



*The final
word*

Hebrews.

About These Studies

Our Term 2 Bible Study series based on the letter of Hebrews has nine pre-written studies. These studies are generally designed to be completed by your group after you have heard the passage preached on a Sunday. Each study consists of roughly seven to ten open-ended questions for your group to discuss.

It may help to think about these questions as “discussion starters” rather than a set of questions to answer one after another. You should allow about 30 to 40 minutes for this discussion. These studies do not aim to guide your group in detailed exegesis of each passage. Rather, they aim to -

- Revisit the exegesis that was presented in the Sunday sermon
- Help your group address remaining questions that you have about the passage
- Provide your group with ample opportunity to consider possible passage applications



This term we have again included some Head/Heart/Hand icons throughout the studies to help signal where a question is moving into application. The HEAD symbol indicates that the question is aimed at sharpening the way we THINK. The HEART symbol indicates a question more closely tied to our DESIRES/EMOTIONS/AFFECTIONS. The HAND symbol indicates that we are getting more PRACTICAL or moving toward TAKING ACTION.

It is recommended that each group member listens to the relevant sermons before the group meeting. Members may also wish to listen to the corresponding episode of Sermon Seasonings podcast (on the weeks when these are available).

Special thanks to Ross Hansen and Seb lane who were involved in writing draft studies for this term. The studies have also been reviewed and given a final edit by Seb Lane. The study booklet has been designed by Justine Kim. The Bible verses throughout this study booklet are generally quoted from New International Version (NIV), Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.

For Growth Group Leaders

Please note that on Sunday 12 May our Sunday preaching series on Hebrews goes on pause for one week because we have planned for a topical sermon to coincide with Mother's Day. However, we will continue our Hebrews Bible Studies on this week (i.e., there isn't a separate study to go with the Mother's Day sermon). This means you will be ahead of the Sermon in your Growth Group (but only for two weeks). See more details below -

- Week 2 - Mother's Day Sunday Sermon (Study 2: Heb. 1:5-2:18; *GG's slightly ahead*)
- Week 3 - Heb. 1:5-2:18 Sunday Sermon (Study 3: Heb. 3-4; *GG's slightly ahead*)
- Week 4 - Heb. 3-6:20 Sunday Sermon (Study 4: Heb. 5-6; *GG's back in sync after sermon*)

Also for your awareness, in Week 6 we have planned for a more evangelistic talk on Sun 9 June based on Hebrews 10:1-18. This is a great week to consider inviting a friend to Church!

Special Request from our Mission Team: ('2 for 2')

This term in Growth Group we want to encourage group leaders and members to be thinking intentionally about those friends and family that you have that do not yet know Jesus. We believe that only God can change the hearts of those who are dead in their sins. So, we must bring them before God in prayer.

If you are a leader it would be fantastic if you could encourage each member of your group to choose two people in their life that they would particularly like to be praying for. Then share these names across the group and pray for them. It would be fantastic to spend some time early in the term praying together as a group for each member's 2 chosen people and then determine how you will keep praying together for these people ongoingly.

For example, our group (Braydon and Merryn's GG) will split in two's to pray for these people every second week as part of our normal group's time in prayer. This is just one way to keep these people in our prayers. Our Explore course will also be coming up again in term 3 and this could be an awesome goal to be praying that we could bring our friends along to!

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Introduction

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.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.⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. **Hebrews 1:1-4¹***

Author and Date

We aren't sure who the author of Hebrews is although it has been much debated throughout church history. The author's identity is not clearly stated in the text, which makes the book technically anonymous. It's not likely to have been authored by Paul whose habit was to sign off his own name at the beginning or end of his letters. The author of Hebrews also indicates that the gospel of salvation was confirmed to him (and his hearers) by those who had heard from Jesus directly (Hebrews 2:3; compare this with what Paul says in Gal 1:11-12). There are also other recognised differences in writing style, rhetoric, vocabulary and theological emphases when compared with Paul's letters.² It seems likely the author may have been a Hellenistic Jew who was well educated.³ The author apparently had a close relationship to the people he was writing to (Heb 13:19) and like Paul was also close with Timothy (Heb 13:23). There have been many alternative author suggestions including Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silvanus, Philip, Priscilla & Aquila, Silas and Epaphras but in the end we can't be certain. The exact date of writing for Hebrews is unknown, although evidence suggests a likely date before AD 70.⁴

Recipients

Hebrews is addressed to a group of Christian brothers and sisters who had an existing pastoral relationship with the author (Heb 13:19-22). The ethnic background of this Christian group is debated by scholars (although is likely to be made up of mostly Jewish Christians). The author evidently expected his recipients to be well acquainted with Old Testament persons, institutions (especially cultic), the Mosaic law and to be committed to the divine authority of the OT.⁵

Main Theme

The main theme of Hebrews is summarised helpfully by one study Bible in this way, "Christ is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant institution; thus each reader, rather than leaving such a great salvation, is summoned to hold on by faith to the true rest found in Christ and to encourage others in the church to persevere."⁶

¹ New International Version (NIV), Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.

² Carson, D.A. and Moo, Douglas J. 2nd Ed. New Testament Introduction (Zondervan, 2005), 600-604.

³ Lane, L.W. Hebrews 1-8 WBC (Zondervan, 1991), xlvii. (Accordance)

⁴ Carson, D.A. and Moo, Douglas J. 2nd Ed. New Testament Introduction (Zondervan, 2005), 604-608.

⁵ Ellingworth, P. 1st Ed. NIGTC (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 21-28. (Accordance)

⁶ ESV Study Bible, Introduction to Hebrews - Theme (Accessed via Online Crossway Account).

