BIBLE CONNECTIONS WITH JOSEPH

Hebrews 13:5–6 (read in 13:1–8)

A companion study from the set Bible Verses for Anxiety, Through the Six Steps · Bible Connections with Joseph

> This study walks Hebrews 13:5–6 (read in 13:1–8) through the six steps: 1 Read It — the passage and what's around it · 2 Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening · 3 Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it · 4 Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture · 5 Come Back — put what you found into today's language · 6 Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus.
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> If it's heavy, pray about it and talk to someone you trust (or the friend who gave you this sheet). If you don't have anyone yet, a local church is a good place to ask.
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> Keep your own Bible open; this page sends you into the passage rather than printing it. It quotes the Christian Standard Bible (CSB); where you see LORD in capital letters, that is how the CSB prints God's personal name. A reference like 4:6 means chapter 4, verse 6; 'v.' means verse.

1 · Read It — the passage and what's around it

Hebrews 13 opens with a run of short commands for how a church lives together, and verses 5 and 6 sit in the middle of them. Read verses 1 to 8 in your own Bible and follow the list in order. Verse 1: keep loving one another as brothers and sisters. Verse 2: welcome strangers into your home; some who did that had angels as their guests without knowing it (Abraham and Lot did, in Genesis 18 and 19). Verse 3: remember the prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and the mistreated as if you were suffering with them. Verse 4: marriage is to be honored by everyone and the marriage bed kept pure, because God will judge sexual sin. Verse 5 is the one about money, and a promise of God's presence is attached to it by the word "for." Verse 6 starts with "Therefore," so read it as part of the same thought. Then verses 7 and 8 turn to the leaders who first spoke God's word to these believers: remember them, look at how their lives turned out, and imitate their faith. Right after that comes "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Keep verses 5 and 6 at the center as you read: because God will never leave you, you can be content and unafraid.

Verse 4 can feel like a sudden turn, but it belongs to the same idea: being content with what God has given. Honor marriage, keep yourself pure, and don't reach for what God has given someone else, whether their spouse or their money. Then watch for that same steadiness in the rest of the list, in how these believers were asked to love, give and live.

If God feels far away as you read this, start here. Verse 5 is a promise about His presence, and His presence holds whether you feel it or not. He has said He will never leave you, and that stays true on the days you can't sense Him at all. God's people have prayed through days like that before, in Psalm 42 and in Isaiah 49:14–16, and step 4 comes back to both.

◆ **What command is the promise attached to, and what does verse 6 say the promise makes possible? Then look at the commands around it: which of them would cost you something to keep?**

2 · Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening

The writer of Hebrews doesn't give his name. He writes to believers who knew Israel's Scriptures well, and he builds verses 5 and 6 out of them. "I will never leave you or abandon you" is a promise God makes more than once in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 31 Moses gives it to all Israel (v. 6), then to Joshua (v. 8). God says it to Joshua again in Joshua 1:5. So it was a promise of God's presence that was never meant for Joshua alone. Joshua's assignment, leading Israel into the land, belonged to him. The promise belonged to the whole people. You meet it once more in Psalm 94:14, which says the same of all of God's people.

Verse 6 comes from Israel's songs as well. Read Psalm 118:6–7 and you'll find both of its lines there, a psalm these readers already knew.

Some of what God said to Joshua was his alone, like the command to lead Israel into the land, and some of it carries over to every believer. Here the New Testament itself does the carrying: the writer of Hebrews takes the promise God gave Israel and Joshua and gives it, in so many words, to believers in Christ.

◆ **Read Deuteronomy 31:6–8, then Joshua 1:5, then Hebrews 13:5–6, in that order. Who was the promise given to first, and who does the writer of Hebrews give it to?**

3 · Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it

These readers had already paid for their faith. Read Hebrews 10:32–34 and 13:3: they had been publicly mocked and mistreated, some had their possessions taken, and some of their friends and fellow believers were in prison. People living like that were likely dealing with plenty of anxiety. Read to the end of 10:34 for what they knew they still had.

Now hear the list in that setting. In 10:33 they had already stood beside people who were treated that way, and in 13:3 they are asked to keep doing it, as if they were in the cell themselves. Some of the strangers at the door in those years were believers who had left their homes for Christ's name, so taking one in could cost something real. And the leaders in verse 7 are the people who first spoke God's word to them. The word behind "outcome" can mean a going out, an exit, and the outcome of their lives is usually taken here to mean the way those lives ended: leaders who had already died, some of them perhaps for their faith. Believers did die for their faith in the church's early years; two examples are Stephen, stoned while he prayed for the men who were killing him (Acts 7:54–60), and James the brother of John, put to death by Herod (Acts 12:1–2). So verse 7 asks them to look at how those leaders finished. They kept trusting Christ to

the very end, and God did not leave them. What the readers are told to copy is that faith, not the manner of the death. The people who heard "I will never leave you" were being asked to imitate a faith that had held all the way to the end.

