

HEBREWS 11-WEEK STUDY GUIDE

Theological Focus

Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice and divine royal priest of promise who is fully God and fully man. He is superior over all created things and all Old Testament institutions.

In Jesus and what He has done, the Old Testament hopes and promises were fulfilled, and the new covenant age is established awaiting final consummation in Christ.

Believers in all circumstances, especially those under persecution, are exhorted to persevere in their faith and warned against going back to the old ways of practicing the Jewish religious traditions devoid of a true relationship with Jesus Christ.

Background

The author of Hebrews is unknown, likely a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian.

Paul, Apollos, and Barnabas are possible authors. See 'Additional Notes' for more info.

The book of Hebrews was estimated to have been written between A.D. 50 and A.D. 70.

Hebrews is a sermon, addressed to believers under persecution who were living in an urban setting. The book exhorts the early converts from Judaism to persevere and resist the pressure to revert to their Jewish faith.

Major themes: Jesus is greater than (the)



The five warnings in the book of Hebrews:

- 1. Warning one: against neglecting salvation (Hebrews 2:1-4)
- 2. Warning two: the failure of the exodus generation (Hebrews 3:7-19)
- 3. Warning three: against falling away (Hebrews 5:11-6:12)
- 4. Warning four: against shrinking back (Hebrews 10:26-39)
- 5. Warning five: against refusing the speaker (Hebrews 12:25-29)

"Hebrews contains 35 direct quotations from the Old Testament, along with many allusions and references. With the Old Testament background in mind, the author argues that God's glory and redemptive plan are finally and most clearly revealed in Jesus Christ."

- Matthew Z. Capps (The Gospel Coalition)

Key Verses

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Hebrews 7:26-28

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 9:15

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Additional Notes

Authorship: Who could possibly have written Hebrews?

Paul was the first postulated author, and Hebrews used to be included after Romans among other Pauline epistles in the earliest manuscript editions of the New Testament books. While the book contains strong parallels with Paul's writings, the style, vocabulary, and structure are quite distinct. The emphasis of the theology expounded in Hebrews regarding Jesus as the Great High Priest and final sacrifice also distinguishes itself from the rest of the Pauline letters. Moreover, the author did not introduce himself as Paul typically did.

Apollos was strongly suggested to be the author based on his reputation as a highly educated Alexandrian with a Jewish background who might have acquired the literary skills exemplified in Hebrews, and his close connection with Paul; being encouraged by Paul in 1 Cor 16:12 and taught by Paul's companions, Priscilla and Aquila.

Other suggested authors were **Barnabas**, alluding to the closing remark in Hebrews 13:22 as a "word of encouragement" which may indicate his name that means "son of encouragement", or **Silas**, who was with Paul and Timothy for the writing of several of Pauline epistles.

Sources: https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-book-of-hebrews https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/who-wrote-hebrews

Authority: Why is this book included in the Bible? How can we find authority in a book whose author is unidentifiable?

The biblical canon is the collection of scriptural books that God has given his corporate people, which are assembled on account of three factors: their divine qualities, reception by the early church, and connection to an apostle. (1)

Although Hebrews was anonymously written, the writings strongly suggest a strong link between the author and the apostles (Hebrews 2:3-4; 13:23), and it was widely received by God's people in the early church. In addition, the book certainly has divine qualities where God's qualities (i.e. beauty and excellency, power and efficacy, unity and harmony) are revealed and God's transformative power is brought forth. (1)

The authority of the Bible lies in its inspiration by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16), not in the identity of its human authors. Despite the uncertainty of its authorship, the message and purpose of Hebrews remains clear and unambiguous, and the glory of God in Christ shines through it. (2,3)

Sources: (1) https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-biblical-canon/ (2) https://discoveryseries.org/courses/understanding-the-bible-the-letter-to-the-hebrews/lessons/the-author-and-recipients-of-hebrews/ (3) https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/who-wrote-hebrews

HEBREWS 1-2:4

THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS CHRIST AS GOD'S REVELATION TO THE WORLD DESERVING OF OUR ATTENTION

Preface

The book of Hebrews begins with an introduction declaring the nature and superiority of Jesus Christ. The book is rich in direct quotations and references from the Old Testament, arguing that God's glory and redemptive plan are ultimately revealed and fulfilled in Jesus.

Observation

- 1. What are the ways that God spoke in the past and these last days (Heb. 1:1-2)?
- 2. Based on Heb. 1:1-4, how is the Son being described? What other verses in Chapter 1 support the descriptions?

Leaders' note: Several keywords are heir, creator, radiance of God's glory, exact representation, sustainer, provided purification of sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty (** equality with God)

3. What were the beliefs about the messages spoken through angels? What is the consequence of violating or disobeying the messages spoken through angels?

Leaders' note: In the past, God spoke through angels, and messages spoken through angels were very highly regarded. More will be discussed in Interpretation Q2-3

Interpretation

1. In what ways is the Son superior over the angels?

Leaders' note: The author builds his support for the superiority of Jesus over the angels by stringing together various Old Testament texts to substantiate his argument.

Jesus is shown as superior by the nature of...

- i. his relationship to the Father Heb. 1:5 referencing Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chro 17:13
- ii. his position over the angels Heb. 1:6-7 referencing Deut 32:43; Ps. 97:7; 104:4 and Heb. 1:13-14 referencing Ps. 110:1
- iii. his kingly authority Heb. 1:8-9 referencing Ps. 45:6–7
- iv. his eternal lordship over creation Heb. 1:10-12 referencing Ps. 102:25-27
- 2. What does Jesus' superiority over the angelic beings reveal to us about Christ?

Leaders' note: The heart behind this question is to help us realize that Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world and we shall grow in our confidence in Christ and allegiance to Him.

3. What are the things that "we have heard" (Heb. 2:1) and how does Heb. 2:3 fortify our faith in God's salvation being confirmed through Jesus?

Leaders' note: This is the <u>first warning</u> written in Hebrews. The author was warning the people against neglecting the message they have heard about Jesus Christ and drifting away from faith.

The author made a case for the importance of the Mosaic law that was given by the angels. Violating and disobeying the Mosaic law resulted in just punishments.

Christ is superior over all things and was confirmed by signs, wonders, and miracles. Rejecting or neglecting the message of salvation made available through Christ will result in more recompense.