Purpose

According to William Lane, “The purpose of Hebrews is to strengthen, encourage, and exhort the tired and weary members of a house church to respond with courage and vitality to the prospect of renewed suffering in view of the gifts and resources God has lavished upon them. The writer’s intention is to address the sagging faith of men and women within the group and to remind them of their responsibility to live actively in response to God’s absolute claim upon their lives through the gospel. He urges his listeners to hold loyally to their confession of Jesus Christ as the sole mediator of salvation in a time of crisis and warns them of the judgment of God they would incur if they should renounce their Christian commitment.”⁷ More succinctly, Thomas Schreiner writes: “The author’s point is that since the work of Christ is so great, it would be folly to turn away from him. The main point in the theology of the letter [...], then, provides a foundation for the central purpose of the letter: don’t fall away.”⁸

Genre

Hebrews describes itself as a ‘word of exhortation’ (Heb 13:22) which was likely delivered in oral form to its original recipients like a short sermon. However it has also been “written” down as well and can be described broadly as a ‘letter’ possessing some of the very typical concluding features of an epistle (benediction, greetings, grace - Heb 13:20-25). Another feature in Hebrews is its distinct movement from exposition to exhortation right throughout.

Structure

The argument throughout Hebrews is constructed in a complex way interweaving exposition and exhortation throughout. It may be helpful to see the argument outlined in detail and so I have included an outline of Hebrew’s belonging to George H. Guthrie.⁹ (Guthrie’s outline was recommended by Peter O’Brien, a current member of our church in his former commentary on Hebrews, since withdrawn from publication).

⁷ Lane, L.W. Hebrews 1-8 WBC (Zondervan, 1991), p. c-ci. (Accordance).

⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, Hebrews, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 14.

⁹Guthrie, G.H. The NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan, 1998), 39-40.

Introduction: God has Spoken to Us in a Son (1:1-4)¹⁰

I. The Position of the Son in Relation to the Angels (1:5-2:18)

A. The Son Superior to the Angels (1:5-14)

WARNING - Do Not reject the Word Spoken Through God's Son (2:1-4)

ab. The Son Superior for a Time Became Positionally Lower Than the Angels (2:5-9)

B. The Son Lower Than the Angels (i.e., among humans) to Suffer for the 'Sons' (i.e., heirs) (2:10-18)

Jesus, the Supreme Example of a Faithful Son (3:1-6)

The Negative Example of Those Who Fell Through Faithlessness (3:7-19)

Transition (4:1-2)

The Promise of Rest for Those Who are Faithful (4:3-11)

WARNING: Consider the Power of God's Word (4:12-13)

II. The Position of the son, Our High Priest, in Relation to the Earthly Sacrificial System (4:14-10:25)

Overlap: We Have a Sinless High Priest Who Has Gone Into Heaven (4:14-16)

A. The Appointment of the Son as a Superior High Priest (5:1-10; 7:1-28)

1. Introduction: The Son Taken From Among Humans and Appointed According to the Order of Melchizedek (5:1-10)

The Present Problem With the Hearers (5:11-6:3)

WARNING: The Danger of Falling Away from the Christian Faith (6:4-8)

Mitigation: The Author's Confidence in and Desire for the Hearers (6:9-12)

God's Promise Our Basis of Hope (6:13-20)

2. The Superiority of Melchizedek (7:1-10)

3. The Superiority of Our Eternal, Melchizedekan High Priest (7:11-28)

ab. We Have Such a High Priest Who is a Minister in Heaven (8:1-2)

B. The Superior Offering of the Appointed High Priest (8:3-10:18)

1. Introduction: The More Excellent Ministry of the Heavenly High Priest (8:3-6)

2. The Superiority of the New Covenant (8:7-13)

3. The Superior New Covenant Offering (9:1-10:18)

Introduction: The Pattern of Old Covenant Worship: Place, With Blood, Effect (9:1-10)

a. Christ's Superior Blood (9:13-22)

b. A Sacrifice in Heaven (9:23-28)

c. An Eternal Sacrifice (10:1-18)

¹⁰ Guthrie includes this note of explanation: Exposition is in plain text, exhortation is italicized and indented, and bold material indicates the unit constitutes an overlap between exposition and exhortation.

Overlap: We Have a Great Priest Who Takes Us Into Heaven (10:19-25)

WARNING: The Danger of Rejecting God's Truth and God's Son (10:26-31)

The Positive Example of the Hearers' Past and an Admonition to Endure to Receive the Promise (10:32-39)

The Positive Example of the Old Testament Faithful (11:1-40)

Reject Sin and Fix Your Eyes on Jesus, Supreme Example of Endurance (12:1-2)

Endure Discipline as Sons (12:3-17)

The Blessings of the New Covenant (12:18-24)

WARNING: Do Not Reject God's Word (12:25-29)

Practical Exhortations (13:1-19)

Benediction (13:20-21)

Conclusion (13:22-25)

Some Further Reader Guidance

Why Read Hebrews? (by Peter Adam from 'Hebrews: The Majestic Son')

"Hebrews is a great book to read, because it tackles an issue which is important for all Christians. It was written to those who had been active as Christians for a while, but who had begun to slip away from their original commitment and practice. They were beginning to drift away, perhaps unaware of what was really happening. They were, in fact, turning away from the living God! So it is essential for us to read Hebrews today, because it is just as easy to slip, to drift, to turn away from the living God.

Many have already drifted far outside the church of God, ranging in mood from pensive nostalgia for what they have lost, to aggressive demolition of the faith of those who remain Christians. Others are still members of churches, but only too well aware that their lives have become a sham and that they have lost the heart of the matter. Some slip away through the enticements of a secular society, some through frustration with their churches, others through busyness or apathy.

The Letter to the Hebrews was written to stop that drift. It describes itself as a 'word of exhortation' or 'message of encouragement' (See alternative translations of Hebrews 13:22), and its pastoral aim is to encourage people to stop moving away from Christian faith and practice. It does this by warning them of the dangers of rejecting God and urging them to hold fast to Christ, God's Son and priest.

