

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

HEBREWS

For

Randy Yaeger, My Father in the Faith.

Thank you for always fixing my eyes on Jesus.

HEBREWS

Introduction

Draw Near to God

Christ is greater. Christ is superior. Christ is greater than. When I began this study of Hebrews, I knew this was the key theme. Every commentary, every expository sermon series, and every person I talked to accentuated this as the main point of Hebrews. Indeed, they were right. The key point of Hebrews is that Christ is greater. Yet, after a half year of in-depth study into Hebrews, I have come to realize that the point of Hebrews is not the purpose of Hebrews. The purpose of Hebrews is to encourage the Christian audience to draw near to God with confidence and not fall back into their Jewish traditions or social pressures.

“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (4:16).

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (10:22).

Likewise, the final outstanding vision of the present mountain of God carries the same draw near language (Gk. proserxomai) that is often overlooked. Rather than the mountain of the Old Covenant that terrified the people, *“you have not come to a mountain that can be touched...”* (12:18), the author of Hebrews urges the audience to draw near to a new mountain.

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

Draw near to God. I have a toddler in my house. Full-blown toddler. Her favorite thing to do is the opposite of whatever Dad tells her to do. The other day we were playing in the afternoon sun. She was running and giggling and delighted. I noticed that one of the fake shoe laces on her shoes had come untied and I was worried about her tripping as she’s apt to do. I called her to me. She just looked at me and laughed. It was innocent enough. Who would want to run to their dad when there are all these fun things to do. I called again and reached out to grab her as she ran by. She pulled away and giggled with delight. It had become a game now. I called in a more serious tone this time. She paused and looked at me. Then she intentionally ran directly away from me toward the swings.

I think for many of us this describes perfectly our relationship with the Father. There is no disdain or hatred of God. We hear him calling. We know his face, know his voice. We should come to him. Yet, there are so many fun things to do out here. So many swings and slides. It’s what all the other kids are doing too. Playfulness without consequence.

Shortly after running away from me, my daughter fell hard on her face. The shoe laces. Dad is so smart sometimes. All of a sudden dad was needed. She came running to me. Crying on my shoulder and wanting me to kiss it.

HEBREWS



This is where we find the audience of Hebrews as well. Whatever troubling times have found them, the author calls upon them to turn toward God. In the midst of their struggles, draw near to God. Find healing for the hurt at the throne of grace.

“Let your heart be strengthened by grace” (13:9).

There is a simplicity and a necessity to drawing near to God that we need to hear today. Our relationship with God is as simple as drawing near to him. He has done all of the work through Jesus that is necessary. The human condition has been redeemed and given eternal magnificence in Jesus. We share in the same inheritance as the firstborn of God. We have been sprinkled with the atoning blood of the sacrifice in the heavenly tabernacle. We don’t have to accomplish anything or do anything to merit our standing. We are simply called to draw near to God.

Yet, this simple call is still necessary for us today. In a culture that says live for the moment or don’t worry about the destination, just enjoy the journey, we are reminded that we are headed somewhere. We are, in fact, drawing closer to something or someone.

What are you drawing near to today? Graduation? Vacation? Being a parent? Empty nesting? Retirement? Death?

Our life in Christ is as simple as this: we are either drawing near to God or falling away from God.

How the Notes Work

1. Read the text! Before reading the notes, spend serious time engaging on your own with the word for that week. Each week’s text is listed in the upper right corner.
2. Consider the notes as a helpful guide through the text rather than a commentary on the text. We will try to highlight themes, background information, original language points, and other subtleties that are often overlooked. The goal is not to tell you what the text says but to allow the living and active Word of God to crystalize in your own thoughts.
3. The front page of the notes each week will have an introduction and devotional thought. The introduction is a broad view of the text in a precise paragraph. The devotional thoughts aren’t intended to be deep or profound but encouraging, convicting, or thought-provoking.
4. The back page of the notes have a zoom out to zoom in bar on the left side as seen on this page. The zoom out area covers background and themes. The zoom in moves further into the precise meaning of words and text notes.
5. It is *vital* that we study the Word of God alongside others. The discussion guide is where the thoughts begin to hit practice and transformation. In a small group we grow together, so, “let us not give up meeting together!”

The Gritty God

Hebrews offers us a different glimpse of God than other places in scripture. On the farm where I grew up the hills were filled with hardwood trees. One of my favorite things to do was watch how the hills changed through the day as the sun ran across the autumn sky. The trees never changed, the hills never changed, but just the movement of light gave a different perspective. So it is with God. The author of Hebrews doesn't show a different God, but just shines the light subtly different enough to reveal some nuances that we don't often see otherwise.

For example, only in Hebrews is Jesus referred to as the High Priest. Throughout Paul's writings he is the sacrifice, but only in Hebrews is he also the one who offers the sacrifice. The light moves just slightly to reveal this different aspect of God in Christ.

Still there is a view of God that stands out to me all the more as I read Hebrews. One of my favorite movies, in the original and remake, is True Grit. It tells the story of a young girl setting out to avenge her father's death when she has no standing or status in society. She looks for a man to help her who will get the job done despite the odds. She finds this man in Rooster Gogburn. When she meets him, she simply says, "they tell me you're a man of true grit."

This quote might be a little lost in today's context as we think of gritty as dirty or maybe like sandpaper. Yet, what the girl means is something different. The definition provided by Power Thesaurus is useful, "Being a gritty person means that the one tends to stick to their goals despite numerous issues, problems, setbacks and failures. The person has firmness of mind and unyielding courage. The synonyms of true grit are: fortitude, determination, spunk, backbone, bottom, courage."

When I read through Hebrews and I see Jesus as he perfectly reveals God I want to look at him in the eyes, shake his hand firmly and say, "You are a man of True Grit."

"We... see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered," (2:9-10).

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin," (4:14-15).

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 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," (5:7-9).

HEBREWS



Not only does Hebrews suggest that God is gritty, but that God's church needs the same character displayed in Jesus. We need a little true grit. I actually think that the word translated "faith" (Gk. pistos) carries the idea of true grit. Think of all the people described in Hebrews eleven from Abraham to Rahab. They all stuck to their God despite the setbacks. They were all gritty. Listen to how the author finishes this chapter on faith,

"what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect," (11:32-40).

We also talk about the great miracles that these heroes of faith accomplished through God, but we often miss that it is their gritty faith that God is applauding. It is their sticktoitiveness. That's what makes the opening lines of Hebrews 12 that immediately follows this passages so powerful.

"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 true grit (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," (12:1-3).

We see the gritty faithfulness of God in Jesus for us. He inspires us to carry on, to have some backbone, to persevere!

We are reminded, *"We do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved," (10:39).* We need a little true grit like God has in our churches today.

Sources

I am greatly indebted to a number of sources, many of which I quote but some of which simply provided unquoted context and discussion for each week's text. The following resources were helpful and used in the notes:

Bateman IV, Herbert W. *Charts on the Book of Hebrews (Kregel Charts of the Bible)*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012.

Bauckham, Richard, Daniel Driver, et al. *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Gundry, Robert H. *Commentary on Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Guthrie, George "Hebrews." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

DeSilva, David. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans: Kindle Edition, 2000.

Ellingworth, Paul. *Hebrews (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.

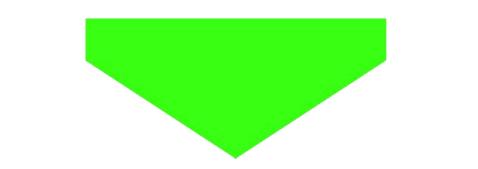
Hagner, Donald. *Hebrews (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)*. Baker Books: Kindle Edition, 2011.

Lane, William L. *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment*. Vancouver: Regent Publishing, 2004.

Thompson, James W. *Hebrews (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament)*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

Wright, N. T. *Hebrews for Everyone (The New Testament for Everyone)*. Westminster John Knox Press: Kindle Edition, 2011.

HEBREWS



In any great study of a book of the Bible there is sadness when it comes to completion. As the final words are read and contemplated the heart sinks a bit like eating the last bite of a great meal. It is the richness that the Word of God brings in providing strength, conviction, and renewal to the Spiritual life. It is even more melancholy when it coincides with the final Sunday as the full time minister at a church after years of ministry. In the same way that the Word of God brings strength, conviction, and renewal, so the church offers the same. I am eternally grateful for the South Hills Church of Christ in Helena, MT for caring for me and my family during our years there. You are the reason this study exists and, more importantly, you are the reason that it was so vitally impactful on my life during these tumultuous times. I will miss immensely our time study and discussing the Bible together. Someday, we will all know who the author truly was!

In Christ,

Brandon Moore

May 19, 2019

HEBREWS



Reading Schedule



Hebrews 1:1-4	Hebrews 8:1-13
Hebrews 1:5-14	Hebrews 9:1-15
Hebrews 2:1-4	Hebrews 9:16-28
Hebrews 2:5-18	Hebrews 10:1-18
Hebrews 3:1-6	Hebrews 10:19-25
Hebrews 3:7-19	Hebrews 10:26-39
Hebrews 4:1-11	Hebrews 11:1-40
Hebrews 4:12-13	Hebrews 12:1-3
Hebrews 4:14 - 16	Hebrews 12:4-13
Hebrews 5:1-10	Hebrews 12:14-17
Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3	Hebrews 12:18-29
Hebrews 6:4-12	Hebrews 13:1-6
Hebrews 6:13-20	Hebrews 13:7-17
Hebrews 7:1-22	Hebrews 13:18-25
Hebrews 7:23-28	

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
1:1-4

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

The introduction of Hebrews immediately invites engagement by intricately initiating the immense motif of inheritance found only in the incarnation of Immanuel. It is quickly evident that this is no basic letter. Rather, the unknown author has carefully crafted a sermon based in rich scriptural study and ancient Greek rhetoric. There are at least 30 direct quotations and 50 clear allusions to the OT in Hebrews. Nearly all of these quotations are taken from the LXX (Septuagint), which is the Greek translation of the OT. In fact, the entire book of Hebrews might be summarized as a Christological commentary on the OT. As Stephen Voorwinde reflects, "The writer to the Hebrews had a mind that was marinated in the OT... There is hardly a verse where the OT is not quoted, summarized, paraphrased or hinted at in some way."¹ Yet, it is not only this knowledge of Hebrew Scripture, but also the author's mastery of Greek language and style that draws us in. The author refers to the work as a "word of exhortation" (13:22). This identical phrase is used in Acts 13:15 to refer to a synagogue sermon, which contained an exempla to prove authority, conclusion based upon scriptural interpretation, and exhortation of application.² Hebrews carefully carries this structure, which appears to have been a staple of Greek rhetoric. Likewise, Hebrews offers the most advanced use of the Greek language in the New Testament. For example, the opening verse bounces in alliteration with the letter "P" used in 3 of the first 4 words. Listen attentively.