Application

- 1. How has the passage transformed our views and attitudes towards Jesus Christ?
- 2. How have we allowed our environment to shape our priorities and draw our attention away from Christ?
- 3. What things in our life have we placed in a position of superiority over God?
- 4. How can we consciously prioritize Jesus in our thoughts and actions in our everyday life?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Praying the Psalms

The Psalms are Spirit-inspired words, given us by God to speak about God and to God. (Christopher Ash, "How to Pray the Psalms")

Begin by picking a psalm, read it slowly, and try to paraphrase it verse-by-verse and make it personal while expressing every feeling that you feel to God.

Example: Praying from Psalm 45:6-7 (Quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9)

"We worship You, O God, our Lord, and King whose throne lasts forever. Jesus Christ, You are our righteous and just King whom we long to trust, worship, and submit to. In Your mighty and precious name, we pray, Amen."

HEBREWS 2:5-18 | JESUS SHARED IN OUR HUMANITY, BECOMING THE PIONEER OF OUR SALVATION AND ADOPTING US INTO HIS FAMILY

Preface

In the previous week...

• Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world. He is superior over angelic beings due to the nature of His relationship to the Father, His position over the angels, His kingly authority, and His eternal lordship over creation. Jesus' superiority is a warning for us to pay careful attention to God's revelation through Him.

This week...

• Jesus Christ's sharing in our humanity is essential for the atonement of our sins. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus became the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan, made us holy, and welcomed us into His family. During His time on earth, Jesus experienced temptations and suffering. Thus, He is able to understand and help us in times of need.

Observation

- 1. To whom has "the world to come" been subjected (Heb. 2:5-8)?
- 2. Based on Heb. 2:9, what is Jesus' current status after being made lower than the angels for a little while and how did He achieve it?
- 3. Based on Heb. 2:9-11 and Heb. 2:14-17, what have Jesus' suffering and death accomplished?

Leaders' note:

- i. **Solidarity** Jesus tasted death for everyone (v.9)
- ii. made the **pioneer of their salvation perfect** (v.10)
- iii. adoption of those who are made holy into the same family (v.11)
- iv. Jesus' death broke the power of the devil who holds the power of death (v.14)
- v. **freed people** from the enslavement to their fear of death (v.15)
- vi. atoned for the sins of the people (v.17)
- 4. What relationships has Jesus established with His people through his incarnation, suffering, and death?

Leaders' note: Family - brothers & sisters (v.11), priestly (v.17), helper and helped (v.16&18)

Interpretation

1. Heb. 2:6-8 is a quotation from Psalm 8:4-6. What do we learn about God, prophecies, and His redemptive plan?

Leaders' note: Jesus' incarnation, suffering, and death were planned and prophesied as part of God's redemptive plan for humanity. There is one promise that is yet to be fulfilled, which is to "see everything subject to them/him" (verse 8).

2. Why is Jesus' incarnation and suffering necessary for our salvation?

Leaders' note: Jesus Christ is **fully God and fully man**. Everything was created by Him and for Him, and everything will be subjected to him. Sin entered the world through one man requiring atonement.

Therefore, **God sent Jesus to die once and for all, bringing all men to Himself**. Through Jesus' identity as God's Son and His role as High Priest, we can be adopted into His family and have our sins forgiven.

3. Based on Heb. 2:14-18, what does Jesus' incarnation reveal about the characteristics He took on as a human?

Application

- 1. How has Jesus' incarnation and suffering impacted our view of His identity and purpose?
- 2. Jesus suffered and died for our sins. How does this truth shape our understanding of the need for repentance and inspire us to live a life of holiness?
- 3. Jesus brings us into the family of God through His relationship as the Son and our High Priest. How does this truth transform the way we approach God as a Father who is holy?
- 4. We are all members of one family in Christ. Share one specific way that we can follow Christ's example to humble ourselves and serve our family/community in the coming week.

Optional Prayer Exercise: Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is the Latin for "Divine Reading". It is a practice of scriptural reading that involves repeatedly reading a portion of Scripture at a slower pace, allowing room for digestion and reflection. It consists of four steps: read, meditate, pray, and contemplate.

Begin by reading a section of the Scripture slowly twice, and identify a word or a phrase for further meditation, prayers, and contemplation.

Example: Lectio Divina on Hebrews 2:14-15; Phrase: "flesh and blood"

Prayers: "Jesus Christ, I'm sorry that I often diminish the suffering that You experienced on the cross by taking the weight of my sin lightly. Help me to surrender my self-seeking and self-protecting tendencies, and remind me to follow Your examples in sacrificially loving others. In Your name, I pray, Amen."

HEBREWS 3 | JESUS CHRIST IS THE FAITHFUL SON OF GOD, IN WHOM WE MUST FIRMLY PLACE OUR HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world. He is the promised Son of God who is superior over angelic beings, deserving of our utmost attention.
- Week 2: Jesus Christ's sharing in our humanity is essential for the atonement of our sins; to fulfill God's redemptive plan, make us holy, and welcome us into His family.

This week...

• Jesus Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house (Heb. 3:6), superior to Moses, who was a faithful servant in God's house. As members of God's house, we are warned to guard against hardened hearts and exhorted to firmly place our hope and confidence in Jesus, unlike those in the exodus generation.

Observation

- 1. Based on Heb. 3:1-6, how was Jesus being compared to Moses?
- 2. Based on Heb. 3:6 and Heb. 3:14, what were the instructions for those who were in God's house?
- 3. What is the repeated warning throughout the passage?
- 4. How was the state of the hearts of those who rebelled or turned away from God?
- 5. What was the consequence for those who disobeyed and whose hearts went astray?

Leaders' note: This is the second warning written in the book of Hebrews. The author used the failure of the exodus generation as a familiar example to the audience. The Israelites hardened their hearts and stopped believing that God was with them. Their unbelief led them to test God, and as a consequence, God condemned them by denying them entry into the promised land.

Interpretation

1. How did Moses and Jesus demonstrate faithfulness? (Note: cross-referencing is advised)

Leaders' note: Moses: Exodus 3:10, Exodus 40:16 | Jesus: John 17:5, Colossians 1:13-14

2. Why did the author compare Jesus' and Moses' faithfulness?

Leaders' note: The author wanted to emphasize that Jesus is greater than all created things and all Old Testament institutions, including Moses. Moses was a respected figure in the Old Testament history and this comparison would be thought-provoking for the audience.

