

# STAYIN' ALIVE

The Spirit Conspiracy

Hebrews 13:1-3

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A couple are both having problems remembering things. During a checkup, the doctor tells them that they're physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember.

Later that night, while watching TV, the man gets up from his chair. "Want anything while I'm in the kitchen?" he asks.

"Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?"

"Sure."

"Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?" she asks.

"No, I can remember it."

"Well, I'd like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down, so as not to forget it?"

He says, "I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries."

"I'd also like whipped cream. I'm certain you'll forget that; write it down?" she asks.

Irritated, he says, "I don't need to write it down, I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream - I got it, for goodness sake!"

Then he toddles into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, the man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment.

"Where's my toast?"

Remembering things can be a challenge. A recent Harvard Medical Study stated that there is a tendency to forget facts or events over time. We are most likely to forget information soon after we learn it. However, memory has a use-it-or-lose-it quality: memories that are called up and used frequently are least likely to be forgotten.

Although the writer of Hebrews didn't have access to a Harvard Medical Study, the writer knew that it was important to remember what it means to be living in

the Spirit. The writer took time at the end of the letter to help Christians remember what it meant to live in the Spirit.

Our reading today comes from Hebrews Chapter 13 verses 1-3.

<sup>1</sup> Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup> Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! <sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

Today we are going to look at ways we can remember how the Spirit dwells within us. Why do we want to remember that the Spirit dwells within us? Because the dwelling of the Spirit in our lives is how we love ourselves and others. When we remember the Spirit of love, God's love is known through us.

The Spirit calls us in a world that often struggles with those they don't like and especially those they don't love! We live in a world where people often justify who they can love and who doesn't deserve to be loved. Have you ever heard comments like this?

The poor? A bunch of welfare queens and deadbeats who ought to go out and get jobs. The hungry? Cut food stamps, it is a waste of hard-earned taxpayer money. Those in prison? They shouldn't have crossed the border in the first place. The lonely outcasts? Don't even talk to me about the deviants who suffer and seek to be seen, heard, and accepted.

The writer of Hebrews reminds the readers to remember what Jesus said and how he was able to love the world and all in it. Especially the poor, those living in prisons, including the prison of abuse. The Outcast and those who think different than us. The writer wants us to remember how to live in the Spirit. We forget things we may have forgotten that the Spirit lives and dwells with in each one of us. We are to remember that the Spirit calls us to do those very things. To love the poor, those living in prisons, the outcasts the deviants. The Spirit calls us to love, to reach out to people with God's love. Because God loves all.

Let's consider what it means to love or reach out to those who are on the fringes of society. We love our family and our friends, but we are also to love those on the fringes; sometimes loving others is not comfortable. Not only is it uncomfortable, it is hard

to remember to love those who are unlovable, and it can be downright challenging. Yet, living in the Spirit we are called to love the “unlovable.” How can that happen? Through remembering that we are called to look at all people as children of God. The Spirit enables us to see the world in a different way. We see things differently, we can be free from our usual loyalties: privilege, position, group, and economy and see who needs to experience God through us. We call on the Spirit to give us the courage to reach out and love those who others have left behind.

When we step out, when we remember that God has called us to love those who others turn away, then God’s love is multiplied. Here is how one young girl reached out to one who was all alone.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUj2vEliPLc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUj2vEliPLc)

The Spirit knows how to do this because the Spirit of Jesus experienced what we experience. When he told us to love others, it was coming from one who’d been there. He lived on Earth—and knew all.

The Spirit shares two important truths:

- 1) Everyone is created in God’s image. Everyone. That is you and me and all people. And if we really think about it, sometimes it is hard enough to love ourselves. We often see ourselves as unlovable. Since Jesus sees you and I worthy of love, so is everyone else.
- 2) God’s love is constant. It never changes, it is always with us. Jesus loved those on the fringes, those who the “religious people” turned away. He offers love, grace and forgiveness. He never said hurtful behavior was good, he shared a new way of life for those who hurt themselves and others.

When we embody this way of life, God’s Spirit changes us. The Spirit moves us to love others, especially those we don’t care for, because everyone is worthy of love. This does not mean we are to accept hurtful behavior, sometimes we have to love at a distance.

To care about others is countercultural. The current pattern of our culture focus on taking care of me. Let others figure it out for themselves. This was never the culture of Christianity. As those we embody the Spirit God has called us to care for the widow, the poor and the oppressed. You see, in all reality, I can’t thrive if you are not thriving. The Spirit calls us to love, support and care for those others want to ignore.

Today I want you to think about someone in your life that you struggle to love. Or maybe it is a group of

people who are so different from you that you can not imagine “loving” them. Let’s take the time to remember that we are called to “love” our neighbor. And the way to do that is through the Spirit. The Spirit that moves in us, guides us, and gives us the strength to do what we are called to do.

Let’s pray...