Devotional Thought:

Recently, my eighteen month old daughter was playing outside. When the time came to go in, I hollered for her attention but she just ignored me, wanting to keep playing. I waited a bit, soaking up the summer sun, and then got her attention this time by asking if she wanted to go inside for a snack. There was no urgency to my request, nor did I go to any great lengths to get her attention. Now, if a tornado had been coming our way I would have sprinted to her, yelled for her attention the entire way, swooped her up in my arms, and carried her to safety. The nature of the need determines the extent and urgency of my desire to speak to her and get her attention. The author of Hebrews reminds us that God has spoken to "our ancestors... at many times and in various ways" (1:1). We worship a God who longs to speak to us. So much so, that when we did not hear through the prophets or even the creation, he did not give up trying to speak to us. The urgency and need of what he had to say was so real that he went to the greatest lengths possible to get our attention. God swooped down in the incarnation of his own Son to speak to us. Just as Moses would enter into the tent of God's glory in the wilderness and hear the word of the Lord, so in our encounters with Jesus we not only hear but fully, relationally encounter the "radiance of God's glory" (1:3). In the midst of a world filled with marketing and social media constantly vying for attention, it might be beneficial for us to listen to the only one who truly backed their voice with action. What might God have to say through Jesus to us today?

Memory Verse of the Week

"THE SON IS THE RADIANCE OF GOD'S GLORY AND THE EXACT REPRESENTATION OF HIS BEING, SUSTAINING ALL THINGS BY HIS POWERFUL WORD."

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Biblical Perspective of Christology

The author of Hebrews inaugurates his sermon with towering Christological claims formed through OT allusions, matched only by the opening of the Gospel of John. In Greek, Hebrews 1:1-4 forms one sentence in which the author makes nine claims concerning the identity of Jesus. It would be worthwhile to notice and draw specific attention to all nine in your study. For the sake of brevity, we will focus on two.

The Radiance of God's Glory - This phrase captures a massive biblical motif thoroughly developed initially in Exodus. The Greek word for glory is “doxa,” which the LXX uses to translate the Hebrew word “kabod.” This is the primary word used to describe God’s intimate presence throughout the OT. Most notably, the original and greatest prophet in Hebrew tradition, Moses, was able to hear God’s glory though he could not see it (Exodus 34:7). To receive prophetic word from God, Moses would enter into the tabernacle where he would hear God’s glory. Yet, at certain times God’s glory was so present that Moses was unable to enter it (Exodus 40:35). Though Moses provided a strong prophetic word from his experience in hearing God’s glory, he fails in comparison to Jesus who *is the radiance* God’s glory. Through Christ, all people can now intimately and relationally know God’s doxa, kabod, glory.

The Wisdom of God - Underlying the entire opening stanza is a motif of divine wisdom. In the OT, Divine Wisdom was first personified in Proverbs. This personification was expounded in the Deuterocanonical book *The Wisdom of Solomon* that was included within the LXX, which is the primary OT used by the author of Hebrews. Five Divine Wisdom motifs are directly attributed to Jesus in the opening of Hebrews: creator (Prov. 8:27-30; Wis. 9:2, 9), radiance of God’s glory (Wis. 7:15-26), image of God (Wis. 7:26b), sustains creation (7:27; 8:1), sits at the right hand of God (Wis. 9:4, 10).³ This is not to say that wisdom is held in the same regard as Christ. Rather, like God’s glory, Jesus embodies fully all of the divine attributes of wisdom.

Zoom Out: Themes in Hebrews

Not only do the opening words of Hebrews set the tone for the book, but they also serve to introduce at least four prevalent themes that will be further expounded. First, the author begins with the concept of God’s speech and word. He says, “God spoke” (1:1), “he has spoken” (1:2), and then refers to Jesus upholding creation through “his powerful word” (1:3). This theme is demonstrated with 36 direct OT quotations wherein God speaks through the Prophets. It is also specifically addressed or referenced in 2:1-4; 3:5; 4:8, 12-13; 5:12; 6:5; 11:4, 13; 12:24-29. Second, the author intentionally draws out the atoning work of Christ’s sacrificial death with the phrase “after he had provided purification” (1:3). The author gives this theme considerable attention when addressing the day of atonement in 9:1-10:18. Third, Jesus not only ascended to the Father, he “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (1:3). This theme recurs when discussing Jesus’ supremacy over angels (1:13), role as high priest (8:1), sacrificial offering (10:12), and perfecter of faith (12:22-23). Fourth, the theme of “better than” (1:4) or “superior” can be found throughout the letter (6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34, 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24). Actually, some scholars argue that it is the central theme throughout the entire book. Not only is Jesus superior to the prophets (1:1-3), angels (1:4-2:18), Moses (3:1-6), Joshua (4:1-10), and the Aaronites (5:1-12:29), but through Jesus, God has mediated and guaranteed a better covenant (7:22; 8:6) providing better access to God (7:19) and a better inheritance (10:34).

Zoom In: Text Notes

1:1 - “At many times and in various ways,” *Polumeros kai polutropos*. This three word phrase is actually the opening phrase in the book of Hebrews meaning in many times and in many ways. The fourth word, *palai*, means in the past. Thus, three of the first four words start with P. Sadly, the poetic impact of this opening phrase is absent and difficult to recreate in English translations. This same alliteration is used Maximus Tyrius 17:7.

1:2 - “his son,” *uiw*. The author does not intend to use the word “son” as a formulaic title for Jesus. Rather, he is emphasizing that sonship is the vehicle with which God now wants to communicate with his people in contrast to the prophets or any stand-in spokesperson. Though the prophets at times were called to enact the message God gave them to deliver, only the son can fully embody this message in his being the father’s son.

1:2 - “he made the universe,” *epoiesen tous aionas*. Literally, “he made the ages.” Though this word is often translated temporally, “ages,” it can also carry a spatial idea, “universe.”

1:3 - “he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” This is an allusion to Psalm 110, which is quoted often in Hebrews (1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21).

¹ Stephen Voorwinde, “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament” *Vox Reforma* 73 (2007): 60.

² Lawrence Wills, “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity” *The Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 277-299.

³ Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Charts on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 116.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
1:1-4

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is one way that you are like your dad?

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

Scripture Questions:

In what ways has God spoken to his people in the past?

Based on this passage, what are the ways that Jesus the Son is like his Father?

If this passage is an introduction, then what do you expect the rest of Hebrews will discuss?

Living Questions:

How do we sometimes wrongly describe Jesus the Son as different than God the Father?

What are some qualities of Jesus that you truly admire?

How does the incarnation change the way we think about God speaking to us?

Memory Verse of the Week

“THE SON IS THE RADIANCE OF GOD’S GLORY AND THE EXACT REPRESENTATION OF HIS BEING, SUSTAINING ALL THINGS BY HIS POWERFUL WORD.”

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 1:5-14

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

After introducing the thesis and main point of his sermon in 1:1-4, the author immediately moves to authoritatively supporting his argument about the supremacy of Jesus by citing seven OT texts (Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14; Deut 32:43 LXX; Ps 104:4; 45:6-7; 102:25-27; 110:1). The author not only shows his mastery of the Jewish Bible, but more subtly reveals his approach to interpreting these texts in light of the glorification of Jesus. As the complete and perfect expression of God (1:2-3), Jesus serves as the interpretive lens by which the entire revelation from God is to now be understood. Thus, the author reinterprets a series of formative OT texts as now speaking directly about Jesus. For example, Psalm 45:6-7 was initially a psalm of the director of music about the king of Israel. Yet, by adding the introduction in 1:8, "but about the Son he says," the author now applies those verses specifically to Jesus. Likewise, the Davidic Psalm 110, the most quoted OT text in Hebrews, is used as the climax of this passage. The author proposes the opening lines are not about David but about Jesus. This form of OT interpretation can be difficult to our modern sensibilities and training that often teaches us to only read a text in its historical or literary context. Yet, it was common for early Christians to interpret OT texts through the supreme context of Jesus. Likewise, this methodology supports the author's overall emphasis in Hebrews. Why would Jewish Christians return to their old way of life in Judaism, if all of the Jewish writings are fulfilled in the person of Jesus?

Devotional Thought:

This morning as I looked into the mirror I noticed something protruding from the left side of my head. It glimmered silver. Another grey hair marked another year of change in our house. We had lost a grandparent and gained a new baby. We had welcomed a new sister and said goodbye to an old friend. Family had moved closer. Yet, others seemed further away than ever before. The old adage holds true: nothing stays the same. Yet, Hebrews reminds us in the opening chapter, God is different than us. God is immutable. He is unchanging. Actually, the author quotes Ps 102 to contrast the changing nature of all created beings with the eternal nature of God. The creation is like a garment that can be worn out, destroyed, and changed. God never does. This divide between changing and unchanging is one reason the incarnation is necessary. See, we often bemoan the fact that everything changes. Yet, we *need* change. Change means redemption. It means we have the ability to be transformed and reborn. Change means we can be grafted into God's family and gain the inheritance of salvation. God in his holiness needs no growth or gain. He does not change because he does not need to change. In contrast, we have to change or we will die. Without change we are left desolate to our own destruction and trapped in the garments of perishing mortality. In Christ, God enters into our changing nature. In this nature, he dies, is resurrected, and glorified. He is anointed. He is seated at the right hand of God and all enemies are placed under his feet. In each case, Christ changes, and so do we.

Memory Verse of the Week

"YOUR THRONE, O GOD, WILL LAST FOR EVER AND EVER;
A SCEPTER OF JUSTICE WILL BE THE SCEPTER OF YOUR KINGDOM."

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Angels in First Century Judaism

Angels play an important, though not prominent, role in the Bible. Israel's understanding of angels portrays a development through the centuries. During the intertestamental period (between the time of the OT and NT), angels take on special significance and by the time of the NT have roles unknown in early biblical literature.

Angels in the OT - In Genesis, angels are initially portrayed as messengers of God's word (Gen 16:11; 22:11; 31:11). In the rest of OT, they also serve to intervene on behalf of humans at important times (Gen 48:16; Exod 23:20-23; 33:2). In later poetic literature, the angels are portrayed as part of the divine assembly often gathered around the throne of God in worship (Ps 103:20-21; 148:2; Isa 6:1-3). They also appear as the celestial army used to thwart the enemies of Israel (Ps 68:17-18; 2 Kings 6:15-17).

Angels in Intertestamental and First Century Judaism - David DeSilva wonderfully portrays the importance of angels during the time that Hebrews was written, "Particularly relevant for Hebrews, however, is the growth of the function of angels as mediators. Angels stand closer to the presence of God than human beings. In particular, the archangels are thought to stand in God's very presence (Tob. 12:15; T Levi 3:4-8; Luke 1:19; Rev. 4:5; 8:2), hence they come to be known as "angels of the presence" (Jub. 2:2, 18; 1QH 14:13; 1Q28b 4:25-26). These creatures are well placed to secure God's favor for those clients further removed from God's household. They direct the prayers of the righteous to God (Tob. 12:12; 1 Enoch 9:1-11; Rev. 8:3-4; implied in Matt. 18:10?), and their priestly functions are augmented as the tendency increases to envision God's abode as a heavenly temple (cf. 1 Enoch 14; 4Q400)."¹

Some take the focus on angels in this text to be a backhanded condemnation of the audience's over exuberance with angels. Yet, this seems unlikely as the author wouldn't begin a homily by alienating his audience and there is actually no textual evidence to support this claim. Rather, the author is utilizing standard Greek rhetorical technique in demonstrating Jesus' superiority over the angels.