3. Compare and contrast the experience of the exodus generation with that of the original audience. What were the similarities or differences?

Leaders' note: **Similarity**: The exodus generation faced difficulties in the wilderness and were tempted to go back to Egypt, while the original audience faced persecution due to their beliefs in Jesus and were tempted to return to Judaism. **Differences**: The promised rest for the Exodus generation is different from the promised rest in Jesus. Moses was the mediator then, while Jesus is the new mediator.

4. Why did the author repeat the warning and what was the author's solution to the warning?

Leaders' note: The author strongly warned the original audience not to repeat the same mistake as the exodus generation. The author explained that **unbelief began with the hardening of the heart** which **led to an active rejection of God**. In this case, unbelief is different from a lack of faith, as it involves the active rejection of God. **Making a conscious decision** to firmly hold onto the confidence and hope we have in Jesus helps us guard against a hardened heart and unbelief that may hinder us from entering God's rest.

Application

- 1. Reflecting on the past and our current way of living, what are the signs of a hardened heart or unbelief in the way we think or act?
- 2. In what ways have we allowed our difficulties to take our attention away from Jesus?
- 3. What spiritual disciplines or practices, both personally and communally, can help us cultivate a tender heart towards God and firm confidence in God?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Confession Prayer

The main Greek word for "confess" is **homologeō**, which means to "agree or say the same thing as". Confession is a means to restore a broken relationship between us and God, as it verbalizes our yearning for forgiveness and desire to repent. Praying a confession prayer will increase our love for Jesus and help us to not get stuck in old patterns of sin.

Examples: Nehemiah 1:5-7 for corporate repentance and Psalm 51:1-4 for personal repentance

Some practical steps to pray a confession prayers:

- 1. Come to God with a humble and contrite heart
- 2. Acknowledge specific sins, confess it to God, humbly admit that we are wrong
- 3. Declare an affirmation of God's character to remind us of His grace and mercy
- 4. Recall God's promises and His assurance of forgiveness

HEBREWS 4-5:10 GOD'S PROMISE OF ETERNAL REST IS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO OBEY AND BELIEVE, THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-2: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world. He is the promised Son of God who shared in our humanity and became the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins. We were warned to pay attention to this message of salvation.
- Week 3: Through Jesus' sacrifice, we are welcomed into His family. As members of His house, we are warned to guard against hardened hearts and exhorted to firmly place our hope and confidence in Him.

This week...

• Jesus Christ, through His ultimate obedience to suffer and die for our sins while being our High Priest, has made God's promise of eternal rest available to us. We are exhorted to diligently strive to enter this rest by pursuing a relationship with God and living in obedience to His Word.

Observation

- 1. What are the four exhortations in this passage? (Hint: look for "let us" in verses 1, 11, 14, 16)
- 2. In Heb. 4:12, how were the five ways that the "Word of God" described?
- 3. How was Jesus' obedience (Heb. 5:8-9) compared to the Exodus generation's obedience?

Interpretation

Based on Hebrews 4, what is the timing, nature, foundation, and significance of God's rest?

Leaders' note:

[Timing] God's rest is eternal, it has been established since the creation of the world (v.3), prophesied since the days of David (v.7), and is now available for believers.

[Nature] God's rest is described as a state of ceasing from one's own works (v.4, v.10).

[Foundation] God's rest is rooted in His completed work of creation (v.3-4) and the promise of entering into that rest through faith in Jesus Christ.

[Significance] God's rest symbolizes the rest, peace, and security found in a restored relationship with God through faith in Jesus; a state of spiritual rest, freed from the burden of trying to earn salvation.

2. How do the four warnings (v.1, 11, 14, 16) in this passage relate to entering God's rest?

Leaders' note: We are warned to have **reverential fear** and guard against ignorance or unbelief that may hinder us from experiencing God's rest (v.1-3), exhorted to **diligently strive** to enter God's rest by pursuing a relationship with God and living in obedience to His Word (v.11-13), reminded to **hold firmly to our faith** in Jesus Christ who is the source of our salvation (v.14), and encouraged to **approach God's throne of grace** with confidence, knowing that we have access to God's rest—grace and mercy—through Jesus Christ (v.16).

3. Why was the "Word of God" (Heb. 4:12-13) brought up when discussing obedience and disobedience?

Leaders' note: The Word of God reveals God's will, teachings, and the consequences of rejecting God, serving as a guide for obedience. God's Word carries authority and possesses penetrating knowledge that can expose the innermost thoughts and motives, including any unbelief that may lead to disobedience.

4. In His humanity, what does Jesus' obedience amid suffering reveal about Him?

Leaders' note: Recall Heb. 4:15 and Heb. 5:2

5. Why were Jesus' prayers heard (Heb. 5:7), and how were His prayers answered?

Leaders' note: Jesus was heard because of His reverent submission. Jesus' prayers were answered NOT by escaping death but rather by conquering death after enduring suffering and facing death itself.

Application

- 1. What are some practical ways that we can allow the Word of God to expose areas of unbelief that often lead us to disobedience?
- 2. In what areas have you been struggling to obey recently, and how have your struggles in obeying God impacted your relationship with Him?
- 3. What can we learn from Jesus' posture of prayer in Heb. 5:7, and how can we incorporate it when we pray for ourselves and others?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer is a prayer to God on behalf of others. It invites us into God's care and concern for us, our families, our friends, and our world. We are commanded in the Bible to carry one another's burdens and pray for all the Lord's people. The purpose of this exercise is to **align** our hearts with God's heart and deepen our relationship with Him and His people.

- $1. \quad \hbox{Practice active listening and grow our empathy.}$
 - Ask open-ended questions to dig into the yearning behind the requests. By asking the right questions and listening closely, our prayers for others can go deeper than just repeating one's request to God.
- 2. Spend some time in silence before praying out loud.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us how we can pray for him/her, and ask God to reveal His heart for him/her.

 3. **Pray out loud**.
 - Try to include in our prayer any Bible verses or characters of God that come to our mind during the time of silence. Try to encourage him/her with Biblical truths about our identity as God's beloved children.