So 'encouragement' in Hebrews is not just soft sympathy and understanding—it is encouragement which derives strength and vibrancy from the character of the true and living God, and from the work of his Son Jesus Christ our priest and Saviour. It is powerful sympathy, because it both assures us of clear understanding and gives motivation and power to change. It is encouragement that is fully Christian, deeply theological and profoundly effective.

It is interesting, then, to compare Hebrews with the sort of encouragement that we give to each other today, which is more likely to be strong on sympathetic understanding but weak on criticism, avoiding direct instructions. Hebrews gives us solid teaching about God, Christ and the atonement, and is clear in its warnings and instructions. Hebrews calls us to 'fix our eyes on Jesus' (12:2), a vital summons to all believers.

Reading Hebrews is an excellent way of escaping the narrow and restrictive world of late twentieth-century counselling techniques. Its first-century rigour has encouraged and sustained Christian obedience for the last 2000 years and is the rightful property of all Christians. Saints in every age have drunk deeply at its wellsprings of truth, faith, holiness, obedience and endurance, and many Christians have been strengthened by its magnificent words of encouragement.

But our age is also one in which people are more likely to read Christian books than they are to read the Bible! So before you go any further [...], you need to read Hebrews yourself. You will soon discover that it takes you into a rich world of symbolism, sacred history and saints of biblical times. Don't be daunted by it, but pray that God will help you understand something at least of this great letter to encourage you to read more deeply, and that it will encourage you in your life with him.

For Study, Discussion and Prayer

When you read Hebrews—try to do it in one or two sittings—mark or briefly take note of (a) those parts which you understand and are encouraged by, and (b) any parts you find difficult to understand or believe. It might be worth starting a 'Hebrews Diary', in which you record your observations, your questions, your conclusions, what has impacted you, what you need to follow up, and the prayers you pray based on the words of Hebrews. If you are in a study group, perhaps each person could share two examples of the things he or she notes. Then pray together, thanking God for his encouragement and asking for his help with the difficulties."¹¹

¹¹ Adam, P. Hebrews: The Majestic Son. (Aquila Press, 2004), p.3-4 (Kindle Edition).

Recommended Resources

Highly Accessible / Non - Technical

Sermon Seasonings



Apple iTunes, Spotify or, online via:
<https://anchor.fm/sermonseasonings/>

Intro Night



Philip Kern - Mon 29 April 2024 –
7:30pm @ Christ Church
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkZn_mQ7DO0

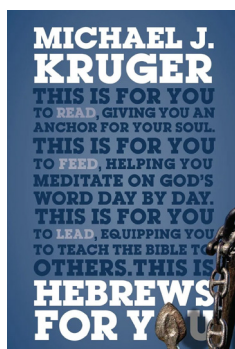
Big Picture Overview: Hebrews 1-13 by the Bible Project



The Letter to the Hebrews
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/hebrews/>

Low/Mid-Range Accessible / Semi-Technical

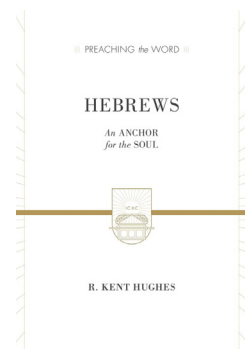
These three resources would be helpful for anyone in teaching roles at church. The first two are especially accessible for those who lead Bible Studies.



Hebrews For You
by Michael J. Kruger



Hebrews: The Majestic Son
by Peter Adam

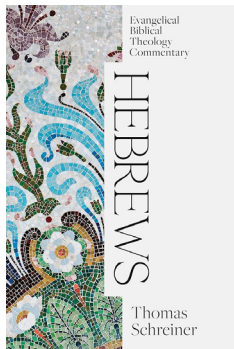


Hebrews (Vol. 1 & 2)
by R. Kent Hughes

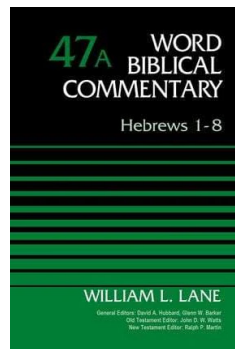
Highly Technical Commentaries

These are three other more detailed commentaries on Hebrews. Schreiner is most accessible and recent, Lane & Ellingworth provide highly technical commentary, incorporating insights from the Greek text & wider scholarship.

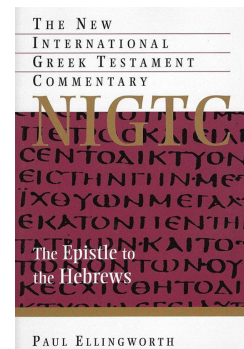
**Note: If you have access to Peter O'Brien's former commentary on Hebrews (previously, Eerdmans's Pillar Series) or the book 'God Has Spoken' (NSBT Series) these may also be helpful to consult, but have been withdrawn from publication



Hebrews (EBCT)
by Thomas Schreiner



Hebrews Vol 1 & 2 (WBC)
by William L. Lane



The Epistle to the Hebrews
by Paul Ellingworth

Study One | God has Spoken

Hebrews 1:1-4

Study Big Idea

God has spoken finally & decisively to us through His majestic Son

Discussion Question

What one word comes to mind when you think of someone else in your Growth Group?

Why Read Hebrews?

“Hebrews is a great book to read, because it tackles an issue which is important for all Christians. It was written to those who had been active as Christians for a while, but who had begun to slip away from their original commitment and practice. They were beginning to drift away, perhaps unaware of what was really happening. They were, in fact, turning away from the living God! So it is essential for us to read Hebrews today, because it is just as easy to slip, to drift, to turn away from the living God.

Many have already drifted far outside the church of God, ranging in mood from pensive nostalgia for what they have lost, to aggressive demolition of the faith of those who remain Christians. Others are still members of churches, but only too well aware that their lives have become a sham and that they have lost the heart of the matter. Some slip away through the enticements of a secular society, some through frustration with their churches, others through busyness or apathy.

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Adam, P. Hebrews: The Majestic Son. (Aquila Press, 2004), p.3 (Kindle Edition).