Zoom Out: Septuagint

The Septuagint, referred to by the letters LXX, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament written between the 3rd and 2nd century BC. It is traditionally believed to have been translated for the library of Ptolemy II, the king of Egypt. Legend contends, "King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: 'Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher.' God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did."² The LXX is the primary source for the OT quotations used in Hebrews as was common during that time period.

Zoom In: Synkrisis

Synkrisis is an ancient rhetorical technique developed by the Greek philosophers. It is a figure of speech in which different things or persons are compared. Comparisons could be between the good and better, the bad with worse, or the good with bad. James Thompson notes, "Exercises in synkrisis were part of the curriculum of teenage students of rhetoric. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, a comparison of Greek and Roman leaders, was a major example of extended *synkrisis*."³ This is the primary technique used by the author of Hebrews who routinely compares Christ with elements of the OT. In this week's text, Jesus is compared with angels. Though the angels are good, Jesus is better, as the author will continue to demonstrate through chapter two in a variety of ways.

Zoom In: Text Notes

1:5, 13 - "To which of the angels did God ever say" *tini gar eipen pote ton aggelon* (1:5), *pros tiva de ton aggelon eireken pote* (1:13). Though the phrases in 1:5 and 13 are not identical they are tightly related in word choice and translated identically in our English version to show the similarity. They serve as an "inclusio" around the chosen quotes to show them as all related. Through these seven points the author is accentuating that the angels have never had the status Jesus, nor humanity, has in relationship to God.

1:6 - "Let all God's angels worship him." The exact source for this quote is unknown. Two sources are likely. First, Deut 32:43 in the LXX includes "let all the angels worship him." This is not included in English translations not based on the LXX. Similarly, Ps 97:7 in the LXX reads "let all his angels worship him." Though once again this rendering is not in English translations. Though neither are quoted verbatim in the original language, either source for this quote is probable.

¹ David deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 97.

² *Tractate Megillah*, 9.

³ James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 13.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
1:5-14

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is your favorite song that has the word angel in it? Sing it if you need to.

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

Scripture Questions:

In what ways does the author of Hebrews portray Jesus as superior to the Angels?

Based on this passage, what relationship do we as humans have with angels?

Why do you think the author of Hebrews quotes so many OT passages early in this sermon?

Living Questions:

How would you describe the way we think about angels currently? Is this biblical? Why or why not?

Have you ever met an angel or had an encounter with an angel?

What is the proper way for Christians to interpret and understand the OT in light of the revelation of Jesus?

Memory Verse of the Week

“YOUR THRONE, O GOD, WILL LAST FOR EVER AND EVER;
A SCEPTER OF JUSTICE WILL BE THE SCEPTER OF YOUR KINGDOM.”

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 2:1-4

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

Don't allow the chapter break to distract from the flow of the sermon that is being presented. In this week's text, the author moves into his first point of exhortation following his introductory remarks and scriptural support. This is not a passing aside. Rather, the author has moved into one of the primary concerns of his homily. He writes, "Therefore, we must give increasing attention to what we have heard so that we don't drift away" (2:1). It appears that after years of following the way of Christ, the audience is begin to slide or slip away. With the significant amount of Jewish language, it appears that they are slipping back into life in Judaism. Yet, it might not be as simple as that. Larger society, Greek culture, and Roman political life likely influenced the audience as well. As members of a minority movement, over time it became difficult to stay faithful to the Way. Therefore, the author points to Christ as greater than all things to remind them that the Way is the best way! Not only that, but there are real consequences for those who ignore so great a salvation. Slipping away is not inconsequential. It is not that the entire church is reverting, but, as deSilva rightly points out, "Hebrews surely does not address a whole assembly that is contemplating falling away. Many in the congregation are no doubt as committed to the confession and hope as the author himself, and indeed his strategy depends on having a solid core of believers who will encourage the wavering, warn those who are being deceived by sin, and assist those who are in danger of stopping short of the prize."¹

Devotional Thought:

I have a friend who has a pasture along a lake near town. Recently as we were out walking on his property, he complained that he was losing more and more of his pasture to the lake. The lake was shallow and every winter would freeze completely over. The slow compression of the ice would dig into the shoreline disrupting the soil, which was then carried into the lake as the ice melted. Not a dramatic flood or monstrous blizzard, but a methodical changing of the seasons. We often thinking of someone losing their faith as dramatic, made for the movies, but more often it seems that disciples slip away through the years of changing seasons. The shoreline of our commitment slowly erodes away as bit by bit the ice of our society digs into us. So how do we reclaim our ground? How do we cultivate a spiritual life of good pasture? Throughout Hebrews the author will offer us a few different suggestions. In this passage, the first such suggestion is listen again to what has been announced and confirmed. This happens on four levels. First, salvation has been announced through the coming of Jesus; his death, burial, resurrection, and glorification in which we first put our hope. Second, the witness of the apostles and disciples confirms this salvation in their testimony and living. Third, the message is confirmed by the ongoing testimony of signs, wonders, and miracles which we have read about and experienced in our own lives personally. Finally, the church's abundance of Spirit-filled disciples all serving in different ways at different times reminds us that God's salvation will keeps us firm to the end.

Memory Verse of the Week

"WE MUST PAY THE MOST CAREFUL ATTENTION, THEREFORE,
TO WHAT WE HAVE HEARD, SO THAT WE DO NOT DRIFT AWAY."

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Message Spoken through the Angels

The author contends that the “message spoken through the angels was binding.” It was so binding that “every violation and disobedience receives its just punishment.” What message is the author referring to here? There are two possible answers to this question. *First*, in its most simple form, this could refer to any message that an angel in the OT delivered to a human. An angel’s primary responsibility was to deliver messages from God to humans in the OT. For example, in Numbers 22, Balaam is stopped by an angel who is opposing his mission as against God. The angels tells Balaam specifically that if he had tried to keep going he would have been killed by the Angels (Num 22:33). Thus, the message of the angel was binding and every disobedience would receive its punishment. Though this view has obvious merit, it should be noted that it does not relate to the seven OT quotations used in the first chapter. *Second*, there was a prevalent belief in Judaism that the Torah, or law, was given to Moses through the angels, who served as a mediator. For example, Paul says specifically in Galatians 3:19, “the law was given through angels.” See also Psalm 68:17-18; Acts 7:38, 53. Similarly, the Jewish historical Josephus says, “we have learned from God the most excellent of our doctrines, the most holy part of our law, by angels or ambassadors.”²

Zoom Out: Hapax Legomena

Hapax Legomena is a Greek word that means “a thing said once.” It refers to a word that is only used once in a corpus of writing. Specifically, for our context it refers to a word that is only used one time within the New Testament. These words are notable because they can be difficult to translate. The more a word is used in context the more its meaning is clarified. So when a word is only used once it can be difficult to nail down a specific meaning. Often extrabiblical sources are needed to clarify a meaning though these works can span centuries. For example, in Hebrews 2:1 the author uses the word *pararrew*, which is often translated “drift away” or “slip away.” This is the only use of this word in the NT, but it does occur in at least two other Greek sources. Proverbs 3:21 in the LXX reads, “My son, don’t *break away*,” and Sophocles in *Philoctetes* says, “it *slips* my mind.” The root of the word seems to denote an idea of slipping away, which fits well with the author’s exhortation. Hebrews has more *hapax legomena* than any other NT book, which demonstrates well the advanced level of language and grammar contained in this work.

Zoom In: Nautical Imagery

Interestingly enough, Hebrews is flush with nautical terms used symbolically to convey deep imagery in the audience’s imagination. These begin in 2:1 with two words, *prosexw*, “to fasten an anchor,” and *pararrew*, “drift away.” The first is often translated “pay close attention to,” but in its root is a nautical expression. Later, the author will call on the church to “hold fast” (*katexw*, 3:6, 14), a word that is specifically used in Acts 27:40 in a nautical context. Likewise, Christians have an “anchor,” (*ankuran*, 6:19, see Acts 27:29, 30, 40) so that they won’t be “carried away” (*parapherw*, 13:9). Also they are encouraged to not “throw overboard” (*apoballw*, 10:35) their confidence in God. This nautical imagery shouldn’t be surprising as many major communities of Christian faith were located in port cities such as Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, etc. More notably though is that the author displays a style of rhetorical and OT exegesis initiated in Alexandria of Egypt. Alexandria was and continues to be the most notable seaport on the mouth of the Nile River. It is not difficult to imagine the author of Hebrews working on his masterful sermon while gazing out across the Mediterranean Sea watching the ships come into port after months of navigating their treacherous journey.

Zoom In: Text Notes

2:1 - “careful,” *perissoteros*. This word is more often translated “more abundantly” or “in greater degree.” There are two interesting notes for why the author intentionally chooses this word to transition his first block of scripture and theology into his first words of application and exhortation. First, one of the central motifs in Hebrews is that Jesus is “greater than.” It shouldn’t be surprising then that the other choice is a word that means “in greater degree” to introduce his first exhortation. Second, the only other use of this word in Hebrews occurs in 13:19 where the author is making his closing remarks requesting the church’s prayer.

2:4 - “gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed,” *pneumatos agiou merismois*. Literally, “apportionments (distributions) of the Holy Spirit.” The word “gifts” does not technically appear in this phrase though most modern translations include it as being alluded to by the author.

¹ David deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 97.

² Josephus, *Antiq.*, 15.5.3.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
3:1-6

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is your current role in your household?

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

Scripture Questions:

What are the similarities and differences between Moses' and Jesus' role in the household of God?

This is the only place in the NT where Jesus is called an apostle. What does this title or word mean and how does that fit within the larger point of Hebrews?

The author quotes Numbers 12 twice in this passage. How does Numbers 12:1-8 serve as background to this passage?

Living Questions:

What are the two things Christians are called to do in this passage and why are they important?

What is our role in the household of God and how does that help us in the way we think about church?

Why is the incarnation of Jesus important for your Christian walk?