HEBREWS 5:11-6:20 KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL ARE THE KEYS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY THAT COMPELS INTO A LIFE OF SERVICE

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-3: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, deserving of our utmost attention. He is the promised Son of God who shared in our humanity and became the pioneer of our salvation. We are made holy and welcomed into His family through His faithfulness and obedience to suffer and die for our sins while being our High Priest.
- Week 4: We are warned to hold fast to our hope in Jesus and strive to enter the promised eternal rest by pursuing a relationship with God and living in obedience to His Word.

This week...

• We are warned against complacency in our spiritual growth, emphasizing the need for a correct understanding of the gospel to be taken forward to maturity. Spiritual maturity is demonstrated through a life of service while awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises.

Side note: Go to the "Go Deeper" section for a separate set of questions about the topic of "losing salvation" (Heb. 6:4-8) and explanations on the "elementary teachings" (6:1-3) and "two unchangeable things" (6:13-20). You may consider using two sessions to discuss this passage in greater detail.

Observation

- 1. What were the author's frustrations toward the original audience?
- 2. What are the three pairs of basic principles laid out in Heb. 6:1-3?

Leaders' note: 1) Faith and repentance, 2) washing and laying on of hands, 3) resurrection and eternal judgment. More explanation can be found in the "Go Deeper" section.

- 3. In Heb 6:4-8, how did the author describe and compare the experiences of a believer?
- 4. In Heb 6:9-12, what were the author's encouragements for the readers?
- 5. What are the "two unchangeable things" referred to in Heb. 6:16?

Leaders' note: 1) The promise of God, signifying the reliability and steadfastness of God's word, and 2) the oath of God, emphasizing the certainty of God's commitment to fulfill what He has promised.

Interpretation

1. Based on Heb. 5:11 to Heb. 6:3, what are the marks of spiritual maturity, and what might have hindered the original audience from maturing?

Leaders' note: Recall Heb. 5:14, and Heb. 6:1; **taking forward** the "elementary teachings" to maturity. Hindrances: no longer try to understand (5:11), **not training themselves** to discern good from evil (5:14).

2. How do the "elementary teachings about Christ" (Heb. 6:1-3) lead to spiritual maturity?

Leaders' note: A correct understanding of the gospel is foundational to spiritual maturity. The gospel has a **transformative power** that changes our hearts and will lead to a **fruitful life and active love for others**.

3. How would you summarize the author's desires for the believers based on Heb. 6:7-12?

Leaders' note: Several key ideas include, producing a crop / living a fruitful life (v.7), continuing to love God and His people by helping them (v.10), diligently pursuing God in faith (v.11), imitating those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised (v.12).

4. How does the life of Abraham and the "two unchangeable things" (Heb. 6:18) provide hope and encouragement amidst the strong warnings (Heb. 6:8, 6:12)?

Leaders' note: The life of Abraham showed his **unwavering faith and endurance** and **God's faithfulness** in fulfilling His promises. The "two unchangeable things" signify **God's promise and His character as an anchor** for the soul (v.19), to encourage believers as they persevere to grow in spiritual maturity.

Application

What are some elementary teachings that you need to be reminded of or take to heart?

Leaders' note: A good example of the criterion on basic Christian beliefs is looking through the Doctrinal Statement on the Island ECC website and the major Christian creeds (e.g. Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian).

- 2. What difficult questions, life struggles, and temptations could lead us or others in our community to abandon our faith in Christ?
- 3. How have we seen ourselves growing in spiritual maturity through serving others?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Prayer of Praise

Praise is the act of complimenting God for **who He is** (e.g. our Creator, our Father), for **His attributes** (e.g. all-knowing, all-powerful), and for **His characters** (e.g. compassion, merciful). The act of praise is not affected by circumstances nor by what we have or what we lack. God's character remains true throughout the past, the present, and the future.

Some practical steps to pray a prayer of praise:

- 1. Find a Bible passage(s) that can inspire and remind you of who God is, e.g., Psalm 29, Psalm 103.
- 2. Take turns among members to verbally pray out praise to God, focusing on praising Him for who He is.

Go Deeper

- I. Hebrews 6:1-3 The three pairs of basic principles are:
 - 1. Faith and repentance: Repenting of sin and turning from trusting in one's own works to resting on the finished work of Christ are the marks of Christian conversion (Heb. 6:12; 9:14; 10:22, 38–39; 12:2; 13:7).
- 2. Washing and laying on of hands: These distinctive initiatory rites indicate that one is becoming an active part of the church (Acts 6:6; 8:14–17; 9:12–19; 19:5–6).
- 3. Resurrection and eternal judgment: Christians have a future hope in the resurrection. They are safe in Christ from the eternal judgment that awaits nonbelievers (Heb. 9:27; 10:27; 11:19, 35).

(Source: The Gospel Coalition)

- II. **Hebrews 6:4-8** is a rather complicated passage that may invoke questions, such as "Can someone lose their salvation?" If your group would like to wrestle with this question further, here are some questions to discuss, taken from the "Life Change Series" (NavPress, 1989).
- 1. In 6:1-3, the writer uses the pronouns "us" and "we." In 6:4-6 he uses "those" and "they." Then he switches back to "us" and "we" in 6:9-12.
 - a. Who are "we" in 6:1-3?
 - b. Who are "they" in 6:4-6? (Are "they" different from "we"?) How can you tell?
 - c. What do you think is the significance of this switch from "we" to "they"? (Does it suggest that the author is talking about a hypothetical situation? Why or why not?)
- 2. a. By what four phrases does the writer describe the "they" group in 6:4-5?
 - b. Do these four phrases indicate to you that the author is talking about genuine bornagain Christians? Why or why not? (Optional: See Romans 6:23, 8:9; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:23; Jude 19.)
- 3. Do you think "falling away" in 6:6 refers to falling from salvation or from maturity? Why?
- 4. Can a true believer fall away from salvation? What do Jesus and Paul say about this in John 6:39-40, John 10:27-30, and Romans 8:31-39?

