some identity like religion or sexuality, or the community of your physical space. Which type(s) of community do you feel most connected to? How could you cultivate connections in other communities you are not already part of?

Action Items

- ❖ Call a friend and tell them what they mean to you.
- ❖ Pay attention to your friends' moods and needs. Do something kind and helpful for them, without them asking.
- ❖ Host a dinner party or game night (in real life or virtually) for your friends or community.

QUEERS THE WORD

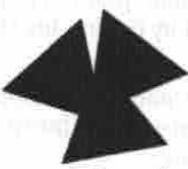
Queer Theology is a radical, non-institutional, and non-hierarchical approach to the study of scripture, history, and culture. It is a movement that challenges the dominant narrative of the past and the present, and it is a movement that is changing the way we think about God, ourselves, and the world around us.

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