Memory Verse of the Week

CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS THE SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE. AND WE ARE HIS HOUSE, IF INDEED WE HOLD FIRMLY TO OUR CONFIDENCE AND THE HOPE IN WHICH WE GLORY.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
2:5-18

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

It is easy to get distracted by the detail of this spectacular text, but in doing so the reader often misses the overarching point: though Jesus is human, he is still greater than the angels. The author has been leading to this argument since the first chapter and finally reaches his conclusion through the adaptation of Psalm 8:4-6. The audience appears to struggle with the idea that Jesus as a human could be superior to the angels. This passage demonstrates the importance and necessity of the incarnation. Though Jesus was superior to the angels, he took on the nature of humanity in order that through his death, resurrection, and glorification, he could bring "many sons and daughters to glory" (2:10). Not only does Jesus become superior to the angels through his faithfulness to the Father, but he elevates the human condition of those who are also faithful to the Father. This is the main thesis of the book of Hebrews. Through his faithfulness, Christ is made superior, and this superiority elevates the condition of faithful humanity. In other words, everything that happens to Jesus has an effect on us. As Christ experiences death, he experiences death for us (2:9). As Christ is glorified, so we share in his glorification (2:10). As Christ is honored as the firstborn son, so we are honored as family (2:11, 13). As Christ is made holy, so we are made holy (2:11). As Christ defeats death, so death is defeated for us (2:14). As Christ is the high priest offering atonement, so we receive atonement for sin (2:17). As Christ was tempted, so he is able to help us in temptation (2:18). As Christ is, so are we.

Devotional Thought:

As I stood in Jimmy John's today I saw a sign that read, "If you do the things you need to do when you need to do them then someday you can do the things you want to do when you want to do them." Why do we struggle so much to do the things we need to do when we need to do them? I was talking to a friend the other day who said one of her biggest spiritual struggles was doing what she needed to do after somebody told her she needed to do it. If nobody told her she needed to do it, she usually had no problem doing it, but as soon as someone told her to do it, she would put it off till the last possible moment. If that's not true insight into the human condition I don't know what is! One of the few motivating emotions stronger than laziness is hubris. Thus, I was struck this week by the author's statement that Jesus "had to be made like them" (2:17). The word translated "he had" literally means "he was obligated" and is often used to describe money owed to another. It is used to describe the obligation of Christians in nearly every use in the NT (Eph 5:28; 2 Thes 2:13; et al.) Yet, the author of Hebrews says Jesus was obligated to take on our humanity in order that he might be our high priest and make atonement. When confronted with what he needed to do, Jesus did not piddle or procrastinate. He set aside all hubris and took on the nature of flesh. He did what needed to be done when it needed to be done, so he could do what we wanted to do when he wanted to. What did he *want* to do? He wants to glorify the Father, and bring many sons and daughters to glory with him.

Memory Verse of the Week

"BECAUSE HE HIMSELF SUFFERED WHEN HE WAS TEMPTED,
HE IS ABLE TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE BEING TEMPTED."

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Christology of Suffering

In Biblical perspective, the anointed messiah of God has always been called to suffer. Isaiah 53 portrays a suffering servant who stands on behalf of Israel though they have rejected him as an outcast. Likewise, Jesus himself predicts his own suffering as a necessity in his earthly ministry (Mark 10:45). The NT authors describe Jesus as suffering for his people on his way to glory (Rom 15:20; 1 Peter 2:21-25; Acts 8:32-33). Hebrews joins this consistent testimony about the necessity of Jesus' suffering towards glory (2:10). This passage of Hebrews does offer three interesting points to a biblical Christology of suffering. First, though Christ offers himself as a substitute for our sin through his suffering, he does not obliterate suffering from the lives of Christians. Rather, Jesus suffered as the initiator or pioneer (see text below) of salvation on his way to glory (2:10). In fact Jesus is "now crowned with glory and honor because he *suffered death*" (2:9). In the same way, Christians on their way to glory will follow the suffering path of their originator. Second, suffering takes place because "at present we do not see everything subject to them" (2:8). When everything becomes subject to God through Christ, suffering will cease (Rev 21:4). Third, Jesus is able to minister to us in our suffering because he, himself became flesh. He is not a distant, aloof God giving orders and commands oblivious to our plight. Rather, "because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (2:18).

Zoom Out: Themes in Hebrews—Perfect

The author introduces a prevalent theme throughout Hebrews in v. 10. Jesus is made "perfect." The word translated perfect is "teliov," which is the verbal form of "telios." It is better to understand this word as meaning complete, whole, or finished rather than flawless. Surely, Jesus was not made flawless through sufferings. Instead, Jesus completes or finishes his ministry task through his sufferings. In Hebrews, Jesus is perfected through suffering (2:10), perfected as the source of salvation (5:9), perfected eternally (7:28), and is the perfecter of faith (12:2). The believer's hope for perfection is innately tied to the perfection of Jesus. Just as he has been perfected and now serves perfectly, so believers can be "made perfect forever" (10:14). As James Thompson notes, "The author employs the language of perfection frequently to describe the completion of the course in the presence of God (7:11, 28; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 11:40), indicating that the community's present suffering is a stage in their progress toward the promised land."¹

Zoom In: It Became Fitting

The phrase in 2:10, "it became fitting," goes unnoticed by the modern reader. Yet, it was significant in Greek rhetoric and would have immediately grabbed the attention of the original audience. The Sophists, who were a school of philosophers and rhetoricians beginning in the 5th cent. BC, argued for three points of persuasion. First, there is the time which is *opportune*. Then there is the point that is *appropriate*. Finally, these collide to demonstrate what is *possible*. The word used for *appropriate* by the Sophists, *prepon*, is the same term used here in 2:10. What is appropriate or fitting for God? That as the creator and sustainer of all things, he should sanctify all things through suffering. This idea would have startled the audience who would have never thought it appropriate for a deity to suffer on behalf of humanity.

Zoom In: Text Notes

2:9 - "taste death," Gk. *geusetai thanatou*. Literally, "taste death." The word translated taste here does not carry the idea of a taste test or sampling something. Rather, the word carries the idea of experiencing something cognitively and emotionally. It might be better to translate "experience death."

2:10 - "pioneer," Gk. *Arxegov*. This is a common word in the LXX used nearly forty times, but is used only four times in the NT (Heb 2:10; 12:2; Acts 3:15; 5:31). In each NT use it only refers to Christ. The word can mean prince, but it also carries the idea of the first in a series. So Jesus is both the prince and originator or initiator. In this instance he initiates salvation. In 12:2 he initiates faith.

2:11 - "brothers and sisters," Gk. *adelphoi*. This word literally means "brothers." Yet, it is used here in the plural form, which does not innately carry with it gender identification. Instead, it is commonly used figuratively as a description of family throughout both biblical and extra-biblical literature. For example, in Luke 21:16 Jesus says, "You will be betrayed even by parents, *brothers and sisters*, ..." This is the same use of the word. See also Hebrews 2:12; 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22.

¹ David deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 97.

² *Tractate Megillah*, 9.

¹ James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 73-74.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
3:1-6

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is your current role in your household?

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

Scripture Questions:

What are the similarities and differences between Moses' and Jesus' role in the household of God?

This is the only place in the NT where Jesus is called an apostle. What does this title or word mean and how does that fit within the larger point of Hebrews?

The author quotes Numbers 12 twice in this passage. How does Numbers 12:1-8 serve as the background to this passage?

Living Questions:

What are the two things Christians are called to do in this passage and why are they important?

What is our role in the household of God and how does that help us in the way we think about church?

Why is the incarnation of Jesus important for your Christian walk?

Memory Verse of the Week

CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS THE SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE. AND WE ARE HIS HOUSE, IF INDEED WE HOLD FIRMLY TO OUR CONFIDENCE AND THE HOPE IN WHICH WE GLORY.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
3:1-6

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

This passage introduces the author's next figure of comparison: Moses. It is important to remember that within the transition from Angels to Moses, the author once again exhorts the audience to "fix your thoughts on Jesus" (3:1). Despite the many comparative figures that Hebrews introduces, the main concern is always Jesus. Having developed the theme of Christians as brothers and sisters of Jesus in chapter two, he returns to this theme to introduce his next point in chapter three (3:1) and then expands upon these thoughts through the language of the household of God in the following five verses. In Jewish thought, Moses was the leading figure over the household of God. As James Thompson notes, Moses "is the giver of the law, a member of the tribe of Levi (Exod 2:1-4), a priest (Ps 99:6) who serves at the altar (Exod 24:4-8). He is especially glorified in the intertestamental age."¹ There is no intention to detract from the significance of Moses in Hebrews 3:1-6. Rather, the author continues to magnify Moses (3:2, 5) in order that Jesus will be magnified even greater in comparison. Thus, "Moses was faithful in all God's house," but he remains a member of that house. In comparison, Jesus is the actual builder and establisher of the house (3:3-4). Likewise, Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, "but Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house" (3:5-6). One might imagine a wealthy household in which there was a master servant who held authority over the staff and happenings of the household. Despite his faithfulness, the servant was still less than the firstborn Son.

Devotional Thought:

Not a month has gone by in the last six months where something in my house hasn't failed. On a windy day we lost shingles not long after our furnace failed. Next, the rains came down and the basement flooded. Nearly six months after a significant earthquake we noticed our porch was sinking into the ground. About the time I had those things fixed, lightning struck the house knocking out electrical devices and light bulbs. Then tonight as I went to work on this devotional thought, our condensation pump on the AC went out and the office was flooded. Eventually it wears you down to the point where you are scared to open a window or shut a door for fear that something might break. I need a more faithful house. I think sometimes we can get discouraged by looking at God's house, the church, in a similar fashion. We look at the flaws and failures. We see the times that we have hurt people instead of helping heal them. We glare at the relapses and gawk at the falling away. Or we roll our eyes at how difficult it is to just find somebody to teach children's Bible class. Yet, Hebrews reminds us that we aren't the ones that make God's house faithful, Jesus is. "Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house." We are called not to stare at our failures, but to look reflectively at Jesus, "our apostle and high priest." Actually, it appears that our primary role as the house is simply to hold on. Hold to the "confidence and hope in which we glory." My house has broken down in a lot of ways but I still have a roof over me. It's still holding on. Are we?

Memory Verse of the Week

CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS THE SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE. AND WE ARE HIS HOUSE, IF INDEED WE HOLD FIRMLY TO OUR CONFIDENCE AND THE HOPE IN WHICH WE GLORY.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Themes in Hebrews - Synkrisis.

Once again, the rhetorical technique of synkrisis is adopted to begin chapter three. In ancient literature synkrisis was a technique of comparison to accentuate specific qualities of that being compared. Having already demonstrated that Jesus was superior to the angles (1:4-2:18), the author of Hebrews now begins to compare Jesus with Moses. Yet, this begs this question, why Moses? Why would the author move from the angels to Moses? What do they have in common? The author appears to be stringing together a thread of biblical revelation from the Angels as messengers of God through Moses as the ultimate prophet and bringer of Torah and most fully in the revelation of Jesus who stands superior. The audience is reminded again of the opening lines of Hebrews, “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (1:1).

Zoom Out: Overarching Point of Chapter 3-4

Chapter three through four serves as one coherent exhortation woven around the comparison of Jesus and Moses. In 3:1-6 the author offers his initial comparison of Moses with Jesus as an exposition of Numbers 12. He then moves into a significant development in 3:6-4:13 based upon this initial comparison and exposition. During this section he asks the provocative question that centers his argument: *will you be faithful and enter God’s rest?* He concludes this section by pointing again to Jesus as the faithful priest (4:14-16). This section is bookmarked (a rhetorical device known as an inclusio) by the phrases “let us hold firmly to the faith we profess” (4:14). In remarking on this section, William Lane concludes, “We are called to consider the faithfulness of Jesus as an incentive to fidelity in our own lives. The basis of our confidence is that we are not abandoned to a hostile or indifferent world, and that we can exhibit faithfulness to God in such a world, is the fidelity of our priest.”²

Zoom In: “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house...”