Brief Recap

How does the letter of Hebrews fit into the big picture story-line of the Bible?

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

1. What are some contrasts you notice between verse 1 and verse 2a? (e.g. *when* does God speak? *To whom?* *By whom?* *In what way/s?*)

2. "In the past... but in these last days..."

a) What is this saying about the significance of Jesus coming into the world?

b) Who are some of the prophets that God spoke to his people through in the past?

c) What is meant by the phrase "these last days"? Where else do we see this language (or concept) used in the Bible? (see also, Isa. 2:2-3; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1; Heb 9:26; 1 Peter 1:10-12)



3. Why does it matter for our knowledge of God to know that God is a *speaking God* and that He *has spoken*? How does this differ to alternative/false views about God?

The Son (verses 2-4)

4. a) These verses describe several amazing attributes and achievements of God's Son. In your own words, list these below (work in pairs) -

Verse Reference	Description of attribute/achievement of God's Son:
i) Verse 2b	
ii) Verse 2b	
iii) Verse 3a	
iv) Verse 3b	
v) Verse 3c	
vi) Verse 3d	
vii) Verse 4	

b) (*Optional*): Discuss as a group - which of these do you find encouraging or challenging?

5. a) Read: John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2:5-11

b) How do these descriptions of Christ match up with Hebrews 1:1-4?



6. How central is Jesus in your own life at the moment? What are some ways you anticipate the message & aim of Hebrews (to counter drift) could be timely for you?

7. When do you find it comforting in your own life to bring to mind that Jesus is seated in heaven right now at his Father's right-hand side ruling and reigning the world?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Two | The Superior Son

Hebrews 1:5–2:18

Study Big Idea

Pay attention to Jesus! He's superior to the angels and he became man to secure our future.

Discussion Question

What are some of the times when you find it hardest to pay attention? Why?

We Tend to Drift

“Have you ever been out on the ocean in a boat? Unlike on a lake, if you turn the motor off and just sit there floating, you don't stay in one spot: you drift in the current. You look up to find you are somewhere completely different. Without doing anything at all, you have drifted away. It is the same in the Christian life. Drifting happens very easily and imperceptibly. For this reason, our author says, “we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (2:1). Here is something that we rarely want to admit: there is a part of each of us that tends to be drawn to things other than Jesus. Left to themselves, our hearts tend to drift away from God. Many things can lead us to drift. It could be suffering, which derails our faith; or opposition, which makes us want to give up; or busyness, which distracts us from our spiritual life. It could be holding on to sin instead of repenting. These things can draw us away from God. It can even be little things that cause us to drift away. C.S. Lewis illustrates this in his book *The Screwtape Letters*, in which one demon gives advice to another: “The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.” (p 56) Now, to be clear, someone who is truly saved, who is truly a Christian, cannot ultimately lose their salvation—although they may have periods of disobedience or backsliding. However, we are given this warning to spur us on and to make us examine ourselves. There is a danger that we may think we are believers but end up proving by our estrangement from Jesus that we never really knew God. This warning is for each one of us.”

Kruger, M.J. *Hebrews For You: Giving You an Anchor for the Soul. God's Word For You* (The Good Book Company, 2021), 28 (Kindle Edition).

Brief Recap

How does this section build on and relate to Hebrews 1:1-4?

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

1. a) How is the relationship between God and Jesus described here?

b) Lots of angels in this section! What is the writer's main argument here concerning angels? What are some of the ways this point is made from the Old Testament?



2. Why is it important for Christians to keep growing in our understanding of the Old Testament and the New Testament? How does this look practically in your own life?

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

3. a) How is the logic concerning angels further applied here? (see also, acts 7:30, 38, 53; Galatians 3:19)

b) What is the tone of the author of Hebrews in this passage?



4. How might my heart be in danger of drifting away from the Gospel? What dangers or distractions do I need to stay alert to in my own life?



5. What practical steps should I take to avoid this?

Read Hebrews 2:5-18

6. a) Verses 6-8 quote Psalm 8:4-6. Why do you think the writer appeals to this Psalm?

b) Why is Jesus now crowned with glory?

7. a) Complete the table, listing Christ's achievements through the cross -

Verse	What Jesus has done
Verse 9	
Verse 10	
Verse 14	
Verse 15	
Verse 17	
Verse 18	

b) Which of these verses particularly stands out for you? Why?

8. Find where the words related to family relationships (e.g. sons/daughters, children, etc.), are used in this section. What comfort do you find in belonging to God's family?

9. What has been one truth about Jesus from this passage that encourages you personally? Why?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Three | Fixed on Jesus

Hebrews 3-4

Study Big Idea

Hold fast your confession & draw near confidently to God's throne of grace through Jesus.

Discussion Question

What do you tend to think most about? Or perhaps, what do you dream or scheme about?

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus

"On August 7, 1974, a Frenchman named Philippe Petit did something remarkable. In the middle of the night he stretched a cable between the two towers of the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan (which were still under construction). Early the next morning, with awestruck crowds watching below, Petit walked back and forth across the cable multiple times, performing one of the world's most daring high-wire acts. When we behold a feat like this, we have one simple question: how did he keep from falling? For high-wire performers, there is one simple answer. You keep your eyes focused on the destination and never look down.

Hebrews 3:1 tells us that it works that way in the Christian life. If we are to keep from falling, we need to "consider Jesus." I prefer the way the NIV translates it: "Fix your eyes on Jesus." Don't look down, but stay focused on him.

Peter learned this lesson the hard way. In Matthew 14:22-33 the disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee in a boat, and they see Jesus walking toward them across the water. When they realize who it is, Peter gets out of the boat and walks on the water toward Jesus. While Peter is looking at Jesus, all is well. But when he focuses on the wind and the waves, he starts to sink. You and I, like Peter, are very easily distracted from Jesus. We fix our eyes on just about anything sometimes. We all have a tendency in our heart to follow other gods, as it were, which we think might satisfy us more than Jesus. That's what the original recipients of this letter were doing—thinking maybe they should go back to Judaism. The author is saying to them and to us, No! Don't get distracted, or you'll start to sink."