Leaders' note: You and your care group members may reach different conclusions about this issue. However, we can learn to embrace disagreements, reject divisiveness, and learn to engage in conversations in a Spirit-filled manner that is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

- III. Hebrews 6:13-20 side study questions:
- 1. What promise did God make to Abraham?
- 2. What were the anchors for Abraham's hope? (Refer to the "two unchangeable things")

Leaders' note: 1) **God's promise**, through what He spoke, and 2) **the oath of God**, confirming what He said. More details on **Oath** (6:16): "When men swear an oath to underline the certainty and solemnity of their words, they swear by someone or something greater than themselves. 'As the Lord lives' was the supreme oath in Israel. Abraham himself swore by God and made others do the same (Genesis 14:22, 21:23-24, 24:3). But, says the author of Hebrews, God has none greater than Himself by whom to swear." (Source: NavPress, 1989; Bruce, F.F., 1979)

- 3. Why did God swear an oath with His promise to bless Abraham (Heb. 6:16-18)?
- 4. What is the importance of the Old Testament references in pointing to Jesus as the manifestation of hope for the people of God?

Leaders' note: Remember that the original audience of Hebrews was mostly Jewish and they were tempted to go back to Judaism because of the oppositions that they faced. The author has been emphasizing the superiority of Jesus Christ over all Old Testament institutions. Jesus has become the forerunner of our faith, entering the "inner sanctuary behind the curtain", allowing us to come to God directly and have the promised eternal rest in God available to us (recall week 4).

- 5. What should be the anchor of our soul?
- 6. Why is it important to have an anchor?
- 7. How does this truth shape our hearts and attitudes as we are waiting for God's promises?
- 8. Where in your life do you need to keep on trusting God's promises?

HEBREWS 7-8:6 | JESUS CHRIST IS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO MINISTERS AND REIGNS FOREVER, AND SAVES US COMPLETELY

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-4 (a): Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, the promised Son of God who is superior over all created things and all Old Testament figures. He is our High Priest who shared in our humanity and became the pioneer of our salvation through His faithful obedience to suffer and die for our sins.
- Week 1-4 (b): Through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, "God's rest" or salvation is available for those who pay attention to God's revelation, firmly place their hope and confidence in Jesus, pursue a relationship with God and living in obedience to His Word.
- Week 5: We are warned against complacency and exhorted to continually deepen our understanding of God and demonstrate spiritual maturity through living a life of service.

This week...

 Jesus Christ is the basis of our salvation pertaining to His role as the eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, superior over the Levitical priestly system. He ministers and reigns forever, securing our salvation, so we no longer have to 'work' for our salvation.

Observation

1. Read Genesis 14:17-20 for additional background. Based on Heb. 7:4-10 and Heb. 7:15-17, how was Melchizedek's priesthood superior to the Levitical priesthood?

Leaders' note: Five aspects: 1) v.4-6a, Melchizedek collected a tenth from Abraham (Levi's ancestor), 2) v.6b-7, Melchizedek blessed Abraham, 3) v.8, Melchizedek's priesthood remains forever ("declared to be living"), 4) v.9-10, when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was yet to be born, 5) v.15-17, priesthood on the basis of the power of an indestructible life as opposed to ancestry.

- 2. Why was the Levitical law (7:11-19) changed/set aside?
- 3. How did the author compare and contrast Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood?

Leaders' note: 1) Heb. 7:20-22, Jesus' priesthood is guaranteed by the oath of God and remains forever, 2) v.23-25, Jesus lives forever and is not prevented by death; enables him to save his people completely, and live to intercede for his people, 3) v.26-28, Jesus offered himself to sacrifice for the sins of his people once for all, unlike the Levites who needed to offer sacrifices daily for his own sins first before others'.

4. How was Jesus' priesthood described in Heb. 8:1-6?

Interpretation

1. How are the different priestly roles (i.e. intercession, offering sacrifices, and mediator) significant for a believer's salvation?

Leaders' note: 1) 7:23-25 Intercession: provides an ongoing representation before God,
2) 7:26-28 Offering sacrifices: He offered Himself and became the perfect sacrifice to atone for sins, and
3) 8:1-6 Mediator of the new covenant: allowing believers to come to God.

2. What was the purpose of the Mosaic law (Heb. 7:18-22, 7:28) and how did it point to Jesus?

Leaders' note: The Mosaic laws were given by God to reveal **God's holiness**, **and the people's sinfulness**, **and establish a pattern of priesthood and sacrifice**. Hence, it shows us **our need for a savior**. Jesus is the better hope provided for us who **reigns forever**, **through whom we can draw near to God**.

3. The original audience of Hebrews was persecuted and tempted to go back into following Jewish rituals. What basic truth about salvation was the author trying to emphasize?

Leaders' note: The author wanted to encourage the original audience to **not fall back into legalism**.

Several key concepts include: 1) Jesus' priesthood provides an **assurance of salvation**, in which salvation is achieved **by grace through faith and not works (rituals) nor ancestry**, 2) it points towards an **eternal hope** because of His **permanent priesthood**, and 3) Jesus' priesthood provides **direct access to God**.

Application

- 1. Jesus is our high priest who reconciled us with God. How does this truth impact our confidence in bringing our needs before God?
- 2. What are our challenges in drawing near to God?
- 3. In what ways are we still living under the old covenant (i.e. appeasing God by works)?
- 4. How can the promises of the new covenant strengthen us during challenging times or moments of doubt in our faith journey?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Silence (and Solitude)

Silence is a spiritual practice to pause, quiet down, and draw near to the presence of God. In the Scripture, Jesus prioritized His time alone, abiding in God the Father. Oftentimes, we associate spending time with God through reading the Bible or doing the "Christian" things for God, but God wants us to delight in Him, coming to Him as we are. This week, try practicing a time of silence while trusting that Jesus is continually interceding for us.

- 1. Begin your time of silence with prayers, asking God to quiet down our minds.
- 2. Spend 15 minutes in silence. Do nothing, not even reading or praying. Embrace the quietness.
- 3. Acknowledge feelings or thoughts that arise, but refocus our thoughts on God.
- 4. Share your experience with your group, and close your time with a prayer of gratitude.

HEBREWS 8:7-9:28 | JESUS' SACRIFICE IS GREATER THAN ALL EARTHLY SACRIFICES AND ESTABLISHES A NEW COVENANT

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-5: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, the promised Son of God who is superior over all created things and all Old Testament figures. He is our High Priest who offered Himself, in His humanity, to atone for our sins and become the pioneer of our salvation. We are warned to pay attention to God's revelation, firmly place our hope in Jesus, live in obedience to His Word, and grow in spiritual maturity.
- Week 6: Jesus Christ is the superior High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, who reigns and ministers forever to secure our salvation so that we no longer have to work for it.