This phrase found in 3:5 is a quotation from Numbers 12:7, which is also referenced by the author in 3:2, “Moses was faithful in all God’s house.” It is not unusual for a NT author to quickly quote an OT phrase in order to summon to mind the entire context of the quotation. Thus, Numbers 12 serves as the theological background for understand the author’s point of comparison between Moses and Jesus. In Numbers 12 Miriam and Aaron begin to oppose Moses until the Lord intervenes making this statement about Moses in Number 12:6-8a, “When there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord.” In Judaism Moses was the ultimate prophet who actually experienced the presence of the Lord. Even greater then is Jesus, who *is* the form of the Lord. The Lord continues in Numbers 12:8b to reprimand and warn Miriam and Aaron when he says, “why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” Likewise, the author of Hebrews continues his argument by offering a similar word of reprimand and warning in 3:7-19.

Zoom In: Text Notes

3:1 - “fix your thoughts,” Gk. *katanoeate*. Literally, “to perceive or understand clearly.” This is a word of close perception and examination. For example, Jesus uses it to draw the audience’s attention to the ravens and lilies in Luke 12:24, 27. Likewise, James uses it to describe what a person perceives when they look in a mirror (Ja 1:23). Hebrews uses it again in 10:24, “Let us *consider* how we may spur one another...”

3:1 - “apostle,” Gk. *Apostelon*. Literally, “one sent forth,” or “delegate.” This is the only time in the entire NT in which Jesus is referred to as an apostle, a title which is usually reserved the twelve that Jesus appointed and Paul. Yet, there are other NT occurrences of apostle being used to describe someone besides the twelve and Paul (see Acts 14:14; Rom 16:7; 2 Co 8:23; Phil 2:25.) Paul even mocks those claiming to be “super-apostles” (2 Co 11:5; 12:1). In the LXX it is often used as a reference to prophets who were sent as messengers. This word is probably chosen by the author here in describing Jesus to aid in the comparison with Moses whom Jews regard as the initial prophet.

3:1 - “we acknowledge,” Gk. *omologias*. Literally, “of our confession” or “of our profession.” This word is used only six times in the NT, three of which occur in Hebrews (2 Co 9:13; 1 Tim 6:12, 13; Heb 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). For the modern reader the term confession often connotes a confession of sin. Yet, this word is more likely used in reference to a professed statement of belief in Jesus.

¹James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 76.

²William Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (Vancouver, Regent College Publishing, 2004), 56.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
3:1-6

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is your current role in your household?

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

Scripture Questions:

What are the similarities and differences between Moses' and Jesus' role in the household of God?

This is the only place in the NT where Jesus is called an apostle. What does this title or word mean and how does that fit within the larger point of Hebrews?

The author quotes Numbers 12 twice in this passage. How does Number 12:1-8 serve as background to this passage?

Living Questions:

What are the two things Christians are called to do in this passage and why are they important?

What is our role in the household of God and how does that help us in the way we think about church?

Why is the incarnation of Jesus important for your Christian walk?

Memory Verse of the Week

CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS THE SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE. AND WE ARE HIS HOUSE, IF INDEED WE HOLD FIRMLY TO OUR CONFIDENCE AND THE HOPE IN WHICH WE GLORY.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
3:7-19

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

There are two basic ways NT authors use OT texts. The most common is for the NT author to make a point and support this point with passages from the OT. For example, consider Paul's use of the OT in 1 Cor 1:28-31. Paul argues that God chooses the lowly things of the world so that no one can boast in their own accomplishment. To support this point he cites Jer 9:24, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." The less common approach is to cite an OT text and expound it to make a point. This is the approach taken most often by the author of Hebrews. In this week's text the author offers an extended quotation of Psalm 95:7-11. This approach is noticeable in three ways. First, the author's argument in 3:12-4:11 follows the flow of Psalm 95:7-11. He begins by discussing today and the hardening of the heart. Then he moves into the wilderness wanderings and the Israelites' unfaithfulness. Finally, he concludes his argument discussing the promise of God's rest. Second, the author demonstrates his exposition of the text by re quoting or referencing the OT verse. Especially notice the direct quotations in 3:15, 4:3. Finally, the author adopts specific words and themes from the original quote in his exposition. For example, he is concerned with heart (3:12), today (3:13; 4:7), rest (3:19; 4:1, 3, 5, 8-11), and disbelief or disobedience (3:12, 18; 4:2). Though this approach to using the OT is not as common in the NT, it was the common approach of the synagogues (especially note Jesus' usage in Luke 4:16-21). Thus, the author takes great care to expound and apply Psalm 95 to the plight and circumstance of his audience.

Devotional Thought:

My son has a onesie that I refuse to put him in. It is all white with a red heart on the front and says, "Future Heartbreaker." It's cute. So is my son. Still, I don't want him strutting (or rolling) around in a shirt with such mean connotations. Is there anything worse than a broken heart? I remember consoling a friend in college who had just been dumped by a man she was convinced was the love of her life. She was distraught. It was more than just a fleeting emotion. It was an attack on her as a person. It was another human being telling her that she wasn't good enough. That's why broken hearts mend so slowly. I know others who are so fearful of a broken heart that they will never let someone have their heart to begin with. Yet, in Hebrews 3 we are reminded that there are in fact worse things than a broken heart. "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (3:7-8). The author repeats this warning three other times in chapter three and then adds an even more ardent warning. "See to it... that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart" (3:12). Worse than a broken heart is a hardened heart. I think these two thoughts are interrelated. Sometimes after we've been hurt routinely from broken hearts, we harden our heart to keep it from being broken again. Not only do we harden it from other people, we even harden it from God. This is the importance of mutual encouragement. As we soften our heart toward God, we also begin to soften our heart toward other people. Might we still be heart broken? Yes. Just like how we often break God's heart. Yet, no matter how many times his heart is broken, he never hardens his heart toward us.

Memory Verse of the Week

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER DAILY, AS LONG AS IT IS CALLED "TODAY."

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: The Exodus as Meta-Narrative

It is important not to allow the defense of the historicity of an OT text or story to detract from appreciating the way an OT text or story functions spiritually and theologically for Israel. This is specifically the case with the Exodus. Debates over the historicity of the Exodus often blind Christians from grasping how the Exodus serves as *the* foundational story for Israelite life and religion. We refer to these types of stories as meta-narratives. A meta-narrative is “an overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstance that provides a pattern or structure for people’s beliefs and gives meaning to their experiences.”¹ Throughout the OT and in the extra-biblical literature, the Exodus routinely serves as the primary meta-narrative for the Israelites. Through the water, God brings freedom from the bondage of slavery. He guides the people through their rebellious wandering and into the promised land. In fact, Psalm 95:7-11 is a song of responsive praise to God for his working in this meta-narrative and the exhortation that he still works this way with his people during the time this psalm was written. Similarly, the author of Hebrews picks up this meta-narrative as still formative for teaching his audience. How might this meta-narrative still function as formative for Christians today?

Zoom Out: Community Commitment and Accountability in Hebrews

The author of Hebrews is genuinely concerned that members of the church are beginning to drift away (2:1), hardening their hearts (3:8), and turning away from the living God (3:12). Undoubtedly, this is a problem that still plagues the church today. Yet, the author of Hebrews offers a different perspective than our modern individualism allows. Hebrews contends that the way to counter turning away from God is through mutual encouragement within Christian community (3:12-13). DeSilva rightly notes, “the community as a whole is charged with looking out for signs that individuals might be wavering in their commitment and acting to shore up that commitment (3:12-13; see also 4:1; 5:12; 10:24-25; 12:15), as well as investing themselves fully to relieve the pressures that weigh on other members (6:9-10; 13:1-3, 15-16), creating a strong alternative social body... Each member of the community bears some responsibility for the perseverance or nonperseverance of the other members.”²

Zoom In: Today

A key word that ties 3:7-4:11 together is “today.” The word “today” first occurs in the initial quotation of Psalm 95:7-11 in 3:7, and again twice in the recurrence of this quotation (3:15; 4:7). The author uses this word for two reasons. First, he creates a sense of present urgency in the minds of the readers. The message he has to offer confronts the audience “today.” Second, the Christian life is about continuity and routine. The sin of the Israelites came in the failure to routinely trust God through the wandering. Thus, the church is called to “encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today’” (3:13). Thus, the church should seek to encourage one another daily as long as it is “today.” Jesus perfectly displays this continual faith as is alluded to in the final chapter of Hebrews. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (13:8).

Zoom In: Text Notes

3:8, 13, 15 - “harden” Gk. *sklyrunw*. Within the authors’ exposition of Psalm 95, he repeats the line “do not harden your hearts” three times (3:8, 15; 4:7). Often missed is the fourth occurrence of this word in Hebrews. 3:13 reads “so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Hardening comes through sin’s deceitfulness. Yet, hardening can be countered through communal encouragement.

3:11 - “They shall never enter my rest.” Literally, “if they shall enter my rest.” This line is an oath form of idiom that means something that will never happen. The contemporary idiom similar to the idea, “over my dead body.”

3:12 - “brothers and sisters” Gk. *adelphoi*. This word literally means “brothers.” Yet, it is used here in the plural form, which does not innately carry with it gender identification. Instead, it is commonly used figuratively as a description of family throughout both biblical and extra-biblical literature. For example, in Luke 21:16, Jesus says, “You will be betrayed even by parents, *brothers and sisters*, ...” This is the same use of the word. See also Hebrews 2:12; 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22.

3:16 - “rebelled” Gk. *parapikrainw*. Literally, “to treat with bitterness.” This *hapax legomena* is used fairly often in the LXX (Ezek 2:5-8; Lam 1:20, et al) and in Philo (alleg. Legg 3.38). The idea seems to be to exasperate or to cause frustration.

¹“Metanarrative,” *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/metanarrative>, accessed 7/18/2018.

²David DeSilva, “Hebrews,” *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: Two Volume Set*, ed. Gale A. Yee, et al (Fortress Press, 2014), location 54739.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
3:7-19

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Have you ever had your heart broken?

Read Hebrews 3:7-19.

Scripture Questions:

What different points does the author of Hebrews make from his use of Psalm 95:7-11?

How does the author call upon Christians to fight against the hardening of their hearts?

How does the exodus serve as a meta-narrative for this passage?

Living Questions:

Why is having a hard heart worse than having a broken heart?

How does the exodus serve as a meta-narrative for us still today as Christians?

In what different ways can we look out for one another and encourage one another in today's world?

Memory Verse of the Week

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER DAILY, AS LONG AS IT IS CALLED "TODAY."