Kruger, M.J. Hebrews For You: Giving You an Anchor for the Soul
God's Word For You (The Good Book Company, 2021), 43-44. (Kindle Edition)


Brief Recap

What have we learnt about Jesus, God's Son, so far?

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

1. How is Jesus' leadership similar, but different, to Moses?

Read Hebrews 3:7-19

2. What are we repeatedly warned against here? (see verses 7, 10, 12, 13, 15, 18-19)
3. How might we understand the *if* statements in Hebrews 3:6 and 3:14? (see also, 2 Cor 13:5; Luke 8:11-15)
-  4. Read Heb. 3:12-13. What are some practical ways we can continue to encourage one another regularly in this group not to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness & to persevere?

Read Hebrews 4:1-11

5. a) What do you think "entering his rest" refers to? (see also, Heb. 11:13-16; Matt. 11:28)

b) How does the author of Hebrews seek to exhort his hearers in verse 11? (see also, Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:10-11)

How Do We Enter God's Rest?

“Since this promise of rest still stands, the author invites us to enter it. This requires three things from us.

The first thing we need is faith. As we already observed above (4:2-3), this was precisely the problem with the wilderness generation: they didn't believe. Israel's lack of faith is a sober reminder that we must do more than merely hear the word. [...] faith is just grabbing hold of the thing that saves us—namely, Jesus. What matters is not just faith itself but the object of our faith. What saves us is Jesus; faith is the way we get Jesus.

The second thing we need is fear. In other words, we need to take seriously the danger of neglecting this great offer of salvation. We see this back in the very first verse of chapter 4: “Let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it” (v 1). If we want to enter into the promised land, we need to tremble; we need to have a healthy fear of ending up like the wilderness generation.

The third thing we need is fight. Why? Because the Christian life can be hard. Yes, it can be wonderful, exciting, and fulfilling. But it can also be exhausting, disheartening, and discouraging. If we are going to make it through the desert and to the promised land, it will take effort. In fact, this is how this section of chapter 4 ends: “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:11). The word “strive” is important here. It reminds us that effort, diligence, and perseverance are essential to the Christian life. No, we are not saved by our efforts—we are only saved by the grace of Christ. But the Christian life still involves effort! It is not passive and detached but active and intentional. This is why the book of Hebrews will later compare the Christian life to running a race (12:1). Running does not come easy. It takes hard work and sacrifice to push through the pain and the exhaustion. But there is a great reward at the end. There is a great promised land waiting for you....”

Kruger, M.J. Hebrews For You: Giving You an Anchor for the Soul
God's Word For You (The Good Book Company, 2021), 56-58. (Kindle Edition)

Read Hebrews 4:12-13

6. How is God's word described here?



7. How have you found the word of God to be living and convicting in your own life? When are you tempted to sit 'over the word' & judge what it says rather than sit 'under it' humbly?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

8. Why is Jesus able to help us in trials and temptation? How have you found this to be true?

9. What should we do since we have such a great, sympathetic High Priest? (verses 14b, 16) How might these verses encourage us: In prayer? In suffering? In temptation?

Pray in Response

Study Four | Jesus our Forerunner

Hebrews 5–6

Study Big Idea

Keep trusting in Jesus: our perfected High Priest - the forerunner & anchor of our faith.

Discussion Question

When have you needed a go-between person for the sake of a relationship? (or been one)

Jesus: Qualified to be our High Priest

“Three times in the argument so far Jesus has been described as high priest (2:17; 3:1; 4:14). A formal comparison is now made between high-priestly ministry under the Mosaic law (vv. 1–4) and the high-priestly ministry of Jesus (vv. 5–10). This lays the foundation for much of the argument to come (6:13 – 10:18), especially the idea that his sacrifice inaugurates a new covenant and a new way of relating to God.”

Peterson, D.G. Hebrews
Tyndale New Testament Commentary (IVP, 2020), 137. (Kindle Edition)

Brief Recap

What has the author of Hebrews just been encouraging these Christians to do? (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Read Hebrews 5:1-10

1. a) What were the general qualifications of a high priest? (Heb 5:1-4)

b) What qualifications does Jesus have for being our high priest? (Heb 5:5-10)

c) Why does the author highlight these similarities and differences between human priests and the unique priesthood of Jesus here?



2. How does Christ's obedience (and our obedience) relate to our salvation? (Heb 5:7-9, see also, 4:15 - and if time, Heb 3:18, 4:6, 4:11; John 15:9-12 & 1 John 2:3-6).

Christ's Obedience & Eternal Salvation:

"The Son suffered in obedience to the Father. 'Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.' 'He learned obedience' does not imply that Christ moved from disobedience to obedience, but that he learnt the full cost of obedience as he faced his suffering on the cross. Similarly, 'once made perfect' does not mean that he moved from a state of imperfection to perfection; the writer uses the word 'perfect' in his usual sense of 'completely achieving God's purpose'. So once Jesus had completely achieved God's purpose by dying on the cross and offering his sacrifice for our sins, then he became the source of our salvation. It is 'eternal salvation'. Without Christ we face 'eternal judgement' (6:2). But through Christ's eternal covenant (13:20), we also have 'eternal redemption' (9:12), and an 'eternal inheritance' (9:15)."

Adam, P. Hebrews: The Majestic Son. (Aquila Press, 2004),
Location 867 of 2212 (Kindle Edition)

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3


3. The writer pauses his argument about Jesus' relationship to Melchizedek (5:10-11), which will be picked up later in chapter 7. In the meantime, what are some of the concerns raised here about his audience (5:11-14)? How is this illustrated?
4. What does the author want for his readers in Hebrews 6:1-3?