This week

 Jesus' sacrifice is superior to all earthly animal sacrifices. His blood was shed once and for all to forgive and pay for our sins. His blood purifies and reconciles us with God, giving us direct access to God. His death establishes the new covenant and institutes a new way of worship without requiring animal sacrifices while waiting for His return.

Observation

- 1. Based on Heb. 8:7-12, what are the implications of the new covenant?
- 2. Where was the Ark of the Covenant stationed? What were the roles of high priests?

Leaders' note: "Most Holy Place" or "inner room". One of the roles of high priests was to offer animal sacrifices for himself and the people of Israel, for the atonement of sins.

Based on Heb. 9:12-14, 18, 22-23, what had been achieved by the shedding of Jesus' blood?

Leaders' note: v.12-14, eternal redemption, purification of the flesh (v.13) and consciences (v.14), v.18, put the new covenant into effect v.22-23, forgiveness and purification of sins.

4. What did Jesus accomplish at His first coming (Heb. 9:26) and what will He accomplish at His second coming (Heb. 9:28)?

Interpretation

1. What do the regulations for worship in the first/old covenant reveal about God's nature?

2. How is Jesus' sacrifice of the new covenant superior to the old covenant?

Leaders' note: 1) **v.11-12** and **v.25-26** Jesus Christ entered the **heavenly tabernacle**, **the "Most Holy Place"** (the very presence of God Himself) **once and for all** by His own blood; not the earthly tabernacle.

2) **v.14** Jesus became the living and eternal sacrifice whose blood cleanses our consciences.

3. Why was the shedding of blood essential to both the old and new covenant?

Leaders' note: Blood symbolizes life, and **the wages of sin is death** (Romans 6:23, Genesis 2:17), requiring payment. **In the old covenant**, animal sacrifices were necessary to <u>atone for sins</u> (Leviticus 17:14). It signifies the gravity of sins and God's justice. **In the new covenant**, Jesus' blood represents the ultimate sacrifice, **demonstrating God's mercy and justice**. His death also <u>activated the new covenant</u>.

4. How did the new covenant change the way the original audience worshipped God?

Leaders' note: The new covenant **replaced the need for animal sacrifices**, and emphasized forgiveness through Jesus' blood, giving **direct access to God**. In the Last Supper, where Jesus foreshadowed His crucifixion, He instituted a new form of worship through an **act of remembrance of Jesus' death** and a **proclamation of His death** until he comes back (Matthew 26:26-28, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Application

- 1. What are the hindrances that keep you from remembering/understanding Jesus' sacrifice?
- 2. What are old systems of belief that you had to discard when you came to faith in Jesus?
- 3. How does the new covenant give you hope, knowing that Jesus will bring judgment?
- 4. What acts of remembrance can you incorporate into your life that would help you contemplate Jesus' sacrifice and the kingdom more frequently?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Communion

The word "worship" comes from an Old English word that means "to ascribe worth to someone". Historically, communion has been the pinnacle of worship gatherings as an act of remembrance. This week, consider observing Communion as a community, remembering and ascribing worth to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

- 1. Prepare the communion elements (bread and juice/wine) and pass them around.
- 2. Be sure to give a **word of caution** before observing Communion, to ensure that everyone who partakes is a follower of Christ.
- 2. Begin by preparing our hearts, praying in silence, and confessing to God ways that we have fallen short.
- 3. Have someone read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24. Pause and take the bread together as a group.
- 4. Have someone read 1 Corinthians 11:25. Pause and take the juice/wine together as a group.
- 5. Close the time in prayers, declaring praise and thanksgiving for Jesus' sacrifice that allows us into this communion with God.

HEBREWS 10

JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS ONCE AND FOR ALL, UNITING US INTO ONE BODY TO SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TOWARD LOVE

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-6: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, the promised Son of God
 who is superior over all created things and Old Testament laws/figures. He is the superior
 High Priest who offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice. He reigns and ministers forever,
 securing our salvation. We are warned to pay attention to God's revelation, firmly place
 our hope in Jesus, obey His Word, and grow in spiritual maturity.
- Week 7: Jesus' sacrifice is superior to all earthly animal sacrifices. His blood purifies and reconciles us with God, giving us direct access to God. His death establishes the new covenant and institutes a new way of worship without requiring animal sacrifices.

This week...

• Jesus Christ died once and for all to pay for our sins. We are warned to persevere and guard against shrinking back from faith, especially amid persecution, by drawing near to God and living in a community. We can place our hope in God's promise of judgment.

Observation

- 1. What was the function of the animal sacrifices? (Heb. 10:3)
- 2. Based on Heb. 10:8-14, what did or will Jesus accomplish at His first and second coming?

Leaders' note: **First coming: v.9-10**, made believers holy, **v.14**, made perfect forever those who are being made holy, **Second coming: v.12-13**, make his enemies his footstool.

- 3. What are the three calls to action outlined in Heb. 10:22-25?
- 4. What happened to those who rejected the law of Moses and what would happen to those who reject the Son of God? (Heb. 10:28-29)

Leaders' note: Those who rejected the law of Moses were **punished with death** (v.28), and **God's punishment would be much more severe** for those who rejected the Son of God and His grace (v.29).

5. Based on Heb. 10:32-35, what were the persecutions endured by the original audience and how did they demonstrate their confidence in Jesus?

Leaders' note: **v.33** Being publicly exposed to insult and persecution, **v.34** imprisonment and confiscation of properties. They demonstrated their confidence in Jesus by **suffering alongside each other joyfully**.

Interpretation

1. How is Jesus' sacrifice of the new covenant superior to the old covenant?

Leaders' note: The **key idea** presented in this passage is that Jesus Christ died to atone for sins **once and for all (v.2, 10, 12)**. The animal sacrifices could not take away sins (v.3), but Jesus' sacrifice was able to **make holy** those who believe in Him (v.10), **make perfect** those who are being made holy (v.14), **forgive sins** (v.16-17), and give believers **direct access to God** (v.19-20).

2. How do the comparisons of God's judgment both warn and encourage his audience?

Leaders' note: The author emphasized the severity of God's punishment for those who reject the Son of God as a **caution** against **willful disobedience** and **falling away** from their faith. The Hebrews believers were faced with severe persecution. Therefore, reminding them of God's judgment would encourage them, **assuring them of salvation** knowing that Jesus will **bring judgment** in His second coming.