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
4:1-11

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

Hebrews has always been associated with the concept of faith, because of the robust theology of faith described in chapters 10-11. In these chapters faith is defined, described, and applauded in the lives of a multitude of figures. Yet, the noun, *pistis*, and the verb, *pisteuw*, which are translated faith and believe first occur in Hebrews 4:2-3. In this initial setting, the author is attempting to teach three significant things about faith. First, faith is a requisite for inheriting the promises of God. He says, "we who have believed (*pisteuw*) enter that rest." This is reaffirmed in 11:6, "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe (*pisteuw*) that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Second, faith is responsive to the good news that is heard. In fact, the author contends that hearing the good news must be mixed in or combined with faith to be pleasing to God. He expounds this point in 10:38-39, "My righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back. But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved." Third, faith in Hebrews is associated with God's promises. Chapter four begins, "since the promise of entering his rest still stands," and this language continues in v. 3, "So I declared on oath." This correlation continues in 6:12, 17; 9:15; and 10:36. By combining these initial thoughts about faith we begin to form a theology of faith from Hebrews. Faith is more than just belief, it is trust in God's promises. In fact, it might be better to translate faith as trust within the book of Hebrews.

Devotional Thought:

"I just don't want to miss out on something special," my wife said to me after she had been asked to work overtime. She was scared she would not spend enough time with our kids who are both under the age of two. The fear of missing out drives us in a lot of ways. Hebrews warns us to be scared of missing out on God's rest in 4:1. In his wonderful *Charts on Hebrews*, Herbert Bateman divides the Jewish concept of rest into three categories: historical, eschatological, and philosophical.¹ The OT only speaks of rest as a historical reality promised to the people of God in which there will be entrance into the land without war or work. This historical reality is practiced weekly in keeping the Sabbath. Eschatology is the study of the end times or eternal life. The concept of eschatological rest develops during the intertestamental time in the later writings of 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and others. It is understood as a kind of eternal, end time status in heaven where the faithful receive blessing from God. Finally, Philo ponders upon the idea of a philosophical rest as a present reality in which the faithful are momentarily free from productivity. It seems to me that the author of Hebrews portrays a holistic rest of intimacy with God "for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his" (4:10). I imagine being exhausted from a long night's journey through the dust of a trail and weight of a heavy pack. Someone who finished before me calls me to his side on a tailgate with a hot cup of coffee and fresh doughnut. I plop down and together we soak in the early morning light of a new day. There's nothing that will keep me from missing out on that.

Memory Verse of the Week

THERE REMAINS, THEN, A SABBATH-REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: The Rest of God

A central motif within chapters 3-4 of Hebrews is the phrase “enter into his rest” (3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10, 11). Of course, the author adopts this phrase from his quotation of Psalm 95:11. The word translated rest is *katapausis*, which carries with it a sense of movement, as in “putting to rest,” or a state of being, as in “a resting.” Outside of one other NT usage (Acts 7:49), it is used only in chapters 3-4 of Hebrews in the NT. Still, this was a common word in the LXX often used specifically to describe the Sabbath as the day of rest, and in the case of Psalm 95 to describe the blessings of the promised land. Whether to a people toiling through the weekly tasks of life or enduring the trials of the wilderness wandering, the rest of God was surely a welcome promise and tangible reality. This point cannot be understated. For the Israelites, the rest of God was not some ethereal afterlife. It was a physical reality. It was a specific land free from the bondage of Egypt and a respite from the wandering in the wilderness. Thus, the author adds an eschatological twist by demonstrating how for those who believe now, “there remains, then, a Sabbath-rest.” The Israelites longed for the rest of the promised land, similarly, the faithful anticipate the coming rest from the toil of life in an inhospitable world. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon beautifully describes the sense of the word *katapausis*, rest, as “the heavenly blessedness in which God dwells, and of which he has promised to make persevering believers in Christ partakers after the toils and trials of life on earth are ended.”²

Zoom Out: Wandering in this World

Throughout this sermon the author makes many points of comparison between the Israelites and his Christian audience. Two specific points should be noticed within the section at hand. First, throughout Hebrews the author correlates his Christian audience specifically with the Israelites *during their wandering in the wilderness*. Faithful Christians in the contemporary world are like the Israelites during the forty years of wandering waiting to enter the promised land. As James Thompson points out, “The author consistently speaks of the Christian experience of a people on the move, and he has a special emphasis on verbs for entering and drawing near.”³ Like the Israelites, Christians are headed somewhere though at times it might not feel like that (see also 11:10, 14, 16; 12:22; 13:14). Second, consistently throughout Hebrews, but even more poignantly here specifically, the author contends that just as there were members of the Israelite nation who did not remain faithful and enter God’s rest, there are some Christians who will not remain faithful and enter God’s rest. William Hall aptly puts it, “Their decisive rejection of the divine mandate brings before us a shocking truth: a participant in the redemption provided by God can choose to disbelieve God. It is possible to display unpardonable indifference to the promise of God.”⁴

Zoom In: Mixed with Faith

The author of Hebrews wants to compare and contrast the condition of current believers with the condition of the Israelites in the wandering. The background to our passage is still Numbers 14 as cited in Psalm 95:7-11, a text in which the Israelites refused to trust God and enter into the promised land. In both cases, the people have “had the good news proclaimed” to them. In the case of the Israelites, it was the word from Caleb that they would inherit the land. In the case of Christians, it is the good news of Jesus. The difference between the Israelites in the wilderness and the Christians in the audience is that the Christians have combined the hearing of the good news with faith (4:3) while the Israelites “did not share the faith of those who obeyed” (4:2). The promise of rest comes to those who both hear and are faithful (4:9-10).

Zoom In: Text Notes

4:1 - “let us be careful” Gk. *phobew*. Literally, “let us fear.” The author chooses the motivating factor of fear in hope of spurring on the congregation. This is the same word that Caleb uses to spur on the people in Numbers 14:9.

4:2 - “share the faith” Gk. *sunkerannumi*. Literally, “mix together,” or “combine.” This word is used only one other time in the NT to describe the bringing together of the church as a body in 1 Cor 12:24. Manuscripts vary in the form of this word, some reading a singular participle, which would refer back to the message. Such as, “it (the message) was not mixed with faith.” Yet, the strongest manuscript support reads it as a plural participle, which points toward “those.” Thus, “they were not united by faith with those who listened” (ESV).

4:7 - “David.” It is interesting that the author would attribute Psalm 95 to David though David is not mentioned as the author of the Psalm nor in the subscript. It seems most likely that the author is simply attributing the entire psalter to David as was common in Judaism.

¹ Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Charts on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 135

² “*katapausis*” Joseph Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1889.

³ James Thompson, *Hebrews*, 95-96.

⁴ William Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 66.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
4:1-11

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

When is a time you missed out on something?

Read Hebrews 4:1-11.

Scripture Questions:

How would you describe God's rest? What other passages come to mind when you think of God's rest?

What do you think the author means that hearing the message must be mixed in with or united by faith?

How would you define or describe "faith" according to this passage?

Living Questions:

What does the fear of missing out do to you personally? Does it drive you or paralyze you?

In what ways are we like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness still today?

What is the difference between being faithful and earning your salvation?

Memory Verse of the Week

THERE REMAINS, THEN, A SABBATH-REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
4:12-13

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

These brief two verses are often quoted separate from their context and treated as an aside. When in fact, these verses form the climax to the first major section of the book of Hebrews. If one imagines reading Hebrews like watching a movie plot unfold, then we see pressure has been building till it finally reaches an initial head in this terse and intense call to the carpet. Notice how the tension between characters has continued to build till this point, especially in the previous two chapters. First, through Psalm 95, we see the tension between God and the unfaithfulness of Israel. Numbers 14 is invoked when the people of God didn't trust that God would give them the promised land. As an affront to God, they asked for a king to return them to slavery in Egypt. Though God had rescued and delivered them from bondage, they personally insulted his generosity. Then the audience is reminded of how similar Israel is to *them!* Just like Israel they have been delivered. Just like Israel they've been promised entrance into God's rest. Just like Israel they have heard the word. And this word, *God's Word*, is like a double-edged sword, so sharp it cuts through anything, even the things they couldn't possibly think could be separated: soul and spirit! God's word sees everything, nothing is hidden and it judges not the outward action but the very "thoughts and attitudes of the heart!" Like a convicted criminal under the executioner's blade, we, er... the audience, lay naked and bare, exposed in our unfaithfulness, and are called to give an account for our actions. Who could possibly save us... er... them?

Devotional Thought:

I find myself tentative when it comes to the final judgment language of the NT. I have met so many people over the years who have shared the damage done to their spiritual lives by overbearing parents, pupils, and parents who taught them that the wrath of God was waiting around every corner to get them. It can be unfortunately easy and fraudulently effective to scare people into conversion. It is odd that something referred to as "good news" could be understood as "God's going to get you if you mess up." I attempt to allow the overwhelming majority of encouraging and joyful texts about the mercy, grace, and love of Jesus to outweigh the minority of judgment and fear texts in scripture. Yet, I am increasingly attuned to the importance of the fear of God, or more specifically, the fear of the word of God in scripture. Might it be that in our honest attempts to rightly convey the overwhelming love of God, we can allow the pendulum to swing too far away from a healthy fear of rejecting God's word? Chapter four begins with a call to be fearful of missing out on God's rest. He returns to this language in these two stark, confrontational, and scary verses that we are looking at this week. The Word of God is like a sword. Not just a sword, but a double-edged sword. It cuts through anything in its way. Even the things we didn't even know were inseparable. It slices through them like a one time only santoku knife on a late night infomercial. God's word leaves us laid bare, neck exposed before God, to whom we must give an account. Good thing we have a great high priest to offer us the confidence in our exposure of mercy and grace in our time of need.

Memory Verse of the Week

FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: *Logos* in Scripture

The word, *logos*, often translated “word,” or “reason,” is a common Greek word used throughout the NT as well as throughout Greek philosophy. It has three meanings based upon context. First, it can mean a “word,” but not in the grammatical sense. Instead it means a word which carries a large concept or meaning. In this way, it is often used in the NT to describe the good news. Paul says in Php 1:14, “proclaim the gospel (*logos*) without fear.” Second, it can simply mean that which is said by a person. It is used in this context to close the sermon on the mount in Mat 7:28, “when Jesus had ended these sayings (*logos*).” Third, it can mean an account or explanatory reason. This is the way it is often used in courtroom dialogue or judgment scenes. For example, the town clerk warns the rioters in Acts 19:40 that they better knock it off because “we would not be able to account (*logos*) for this commotion.” Finally, *logos* is adopted as jargon by the Greek philosophers where it refers to reason or logic. Most notably, Heraclitus (6th Cent BC) contends there is a cosmic *logos* that is similar to the *logos* within a person. John has this concept in mind when he applies *logos* to Jesus (John 1:1-14). Yet, it is important to not apply John’s Christology upon Hebrews. Rather, the author of Hebrews appears to be adopting the LXX usage of *logos* besides its common usage. Most notably, in Deut 32:45-47, Moses finishes offering the law to the Israelites and says, “Set your heart to all the words (*logos*) which I testify unto you this day, which you shall command your children to observe to do, even all the words of this law. For it is no vain word (*logos*) for you; because it is your life.”