5. Where do you think you might be vulnerable to spiritual immaturity in your own Christian walk? What are some practical steps that might help you to keep growing?

Read Hebrews 6:4-20

6. a) What is described as impossible here? (Heb 6:4-6a)

b) How do verses 7-8 help to illustrate and explain the warning in verses 4-6? (See also, Deut. 28:1-11, 29:19-28)
7. Do you think the person described in verses 4-5 is a Christian? Can a Christian fall away? Why or why not? (see also, Heb 3:6, 14; Mark 4:13-20; 2 Cor 13:5; Philip 1:6; 1 John 2:19)
8.  Where in your own life do you feel the challenge of such a strong warning-passage like this?
9. a) How does the writer's tone and address change in verses 9-12 (compared to verses 4-8)?

b) What response to this warning does the author want from them? Why? (Heb 6:11-12)
10. How does the author go on to reassure these Christians? (Heb 6:13-20). What do you personally find encouraging in these verses?



Extra Notes

Study Five | Jesus is Better

Hebrews 7-9

Study Big Idea

Stick with Jesus because in Him we have a better priesthood, covenant and sacrifice.

Discussion Question

When did you get a better upgrade on something that made you excited?

Jesus is Better

“The word “better” (κρείττονος) captures the author’s intention: Jesus is “better” than angels (1:4); the readers have experienced “better things” (6:9); Melchizedek is “better” than Abraham (7:7); Jesus guarantees a “better covenant” (7:22; 8:6), which has “better promises” (8:6); he offered “better sacrifices” (9:23); the readers have a “better possession” (10:34); a “better country” (11:16); await a “better resurrection” (11:35); OT saints will experience what is “better” and “perfect” only in fellowship with NT saints (11:40); Jesus’ blood speaks “better” than Abel’s (12:24). It is inconceivable, according to the author, that the readers would forsake what is better and cling to the law and the Levitical priesthood.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, Hebrews, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 226–227.

Brief Recap

What warning and encouragement has the author just been giving in chapter 6 of Hebrews?


Read Hebrews 7:1-28

1. a) Who is Melchizedek? (Heb 6:20-7:1) What details are we told about him here? (Heb 7:1-3; see also, Gen 14:17-20; Ps 110:4)

b) How is Melchizedek shown to be better than Abraham (& Levi) according to verses 4-10?

2. What are some questions raised about Jesus' priesthood and a few of the logical steps to the author's argument in verses 11-19? Does it raise any further questions for you?

3. How is Jesus' priesthood shown to be better than the old system? (Heb 7:20-28)

-  4. Why might it matter for Christians to have a better understanding about who Jesus is in his role as high priest and also the basis for his priesthood? Why does it matter for you?

Read Hebrews 8:1-13

5. a) How does the author summarise the main point so far in verses 1-2?


b) What is similar and what is different between Jesus' ministry compared to the Levitical priesthood? (Heb 8:3-6, see also Exodus 25:40)

6. In what ways is the new covenant better than the old one according to the extended quote from Jeremiah 31? (Heb 8:7-13)

Read Hebrews 9:1-28

7. What did worship look like in the earthly tabernacle under the old covenant? (Heb. 9:1-7) What important lesson was being taught through this? (9:8-10)

8. What are some ways the author emphasizes how 'Jesus is better' in verses 11-28?
What encouragement can we draw from this?

 9. When are you tempted to feel weighed down or burdened by a guilty conscience?
What is some of the good news & freedom this passage offers to us in Christ?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Six | Once for All

Hebrews 10:1-18

Study Big Idea

Keep going with Jesus because his death was the real thing and it did the job once for all.

Discussion Question

When did you get a big job done once and for all?

Something you need to know: Blood and Body

“Why does the writer separate Jesus’ blood (chapter 9) from his body (chapter 10)? What is the distinction? The separation of body and blood means that death has occurred. This is common terminology in Old Testament sacrifices, and is also reflected in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, with the separation between ‘This is my body’, and ‘This ... is ... my blood’ (Luke 22:19–20). In Old Testament sacrifices, such as on the Day of Atonement, it was blood that was sprinkled on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant (Leviticus 16:14–16,18–19). At Mount Sinai, at the covenant-making ceremony, blood was again sprinkled (see Exodus 24:8). Blood represented the power or effect of the sacrifice, its specific application. This idea corresponds with the references in Hebrews to the blood of Christ, which is able to ‘cleanse our consciences’ (see 9:14). If blood means the effect of the sacrifice, what does body mean? The Old Testament use seems to refer to offering, and this is strongly developed in Hebrews, where the offering is the self-offering of Christ, rather than the offering by someone else of an animal. Because Christ’s offering is himself, his body, he is both priest and sacrifice; and the powerful result of his sacrifice is represented in the language of blood. So in chapter 10 the contrast is between animal sacrifices and the Christ’s voluntary sacrifice of himself.”

Adam, P. Hebrews: The Majestic Son. (Aquila Press, 2004), p.84-85 (Kindle Edition).

Brief Recap

What has been the author’s argument in chapter 9 so far leading into this chapter?

Read Hebrews 10:1-4

1. What are some of the points that the author makes about the law and the old covenant sacrifices in verses 1 and 4?

2. What evidence is given in verses 2 and 3 to show that these Old Testament sacrifices weren't sufficient to decisively cleanse the conscience? (See also, Hebrews 9:9, 13-14).



3. In what ways do these verses help give us a better understanding of the whole big picture storyline of the Bible? How might it also deepen our appreciation of the Old Testament?

Read Hebrews 10:5-10

4. How does the author progress his argument about the uniqueness and effectiveness of Christ's greater sacrifice in verses 5-10? Why is Psalm 40:6-8 quoted?