3. How do the three calls to action lead to perseverance amid great persecution?

Leaders' note: v.22 Believers can find strength, comfort, and guidance to endure persecution by drawing near to God in faith. v.23 Trusting and holding unswervingly to the hope in Jesus and His promises provides assurance and steadfastness in the face of trials and persecution. v.24 Living in a community, spurring one another toward love and good deeds gives encouragement and strength to persevere.

Application

- 1. How have you been tempted to shrink back from your faith due to trials or persecution?
- 2. How does the hope in God's judgment encourage you when you face persecution?
- 3. Which of the three calls to action do you want to take to heart and put into action?
- 4. How can we actively spur others on in love and good deeds in our community?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Praying the Examen

The Examen prayer is a technique of prayer and meditation to increase our awareness of God's presence and guidance in our lives. It consists of five movements: **thanksgiving**, **guidance**, **review**, **grace**, and **resolution**. When practiced in a community, it can serve as a reminder of how He is at work in our lives despite the ways that we have fallen short. This prayer is to be spoken out in a conversational way, as Jesus is our savior and our friend.

Example: "[Thanksgiving] Jesus we thank You for Your sacrifice that unites us all as one family, one body. [Guidance] Fill us with Your Spirit, God, and guide us so that we may see both the good and the bad in our lives that You want us to see. [Review] We are grateful for all the joy we've experienced together as a community. Yet, we are also sorrowful for the needs that are unmet due to our lack of resources or perhaps, apathy. [Grace] Forgive us, O Lord, and heal us, for You are our forgiving God and our healer. [Resolution] As we look forward to tomorrow, may You continue to provide for us and overflow us with Your love. Amen."

HEBREWS 11-12:3 | JESUS IS THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH; WE CAN HAVE A STRONG FAITH THAT IS ACTIVE IN OBEDIENCE

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-7: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, the promised Son of God and great High Priest, who is superior over all things. He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to purify us, reconcile us with God, and secure our salvation. Through Jesus Christ, we can come to God directly. We are warned to pay attention to God's revelation, firmly place our hope in Jesus, obey His Word, and grow in spiritual maturity.
- Week 8: Jesus Christ died once and for all for our sins and established the new covenant. We are warned to persevere and guard against losing faith, especially amid persecution.

This week

 Jesus Christ is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who exemplified a faith that is active in obedience. Learning from the forerunners of our faith, we are reminded to fix our eyes on Him and have our minds set on the eternal so that we can persevere in faith.

Observation

- 1. According to Heb. 11:1, what are the key elements of faith?
- 2. Based on Heb. 11:6, what are the two beliefs required to come to God?
- 3. Based on Heb. 11:8-19, how did Abraham demonstrate his faith?
- 4. What was the shared experience amongst the names listed in this passage? (Heb. 11:13-16)

Leaders' note: 1) They were still living by faith when they died, 2) they did not receive the things promised; they only **saw** them and **welcomed** them **from a distance**, 3) they **admitted** that they were **foreigners and** strangers on earth, 4) they were looking for a country of their own, a better country-a heavenly one.

- 5. Based on Heb. 11:23-29, how did Moses' parents and Moses demonstrate their faith?
- 6. What are the two encouragements that the author was calling for in Heb. 12:1-3?

Interpretation

1. What was the common response displayed by the Old Testament characters as a result of their faith?

Leaders' note: The Old Testament characters displayed **obedience** and **faith in action**, even though they might not fully understand God's calling for them. They had confidence in God's promises and who He is.

2. Hebrews 11 outlined the Old Testament characters' faith in action. What are the important qualities/beliefs that could lead to an active faith?

Leaders' note: This is an <u>open-ended question</u>. To help with discussion, instruct members to identify verbs/adjectives that were mentioned <u>preceding the actions</u> that demonstrated their faith. Example answers are, but are not limited to: **v.6** belief in God, earnestness in seeking God, **v.13** admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth, **v.16** longed for a "better" country, **v.17** embraced God's promises.

- 3. How could the lives of the Old Testament characters encourage the original audience to persevere in suffering persecution?
- 4. How do the concepts of being a foreigner and stranger who long for a better country, foster the faith of believers that lead to actions?
- 5. How would you explain Hebrews 11:39-40 to others?

Leaders' note: The author was calling the original audience to have an even greater faith than the faith of the Old Testament characters because they have seen God's promise being fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Application

- 1. We are foreigners and strangers on earth. How does this truth affect the way we prioritize our thoughts, resources, and actions?
- 2. How does our current situation of life call for the kind of faith demonstrated in Hebrews 11? How can we act in faith this week, in accordance with what has been demonstrated?
- 3. Share a circumstance in your life in which you needed to trust God, even though you could not see where it was going to lead.

Optional Prayer Exercise: Praying with Prayers of the Saints

Reading pre-written prayers of the saints may seem unoriginal, but it can be a powerful practice to increase our sense of belonging and connect with the forerunners of our faith. This week, spend some time reading and meditating on some prayers of the saints and practice writing out your prayers as if you are writing a letter to God.

Example: "My Song for Today", Prayer of St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)

"My life is but an instant, a passing hour. My life is but a day that escapes and flies away. O my God! You know that to love you on earth I only have today. Lord, what does it matter if the future is gloomy? To pray for tomorrow, oh no, I cannot! Keep my heart pure, cover me with your shadow Just for today. O divine Pilot! whose hand guides me. I'm soon to see you on the eternal shore. Guide my little boat over the stormy waves in peace, just for today. Amen."

HEBREWS 12

ENDURING HARDSHIPS AS GOD'S DISCIPLINE HELPS US UNDERSTAND TRUE WORSHIP IN LIGHT OF GOD'S HOLINESS

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-8 (a): Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, the promised Son of God and great High Priest, who is superior over all things. He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice once and for all to purify us, reconcile us with God, secure our salvation, and establish the new covenant. We can come to God directly through Jesus Christ.
- Week 1-8 (b): We are warned to pay attention to God's revelation, firmly place our hope in Jesus, obey His Word, and grow in spiritual maturity. We are also warned to persevere and guard against losing faith, especially amid persecution.
- Week 9: Faith is active in obedience. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith; and have our minds set on the eternal to persevere in faith.

This week...