Zoom In: *Logos* in Hebrews 4:12-13

The author uses the word *logos* twice in these two verses. The first usage in v. 12 is obvious and translated, “the word of God.” Yet, the second usage is often overlooked as most modern translations rightly use the phrase, “to whom we must give account.” This phrase is literally, “to him we must give word.” *Logos* serves to create an inclusio (think of book ends) around v. 12-13. Because the word of God is all-knowing and active in judgment, the hearer must offer a word of account. Yet, *logos* does something else in this text that is often overlooked as well. It is the connecting link between the exposition of Psalm 95 in 3:7-4:11 and this apparent aside in 4:12-13. *Logos* is used in 4:2, “but the message (*logos*) they heard was of no value to them.” Just as the penetrating *logos* of God separates soul and spirit, so it separated the Israelites from the rest of God in their unbelief. Thus, Christians are called to not be like the Israelites, but instead offer a *logos* of faith in response to effectiveness of the *logos* of God.

Zoom In: Naked and Bare

The author of Hebrews uses intrusive and aggressive language in these brief verses to confront his audience. The listener is confronted with the omniscient double-edged sword, which penetrates, divides, and judges. DeSilva captures the imagery of v. 13 well, “The image created by these verses is that of a defendant being hauled before a judge whose eyes can penetrate into the depths of the soul, and therefore the guilt, of this defendant... the term (*traxelizw*), usually translated “laid bare” or “exposed,” refers more fully to the condemned criminal whose throat is exposed to the executioner’s blade. The author places the addressees before God naked with the throat pulled back... to reinforce his contention that distrust and disobedience toward God are really the greatest dangers facing the audience, and not the temporal concerns that have convinced a few that drawing back is advantageous.”

Zoom In: Text Notes

4:12 - “active” Gk. *energes*. Literally, “active” or “working.” This is where we get the word energy, but it is important to not apply the contemporary meaning of energy upon a word that vastly predates it. This word is also translated as effective in 1 Cor 16:9 and Phm 1:6. Effective might be a useful translation in this passage as well though the author does seem to be intending more forceful language than effective denotes.

4:13 - “laid bare” Gk. *tetralexismena*. Literally, “to open.” This hapax legomena comes from the executioner’s table or butcher’s block. Bullinger captures the meaning well, “to twist the neck, throttle, to bend back the neck, for example, of an animal for slaughter so as to expose the throat; hence, to expose, lay bare.”

¹ Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Charts on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 135.

² “katapausis” Joseph Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1889.

³ James Thompson, *Hebrews*, 95-96.

⁴ William Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 66.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
4:12-13

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Who is someone in your life who knows what you're thinking or feeling without you even saying a word?

Read Hebrews 4:12-13.

Scripture Questions:

What is the word of God?

How is the word of God effective and active?

How does this passage relate to what we've studied in the last two chapters?

Living Questions:

When is a time a scripture really convicted you? Or, what scripture do you find convicting?

What is the relationship between fearing God and Christian maturity?

What relationship does Jesus have with the Word of God?

Memory Verse of the Week

FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
4:14-16

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

These notes attempt each week to zoom in to the detail of the text while maintaining the zoomed out coherence found throughout the book of Hebrews. This is especially important in this passage as the author is often understood to be transitioning from comparing Israelites to Christians into focusing on the high priest. Yet, one must remember that the entire comparison of Israel and Christians is encapsulated within a broader comparison of Jesus with Moses that was first established in 3:1-5. By zooming out we notice that Moses is mentioned throughout Hebrews after first being introduced in 3:1. Even as the letter builds to a climax at Mount Zion in chapter 12, Moses appears again v. 21, "The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, 'I am trembling with fear.'" Likewise, by zooming in to the detail of the text we notice an important linkage. The phrase high priest used in 4:14-15 is specifically ascribed to Jesus in 3:1, "whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest." The text then moves immediately to compare Moses with Jesus. Two descriptions are given of Jesus in 3:1, apostle and high priest. It is plausible that after introducing these two qualities of Jesus, the author moves to show how Jesus is superior to Moses in both these qualities. An apostle is simply a messenger. Hence, 3:7 through 4:13 is all about the importance of listening to Jesus as a messenger, because the Israelites didn't listen to Moses in the wilderness. Jesus is in fact a better apostle than Moses. Likewise, Jesus is a better high priest than Moses in 4:14-10:18.

Devotional Thought:

It is easy to think that empathy and sympathy mean the same thing, and they are indeed similar. Yet, the nuance of difference is important. Sympathy refers to feeling bad for another person. I might have sympathy for someone over a story I watch on the news. Empathy is to feel the same emotions with another person. I read on Facebook this week, "It would probably be boring to walk a mile in my shoes, but spend ten seconds inside my brain and that will really freak you out." This is empathy. Sympathy says, "I'm sorry your power went out." Empathy says, "let me sit in the dark with you." A good friend sends you a sympathy card, a great friend holds your hand. The author of Hebrews says that Jesus is able to *empathize* with us in our weaknesses. The word used is *sumpathew*. This word is only used twice in the NT and both occur in Hebrews (10:34). Translations differ on whether to use "sympathize" or "empathize." Though the Greek word *sumpathew* looks more like sympathize, a more accurate meaning is found in empathize. *Sum* means "with" in Greek. *Pathew* means "to feel." This is an amazing thought about Jesus. He doesn't just look at us and feel sorry for us. If so, there is no need for the incarnation. Rather, Jesus joins with us in our weakness. In becoming flesh he experiences all our hurt and weaknesses. Jesus has walked far more than a mile in our shoes. He sits with us in the dark. He holds our hand. There is no temptation or hurt in our lives that Jesus cannot relate to. With this thought in mind, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence whenever we need help.

Memory Verse of the Week

LET US THEN APPROACH GOD'S THRONE OF GRACE WITH CONFIDENCE, SO THAT WE MAY RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP US IN OUR TIME OF NEED.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: High Priest

Next week's notes will more fully expound the theme of Jesus as High Priest, but this week we want to focus just briefly on the basic concept of the priest. The primary role of a priest is to serve as a mediator or arbitrator between God and God's people. Regardless of religion, this was the customary role of the priest in the ancient world and this still continues through today. Interestingly enough, the author of Hebrews actually goes out of his way to define this role to his audience. He says in 5:1, "Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin." The author of Hebrews then points towards Jesus as the great high priest, the ultimate mediator. Why does Jesus hold this position? Because he perfectly understands both God and humanity. There is only one who is both fully God and fully human. The incarnate nature of Jesus allows him to function with great empathy as arbitrator on behalf of humanity before God.

Zoom Out: Moses as Arbitrator

Numbers 14 continues to serve as the background to these texts as derived from the author's quotation of Psalm 95 as previously discussed. Slowly and methodically the author of Hebrews has picked through different elements of this narrative. He has demonstrated how the Israelites had a hard heart toward God, wanted to return to Egypt, didn't trust in God, didn't hear his word with faith, and then missed out on God's rest. Another key element to the Num 14 narrative is the role of Moses as Arbitrator. God is so upset at the Israelites that he says he is going to destroy them and start over with just Moses. Then Moses steps forward to negotiate on behalf of the Israelites (Num 14:13-25). Moses is able to negotiate on behalf of the Israelites because he is an Israelite, but also because he has come to know God personally and "face to face" (Num 14:14). In fact, Moses petitions God's virtue in defense of the Israelites (Num 14:18-19). This virtue he learned first hand as God passed by him (Ex 34:6-18). Thus, in Hebrews 4:14-16 Jesus is shown as a high priest in his ability to serve as an arbitrator between God and humanity, much like Moses.

Zoom In: Use of Emotion in Rhetoric

As has been discussed many times, the author of Hebrews is well-trained in the art of rhetoric. This is amply demonstrated in the emotional movement of 4:12-16. 4:12-13 invokes fear before the all-seeing judge, but 4:14-16 moves the listener out of this fear and into security before the all-powerful throne of grace. DeSilva rightly demonstrates, "The Arousing particular emotions in an audience was an integral part of the ancient art of persuasion (see, e.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.1-11). While the author crafted images designed to arouse fear in 4:12-13, he turns immediately in 4:14-16 to craft an appeal designed to instill confidence in the hearers. This pattern recurs throughout the sermon (6:4-8 // 6:9-12; 10:26-31 // 10:32-36), with the author associating cause for fear with drifting away from commitment to the group and its confession, and cause for confidence with perseverance in commitment to Christ and one another."

Zoom In: Text Notes

4:14 - "ascended" Gk. *dieleluthota*. Literally, "to come or go through." Some translations choose to render this word as ascended, but in doing so they miss the important Exodus motif of passing through. The same word is used in 1 Cor 10:1-2, "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all *passed through* the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."¹

4:14 - "profession" Gk. *omologian*. Literally, "confession or profession." This word is used only six times in the NT, three of which occur in Hebrews (2 Cor 9:13; 1 Tim 6:12, 13; Heb 3:1, 4:14; 10:23). For the modern reader the term confession often connotes a confession of sin. Yet, this word is more likely used in reference to a professed statement of belief.

4:15 - "weaknesses" Gk. *astheneia*. Literally, "weakness," or "infirmity." This word is specifically used in the plural in this setting to relate to the weaknesses of the people or the priesthood. The idea is not that Jesus relates to sinfulness, but that he knows the weakness of the human condition. As Ellingworth writes, "5:2 suggests that the author is thinking, not of physical weakness, but of the intellectual and moral weakness which leads to failure to do God's will. Here the plural may refer more specifically to unintentional transgression of the Mosaic Law."²

¹David DeSilva, "Hebrews," in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, 635.

²Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 268.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
4:14-16

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Who is a person who has helped you at a time of need? What did that mean to you?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

Scripture Questions:

How does this passage fit into Hebrews to this point?

How does Hebrews move your emotions from 4:12-16?

What does it mean that Jesus “has gone through the heavens?”

Living Questions:

What is the connection in your faith journey between fear and confidence?

In what ways have you found mercy and grace in your time of need?

What do these verses teach us about our relationship with Jesus as Christians?