5. According to the author of Hebrews, how have Christians been made holy? (Heb 10:10)



6. When do you find this truth and spiritual reality hardest to believe in your own life?

Note about verse 10

"Note that verse 10 says, 'we have been made holy'. To the writer of Hebrews 'made holy' (or 'sanctified') means 'forgiven', 'given access to God', 'eternally redeemed'. It does not here refer to a gradual change of character (as it often does in our Christian vocabulary) but to a definite change of state as it does in Hebrews 12:14. We commonly speak of 'justification' as the start of our Christian life, and 'sanctification' as our gradual progress in it [our interpretation of Paul]. Hebrews uses 'sanctification' for both. Also note that in verse 10 the word 'will' refers to God's will in verses 7 and 9. Its meaning here is 'purpose' or 'intention'; it is a different word to diatheke [Gk. word for covenant] (see 9:16), which is understood in the sense of a 'last will and testament'."

Adam, P. Hebrews: The Majestic Son. (Aquila Press, 2004), p.86 (Kindle Edition).

Read Hebrews 10:11-18

7. a) What contrast is made here (once again) between the old covenant sacrifices and Christ's sacrifices? (Heb. 10:11-14)

b) How does the author emphasize the 'once for all' characteristic of Christ's sacrifice? (Heb. 10:12-14, see also: Heb. 9:26-28)

8. Who testifies in verse 15? What is his message? How are his words comforting and reassuring to you personally?

9. Why does it matter for our Christian perseverance to trust in the decisive reality of Christ's finished sacrifice? How easy or difficult do you find this to do in practice?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Seven | Don't Shrink Back

Hebrews 10:19–39

Study Big Idea

Don't shrink back but let us rather draw near in faith, hold fast our hope and spur on in love.

Discussion Question

When or where do you feel most confident? When or where do you feel most scared?

Don't Quit

“Do you ever wonder what the theme of the whole Bible is? What's the single concept that holds it all together? There are many possible answers to that question. But arguably, Jeremiah 31:33 captures it pretty well: “And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” In fact, our author already cited this passage earlier in the book (Hebrews 8:10). But that is not the only place in which it occurs. In fact, this concept—in one form or another—recurs throughout the whole Bible (Genesis 17:8; Exodus 29:45; Ezekiel 14:11; Zechariah 8:8; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Indeed, this is the crescendo at the end of the book of Revelation: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (21:3). In short, God desires to be with us. That's the big point of the Bible. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that being near God is a scary place to be. Whenever people come into God's presence, it can be crushing. Remember the story of Isaiah 6: even a holy prophet like Isaiah declares, “Woe is me!” when he encounters the living God. So, drawing near to God is a complex affair. But with Christ's perfect sacrifice paving the way, drawing near is not just a possibility; it's what we are called to do! So, in the next section, Hebrews 10:19-22, our author reminds us again of the wonderful privilege of drawing near to God. Then the rest of the chapter encourages us to live in a way that is worthy of the God who has been so gracious to us—we are to persevere and not to fall away.”

Kruger, M.J. Hebrews For You: Giving You an Anchor for the Soul
God's Word For You (The Good Book Company, 2021), 145-146 (Kindle Edition)

Brief Recap

What have been some of the author's key points to his argument about Christ so far?

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

1. What is the 'therefore' at the start of verse 19 there for? How does it connect with the argument that comes beforehand?

2. a) What are the two grounding truths that the author reminds his audience of before getting to his exhortations in verse 19 and 21? (each beginning: “since...”)

b) Fill out the table below with your observations about the three exhortations that follow.

Verse Reference	The Exhortation - “Let us...”	Basis/Reason:
i) Verse 22		
ii) Verse 23		
iii) Verse 24-25		



3. What are some practical ways you seek to live out these three exhortations in your own life? (Individually and corporately)



4. How are you (and perhaps your family) going at “not giving up meeting together” when it comes to prioritizing the Sunday gather and/or Growth Group? (vs25a) What are some of the obstacles or attitudes that might draw you away? Why?

Read Hebrews 10:26-31

5. a) What stands out to you in this warning? What further questions does it raise?

b) How does it compare to the other warning passages so far in Hebrews? (see also, Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 6:4-8)

6. Why do you think the author includes such severe warnings throughout the letter? What is something we learn about God through this warning passage?

What is the nature of sin threatening the community?

“From a historical perspective, the nature of the sin referred to [in the warning passages of Hebrews] involves reverting to Judaism. The listeners are apparently in danger of returning to a reliance on the cultic structures of the old covenant in Judaism. Although the warning passages of Hebrews describe the sin threatening the community in a number of ways, since there are various facets to it, ultimately it is irreversible apostasy from the living God. It is the utter rejection of an entire position and stance that had once been professed.

This sin is Trinitarian in its scope, for it involves a persistent and culpable refusal to obey the voice of the living God who speaks in his Son and warns from heaven (Heb. 1:1-4; Heb. 12:25). It treats Jesus with utter contempt by crucifying him again, subjecting him to public disgrace (Heb. 6:6), and rejecting his new covenant sacrifice by which the work of atonement was completed (Heb. 10:29). And it arrogantly insults God’s gracious Spirit through whom Christ offered himself to God and who applies the definitive forgiveness of sins to believers (Heb. 10:29). The fact that it is willful, persistent, and committed in view of the knowledge of the truth rules out the possibility that it is due to ignorance (Heb. 10:26). Unlike other sins, offenses, and weaknesses of believers referred to in Hebrews that have been wonderfully atoned for through Jesus’ new covenant sacrifice and high priestly ministry, there is no provision for the sin of apostasy. For those who utterly reject God’s gracious plan of saving people and bringing them to glory “there remains no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26).

In the light of this, the special character of the sin of apostasy must be understood clearly and not confused with other sins and weaknesses of Christians, as has often been the case throughout church history. Since this offense constitutes a total renunciation of everything that is distinctively Christian and which the person had previously professed, it is not the sin of the outsider or the one who is on the edge of church life.

Those who are anxious about having committed this sin, and are troubled that God will not receive them into fellowship with his Son because they believe their sin is too great, are urged by Hebrews to come with boldness to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in their time of need (Heb. 2:18; Heb. 4:14-16).