• Enduring hardships is one way that God disciplines us to make us holy and understand His holiness. The right understanding of God's holiness will lead us to come to Him in worship with reverent fear and joy. All the while holding on to God's promises that have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Observation

- 1. Based on Heb. 12:1-3, what should be the attitude and inspiration for running the race of faith?
- 2. What are the purposes and outcomes of God's discipline? (Heb. 12:10-11)
- 3. Based on Heb. 12:12-17, what are the instructions for believers to live out?

Leaders' note: **v.13** is a reference to Proverbs 4:26 "Give careful thought to the **paths for your feet** and be steadfast in all your ways."

- 4. Compare and contrast the two mountains described in Heb. 12:18-21 and Heb. 12:22-24.
- 5. In Heb. 12:25-28, what warning does the author give and what posture is the author inviting his audience into, in light of the new covenant?

Interpretation

- 1. How did Jesus' perfect endurance (Heb. 12:1-3) encourage the audience to persevere in faith and endure hardships?
- 2. What were the commonalities of all instructions in this passage?

Leaders' note: This is an <u>open-ended question</u>. The general idea is that all instructions require discipline, effort, intentionality, and trained yielding within a community.

- 3. How was the original audience similar to the example of Esau? (Heb. 12:16-17)
- 4. Compare and contrast the two perceptions of God based on the two "mountains" in Heb. 12:18-21 and Heb. 12:22-24.
- 5. How does the right view of God lead believers to a proper manner of worship?

Application

- 1. How has God's discipline produced righteousness in your life?
- 2. How have you been making every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy?
- 3. How has being in a community helped you to pursue holiness?
- 4. Examining your attitude towards worship, do you come with an attitude of reverence? Why or why not?

Optional Prayer Exercise: Praying with Physical Postures

The meaning of worship is to honor and show reverence for God. Sometimes we forget that we can worship through physical postures. In scripture, there are many examples of prayers accompanied by different physical postures. Abraham fell upon his face before God, Moses prayed with outstretched arms, and Jesus prayed while looking up to Heaven. This week, try praying with various postures and displaying the worth of Christ with our bodies.

Several posture examples and the meaning:

- 1. Lying prostrate before God to acknowledge our total unworthiness, recognize our need for God's mercy, show a proper response to a serious crisis, and express worship and reverence.
- 2. Kneeling before God to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus, demonstrate an earnest appeal and humility.
- 3. Sitting before God to remind us that all believers are seated with Christ in Heaven, display a hearing heart and a teachable spirit, and symbolize intimate fellowship.
- 4. Standing before God to reaffirm one's commitment to God and His ways, and show a readiness to serve.
- 5. Bowing the head to show reverence and humility, looking up to declare that our help comes from God.
- 6. Lifting up the arms or hands as a symbol of seeking God's mercy and blessing, and to reflect attitudes of worship and appeal for God's sovereign power.

HEBREWS 13 |

REMEMBERING JESUS AND HIS SACRIFICE WILL EQUIP US TO DO GOOD WORKS FOR OTHERS THAT PLEASE GOD

Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-8 (a): Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, the promised Son of God and great High Priest, who is superior over all things. He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice once and for all to purify us, reconcile us with God, secure our salvation, and establish the new covenant. We can come to God directly through Jesus Christ.
- Week 1-8 (b): We are warned to pay attention to God's revelation, firmly place our hope in Jesus, obey His Word, and grow in spiritual maturity. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus and have our minds set on the eternal to persevere in faith, especially amid persecution.
- Week 10: Enduring hardships is one way that God disciplines us to make us holy and understand His holiness, which shall lead us to worship Him with reverent fear and joy.

This week...

• The book of Hebrews concludes with a call to action that all believers should live out, in light of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus suffered outside the camp so that we could be made holy and could come to God in worship. Therefore, we ought to do good works that brings pleasure and glory to Him in response, as He has equipped and strengthened us through Jesus Christ.

Observation

- 1. Based on Heb. 13:1-5, what instructions does the author give his audience to live out?
- 2. What truths did the author emphasize to encourage his audience to live out their faith? (Heb. 13:5-8)
- 3. What sacrifices are required of believers in response to Jesus' sacrifice? (Heb. 13:13-16)
- 4. According to Heb. 13:17-19, what counsel did the author give his audience on how to treat their leaders?

Interpretation

1. How do the truths in Heb. 13:5-8 tackle the root cause of not living out the instructions written in Heb. 13:1-5?

2. What are the implications of Jesus suffering outside the city gate, especially as it relates to the law?

Leaders' note: Jesus' blood made the people outside the city gate holy. His sacrifice supersedes the Jewish laws so people will no longer benefit from Jewish rituals (v.9 eating ceremonial food), and the altar that Jesus is ministering in is greater than the tabernacle that is ministered by Jews (v.10).

3. Why would the instructions about sacrifices in Heb. 13:15-16 be important for his audience?

Leaders' note: In the context of the original audience, openly professing Jesus' name, doing good, and sharing with others can put them in danger and thus it is considered a form of sacrifice. In addition, since the people are used to the concept of sacrifice, explaining these acts as a form of sacrifice may help their understanding and add value to the suffering that they had to endure.

- 4. What does submitting to the leaders teach us about honoring God's authority and Jesus' Lordship? (Heb. 13:17, 20)
- 5. How does the benediction in Heb. 13:20-21 summarize the important teachings in the book of Hebrews?

Application

- 1. How can you actively demonstrate your love for one another within your community?
- 2. In what ways can you show hospitality to strangers and extend kindness to those in need?
- 3. What steps can you take to cultivate a lifestyle that allows you to serve or give sacrificially?
- 4. What one aspect of Hebrews 13 would you like to take to heart and put into action this week/month?

Moving beyond Prayers: Take Actions!

Prayerfully evaluate your current life in the following areas, and ask God to reveal which areas where you are fruitful and where you are falling short: 1) Hospitality, 2) Remembering those who are persecuted, 3) Purity, 4) Proper attitude towards wealth and personal achievements, 5) Appreciation for God's grace of salvation, 6) Offering praise to God, 7) Doing good and sharing with others, 8) Obedience to leaders, and 9) Prayer.

God called us to go to him outside the camp (v.13). To close off this study on Hebrews, take time to decide as a group to commit to serving the community in your city, that is outside of your home church.

NOTES

NOTES

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"FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS,
THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTOR OF FAITH"
HEBREWS 12:2