◆ **Write what "I will never leave you or abandon you" would have sounded like to people under that kind of pressure, who had just been asked to remember the leaders they had lost.**

4 · Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture

Here is the reading so far: verses 1 to 8 are one list of how a church under pressure lives, and verses 5 and 6 give the reason that steadies it. The text says "the love of money," so the subject in verse 5 is greed: what happens when someone loves money. Having money is a separate matter. The answer to greed is contentment, and the reason for contentment is the same promise that answers fear. Now hold that reading up against the fullness of Scripture, and see what it confirms and what it changes.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10 and 17–19. Paul names the love of money, and he also speaks to people who are rich without telling them to stop being rich. Read Philippians 4:11–13, where Paul says he has learned contentment, and notice where he says his strength for it comes from. Then read Matthew 6:24–34, where Jesus puts money and worry side by side and answers both with the Father's care. And read Exodus 20:17, the tenth commandment (some traditions number the commandments differently, but either way this is the command against coveting). A neighbor's wife and a neighbor's goods are in the same sentence, and the same wanting of what is not yours sits behind both, which is why verses 4 and 5 stand so naturally side by side. The answer to that wanting is the contentment verse 5 asks for.

Now come back to the question from step 1: what about the times when God feels far away? Read Psalm 42. The singer weeps day and night while people keep asking him where his God is (v. 3), and he asks God, his rock, why He has forgotten him (v. 9). Yet he keeps talking to his own soul and telling it to put its hope in God (vv. 5, 11). He feels forgotten, and he still calls God his rock. Then read Isaiah 49:14–16. Zion says the Lord has abandoned her and forgotten her. God answers that a mother could sooner forget her nursing baby, and even if she did, He would not forget Zion; He has inscribed her on the palms of His hands. Telling God that He feels far away is something His people have done in Scripture itself, and God answered them with His faithfulness.

Then test the promise itself with the Westminster Confession of Faith (a 1640s summary of Bible teaching used by Reformed churches; a tool, not an authority over the Bible). It says God may, for a season, let His children walk through times when He feels far away, and yet the faith He plants in them never dies out: in its own older words, they are "never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith" (chapter 18, section 4).

Philippians 4:11–13 shows the same from inside a hard season: Paul learned contentment there, leaning on the strength Christ gives. So here is what the promise in verse 5 is: He will never give you up. Feeling Him near is a gift He often gives, and the promise holds on the days that gift seems missing.

◆ **Does the reading hold when you square it with these passages? Write one thing they confirm, and one thing they add or correct.**

5 · Come Back — put what you found into today's language

Put verse 5 into today's words. The problem it names is loving money: wanting more than God has given. The cure it names is "Be satisfied with what you have," and what you have is what is in your hands today. Tomorrow is in God's hand, so today's portion is the one you are asked to be content with. The ground it gives is the promise: God has said He will never leave you.

The same promise does two jobs here. It's the reason to be content, and it's the reason not to be afraid. It reaches you because of God's character, and He still goes with His people; step 2 showed how the promise God gave Joshua carries over to you. Verse 6 is what courage sounds like when it rests on that promise. You can say it before you feel it.

Then bring the rest of the list back with it. A heart that knows God will not leave it has room to open the door to a stranger, to stand beside someone who is suffering, to keep a marriage honored and pure, and to hold money loosely. Verse 7 shows what that looks like over a whole life: leaders whose faith held to the end, with the same God beside them.

◆ **Write verse 6 in your own words, starting with its first word: Therefore.**

6 · Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus

Step six asks two questions, and they belong together: what this passage asks of you, and how it points you to Jesus. The passage asks something of your hands, your home, your marriage, if you're married, and your wallet, and it gives a reason that rests on who is with you. If you're single, widowed or divorced, this passage is for you too: verse 4 asks all of us to honor marriage, and the contentment of verse 5, with the life God has given you today, is for every season of life. Verse 4's call to purity is for every believer, married or not. And for anyone who has fallen short here, as all of us have in some way, grace is there: Christ forgives and makes new, and when we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9).

◆ **What does this passage ask of you this week? Pick one command from verses 1 to 5 and write down one way you will keep it. And a few verses after "I will never leave you," the writer says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (v. 8). Notice where that line sits: right after the leaders whose faith held to the end. Then read Jesus' last words in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 28:20), and John 14:18, where Jesus, the night before He died, tells His disciples He will not leave them as orphans but will come to them. How does this passage point you to Jesus?**

> This study is one of eight in Bible Verses for Anxiety, Through the Six Steps. The full set: bibleconnectionswithjoseph.com/companions/anxiety-verses/

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