By contrast, apostates defiantly and deliberately reject the Son of God and his salvation, showing neither anxiety nor concern, since they would feel justified in their determined and fixed resolve.”

Gospel Coalition Article, Jan 9 2012 - Collin Hansen interview with Peter O'Brien
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/warning-passages-ahead/>

Read Hebrews 10:32-39

7. What are a few of the things we learn about the audience of this letter and their previous circumstances in these verses? (Heb 10:32-34)
8. How does the author further exhort and encourage his readers toward perseverance in verses 35-39? What do you find encouraging or challenging in these verses for yourself?
9. Who is someone you can encourage or pray for this week in their Christian perseverance?

Pray in Response

Study Eight | Living by Faith

Hebrews 11:1-12:3

Study Big Idea

Faith takes God at his word, believes his promises & continues the race by looking to Jesus.

Discussion Question

When have you needed a lot of endurance?

Persevering Faith

“We don’t have a dissertation on faith here that is unrelated to the rest of the letter. Faith is introduced because the flip side of apostasy is faith. The author doesn’t ask the readers to look to themselves and to summon up all their energy to persevere until the end. What it means to endure is to keep trusting God until the end. Endurance comes when we look to God for strength and put our trust in his promises. Faith means we put our trust in what God has promised, even if those promises seem impossible to us. Chapter 11 reminds us that we are not the first to take this journey; many have walked this path ahead of us, and thus we are not alone in our journey of faith.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, Hebrews, ed. T. Desmond Alexander,
Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger,
Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 337–338.

Brief Recap

What were one or two of the themes raised by the author leading into this chapter in Hebrews 10:36-39?

Read Hebrews 11:1-7

1. What characteristics of faith are highlighted in verses 1-2? How do these verses introduce the whole chapter?
2. Whose faith is mentioned at the beginning of this list in verse 3? Why do you think the author begins with this first example in light of the introduction? (See also, Genesis 1:1)

3. How do we see faith in action (or otherwise described) in the lives of:

a) Abel (Heb 11:4; see also, Genesis 4:1-12)

b) Enoch (Heb 11:5-6; see also, Genesis 5:21-24)

c) Noah (Heb 11:7; see also, Genesis 6:5-14, 22)



4. In verse 7, Noah was warned about “things not yet seen”. What are some warnings and unseen realities the author has been lifting our eyes to see so far in the letter? How can we keep these realities in focus? How might they shape our attitudes toward God and this world?

5. Group Work: Split into three groups for this next question

a) Read your focus verses together and complete your part of the table below.

Focus Verse	Who is mentioned?	How do they illustrate faith and endurance? On what basis?	Any key verses, notes or OT cross-reference?
Group 1 - Hebrews 11:8-22			
Group 2 - Hebrews 11:23-31			
Group 3 - Hebrews 11:32-40			

b) Group share back: Who were some of the examples highlighted in your section? Were there any key verses or ideas that particularly stood out for your group? Why?



6. How might you summarise the author's main point in Hebrews 11 in a sentence or two?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

7. How is the Christian life described in verses 1-2? What hindrances or entanglements need to be thrown off in your own race of faith at the moment?



8. What are some of the practical habits in your life that help you fix your eyes on Jesus and what he's done for us to keep persevering as a Christian?

9. What has been one key take-away or personal reflection from this study for you?

Pray in Response

Study Nine | Our Great Shepherd

Hebrews 12:4–13:25

Study Big Idea

Receive your Father's discipline for holiness and keep looking for the city to come.

Discussion Question

When did you need to be disciplined by one of your parents in childhood?

Receive God's Discipline:

“The writer now further encourages his readers: ‘In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood’. The readers of Hebrews had not suffered to the point of shedding blood, as did Jesus and some of the believers mentioned in chapter 11. Then he gives yet another reason for perseverance—God’s love is received in the discipline of hardship. When things go wrong and we are frustrated, our expectation is that it is a sign of God’s anger towards us or his neglect of us. Not so, says the writer, quoting Proverbs 3:11–12: even persecution is a sign of God’s loving perseverance with us.”

Adam, P. Hebrews: The Majestic Son. (Aquila Press, 2004), p.109 (Kindle Edition).

Brief Recap

What has the author just been exhorting his readers to do in Hebrews 12:1-3?

Read Hebrews 12:4-29

1. What perspective does the author want Christians to have when it comes to enduring hardship in verses 1-13? What is the overall purpose of such discipline?
2. a) What exhortation and warning is given in verses 14-17? Why do you think Esau is given as a negative example here? (See also, Genesis 25:24-34)

b) (Optional): When or where in your life do you find it more challenging to pursue peace with others? What active steps might you be able to take to strive for peace?



3. What contrast is made in verses 18-28? How should this passage shape the way we think about worship? What is described as 'better' for the Christian here? (See also, Gen. 4:1-12)

4. What do we learn about God and his character throughout chapter 12? How should this shape our own attitudes and the way we respond to him?

Read Hebrews 13:1-25



5. a) What are a few of the practical exhortations mentioned in verses 1-3?


b) How are Christians called to relate to one another in verse 1? Are you aware of any present opportunities to show practical love to a brother or sister at church?

c) (Optional) What priority do you give to showing hospitality toward others in your life? Does your group have any wisdom or practical advice about how to grow in being hospitable?

6. What two areas of life are Christians to be especially self-watchful of? (13:4-6) Why so?

7. How are we called to relate to our Christian leaders in this passage? Why is this relationship mutually important? (Heb. 13:7-9, 17-19, see also: Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2-3)

8. (Optional) When are you tempted to feel embarrassed or ridiculed for being a Christian? How might verses 11-15 serve to encourage you to endure faithfully in such times?

-  9. How have you been personally encouraged or challenged as we've worked through this series? Are there any parts of Hebrews that you want to go back and reflect further on?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