Memory Verse of the Week

LET US THEN APPROACH GOD'S THRONE OF GRACE WITH CONFIDENCE, SO THAT WE MAY RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELPS US IN OUR TIME OF NEED.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
5:1-10

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

Within this section, the author has fully transitioned out of Jesus being greater than Moses as an apostle or messenger, and is fully imbedded in the important work of professing Jesus as a greater high priest than Moses (3:1). Within these ten verses, the author makes four significant points. First, he establishes the important role and qualifications of the high priest in Judaism (5:1-3). His role is to represent the people as a mediator, offer sacrifices, and help the ignorant and wayward. Second, the author shows how the high priest is chosen (5:4). He is exclusively called by God like Aaron. They cannot become high priest by their own initiative. Third, having established the calling of the high priest, the author moves to show how Jesus receives the same, yet greater, calling as the son of God (5:5-6). Just as the high priest cannot honor himself in his task, so Jesus did not care about his own honor, but God's honor, in becoming high priest. Fourth and likewise, having established the roles of the high priest, the author demonstrates how Jesus fulfills all of these roles to an even greater extent (5:7-10). Jesus is a greater high priest than any high priest before him because he was completely faithful and obedient even in suffering. He is also able to serve as a greater high priest because his lineage is not tied to the earthly lineage of Aaron but to the lineage of Melchizedek. The comparison between Jesus and the Aaronic priesthood is now ripe for the harvest and the author will spend the following chapters on these important differences.

Devotional Thought:

God cares more about our character than our health or happiness. That is a hard thought. Yet, it is affirmed time after time throughout scripture. In the passage for this week, it is not us who suffer, but God's own son. Listen to how David DeSilva in his commentary on v. 8-9 describes these verses, "The author, addressing those who have experienced and continue to experience hardship as a result of their association with the Christian group, wishes to assure them that such hardship is not a sign of the displeasure of the divine. Since the Son himself was subject to the educative discipline of hardships, the "many sons and daughters" should not be surprised at their own endurance of discipline. Like the Son, they also have need to cry out to God with loud supplications and tears, and, like the Son, they will also be heard by God, as 4:14-16 assures them. Thus the pattern of enduring hardship and calling upon the Lord for help is affirmed as the "normal" condition, the "proper" condition, and not a disconfirming one that makes the believers question their commitment to this group. What counts is not avoiding hardships but seeing in those hardships an opportunity to learn obedience (and a deep reliance on God in prayer), which has eternal value (leading to a place in the "rest" "homeland," or "city" prepared by God)."¹ Our culture values health and happiness above all things. God doesn't feel the same. Our character, often only forged through suffering, is God's primary concern for our life. We must be faithful witnesses to the kingdom, and that witness comes through strength of Christ-like character.

Memory Verse of the Week

SON THOUGH HE WAS, HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE FROM WHAT HE SUFFERED AND,
ONCE MADE PERFECT, HE BECAME THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: High Priest in OT

The priesthood of the OT was established through the line of Aaron, Moses' brother, and carried through the lineage of Levi (Ex 28:1-3; Lev 8). The high priest was selected from among the priests by the casting of lots, community election, or chosen by the ruling king. Though the high priest began to function in a variety of ways by the time of the writing of Hebrews, we will focus only on the OT qualifications and functions this week. The basic qualifications for a male to serve as high priest was that he be appointed by God for the task (Ex 28:1), set apart from everyday Israelite life (Lev 28), and free from any physical defects (Lev 21:16-23). His primary role was to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people (Lev 16). Secondarily, he provided instruction (Mal 2:6), was responsible for ritual and physical health (Lev 13-15), and served as judge (Deut 17:8-9; 21:5).

Zoom Out: Solidarity

The author of Hebrews has introduced and already begun to develop the theme of the high priest in solidarity with the people. In 2:14-15, Jesus "shared in their humanity" so that he might defeat death for all people. He was "tempted in every way" and "empathizes with our weaknesses" (4:15). "The requirement for solidarity is nowhere mentioned in the OT. The author is apparently familiar with Philo's claim that the Levitical high priest moderates the emotions but keeps his feelings under control... However, he indicates that Jesus not only meets these qualifications but exceeds the qualification of showing moderate feelings (5:2), for he is able to show full sympathy by entering into the sufferings and temptations of the people."² Though solidarity was not an OT requirement for the priesthood, it is a fundamental concept in the OT. In his wonderful article on solidarity in the OT, G. W. Grogan shows how God creates humanity for solidarity in relational existence through community and then enters into solidarity with humanity through covenant. All the blessings of covenant life with God in the OT are bestowed upon the Christian community even greater through the mediating work of the high priest, Jesus.³

Zoom In: Table of High Priest References in Hebrews

Passage	Reference to Jesus and Role as High Priest
2:17	Jesus had to be made "fully human in every way" to serve as a merciful and faithful high priest.
3:1	"Fix your thoughts on Jesus... apostle and high priest."
4:14-15	"Since we have a great high priest" who empathizes with our weaknesses yet did not sin.
5:10	"Designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek."
6:20	"He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."
7:27	Jesus is different than other high priests because he doesn't have to sacrifice over and over, just once.
8:1	We have a high priest seated at the right hand of God in heaven.
9:11	Christ as high priest "went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle."

Zoom In: Text Notes

4:14 - "are going astray" Gk. *planwmenois*. Literally, "to cause to stray." A word often used to describe the condition of sheep going astray (Mat 18:12; 1 Pet 2:25), but more likely used here in connection with the wilderness wandering. The same word is used in Heb 11:38 to describe the Israelites wandering in the wilderness (see also 3:10).

5:8 - "learned... suffered" Gk. *emathen... epathon*. There is an important word play between "learned," *emathen*, and "suffered," *epathon*. The words are identical in Greek except for the second letter. It appears that the author wishes to accentuate the connection between learning and suffering through a play on words.

5:9 - "made perfect" Gk. *teleiwtheis*. Literally, "to carry through to completion" or "to complete." The idea here again is not that Jesus was made without flaw or without sin. That has always been a part of Jesus' composition as Son of God. Rather, Jesus completed fully the task that was put before him through his suffering. The author of Hebrews uses this often to refer to completion or fulfillment (2:10; 7:19, 28; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23).

5:10 - "designated" Gk. *prosagoreuw*. Literally, "to address in the agora." The agora was the open marketplace in Greek cities. The idea is that you proclaim or call a person's name publicly. This is patronage language where the one receiving from a patron would often go through the streets proclaim the greatness of their patron.

¹ David DeSilva, *Hebrews* (in Fortress Commentary on the Bible), 635.

² James Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 115.

³ "The Old Testament Concept of Solidarity in Hebrews" *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.1 (1998), 159-173.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
5:1-10

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is the best job you've ever had?

Read Hebrews 5:1-10.

Scripture Questions:

In what ways is Jesus similar and different than the high priests of the OT?

What does it mean that Jesus learned obedience?

Why is it important for the author of Hebrews to show that Jesus is a great high priest?

Living Questions:

How have you learned obedience to God during your times of suffering?

How does it change your understanding of suffering to know that Jesus suffered too?

Memory Verse of the Week

SON THOUGH HE WAS, HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE FROM WHAT HE SUFFERED AND,
ONCE MADE PERFECT, HE BECAME THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
5:11-6:3

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

This text appears to be a true aside within the book of Hebrews marked off by an often mistranslated *inclusio* between 5:11 and 6:12. The Greek phrase, *vothroi genesthe*, often translated "become dull" exists in both of these verses, and is the main point of the aside. That it is an aside does not mean that it is unrelated to the material surrounding it. In fact, the call to grow up and quit being dull that occurs in this text in many ways prepares the audience to pay astute attention to the in-depth explanation of Jesus as a high priest that will follow. This thought immediately proceeds from the aside, "was designated to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek" (5:10), and continues through the following four chapters concluding in 10:18, "sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary." The purpose of the aside is obvious from within the text. The author wishes to dive into the deep elements of the supremacy of Christ, but the audience's continued immaturity means that he must first lay the groundwork that should already be mastered. By invoking imagery of children feeding on milk, the author both confronts and insults his audience intentionally. The matter is so pressing, that the author goes to great extremes to get the audience's attention. As has already been demonstrated, he is a skilled rhetorician who commonly uses rhetorical devices to engage, encourage and, now, instigate change.

Devotional Thought:

My son is just reaching the age where he is starting to eat real food, and by real food I mean baby food. One of the new tasks of our day is to feed the baby with a real spoon, and by a real spoon I mean a baby spoon. After many jars of green beans, sweet potatoes, and pears, I have learned three things about feeding babies. First, despite my best efforts, feeding babies is messy. I put on bibs. I keep a wipe next to me. I do the spoon thing where you take the excess food off of their chubby cheeks. It doesn't matter. Feeding babies is messy. Second, it takes forever. It is one of the most tedious elements of my day. There is just 4oz in one of those little jars and, yet, it takes twenty minutes for them to eat it. That's 12oz an hour. Finally, no matter how many times I hand him the spoon, my son can't feed himself. So it is with baby Christians. Learning how to be a disciple of Jesus is initially messy and time consuming. Likewise, no baby Christian can feed themselves. They are still learning how to eat the spiritual bread from the father. It takes a strong mentoring commitment to help grow up a baby Christian. It is a good work, a holy work. The author of Hebrews does not critique helping feed baby Christians. Instead, he says the problem is that the baby Christians aren't ever growing up. They are stuck in delayed adolescence. They refuse to grow up. So it is with the church today. Too many Christians have never grown up and the church spends countless hours feeding those who should be mature. If in your Christian walk you are still needing someone to constantly feed you, grow up.

Memory Verse of the Week

SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BY CONSTANT USE HAVE TRAINED THEMSELVES TO DISTINGUISH GOOD FROM EVIL.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Education in the Ancient World

The language of education saturates this text as is demonstrated in the text notes below. James Thompson notes, “The author’s analysis of the readers’ situation is heavily indebted to Greek educational theory, which Philo had adapted into the Jewish tradition. ‘Sluggish in hearing’ (*nothros tais akoais*) was a common expression for mental obtuseness.”¹ In ancient educational theory, especially that proposed by Philo, learning was about the coming to maturity of the entire individual, and the language he uses to describe this process is abundant within this text. See the chart below:

Hebrews 5:11-6:3	Philo
“child” (<i>nepios</i>) 5:13	The uneducated is referred to as a child (Migration 29)
“unskilled” (<i>apeiros</i>) 6:1	Has yet to study the greater teachings (Agriculture 9, 160)
“milk... meat” (<i>gala... trophy</i>) 5:12	Refers to preliminary education as milky foods and philosophy as meat (Good Person 160: Agriculture 9).
“Mature” (<i>teleiotes</i>) 6:1	Education takes the development of maturity (<i>teleios</i>) through practice (Confusion 181 Prelim. Studies 35).

Zoom Out: Maturity or Perfection

It is important in the conversation about Christian maturity to allow scripture itself to define what it takes to be a mature Christian. The word that is translated maturity is *teleiotes*, which is the same word often translated “perfect” or “complete.” The semantic stem *telei* is used throughout Hebrews and in leading to this point is specifically used concerning Jesus (2:10; 5:9). Most notably, in the immediately preceding verses, the author of Hebrews has demonstrated how Jesus was “made perfect” through his suffering. DeSilva notes the significance of Jesus’ perfection for Christians. “In what sense is Jesus perfected? Hebrews speaks only three times about God perfecting Jesus or Jesus being perfected, so we will have to be especially attentive to the author’s clues as to the meaning of this expression. I would take it as axiomatic, however, that the perfecting of Christ will be related to the perfecting of believers, since in so many places Christ is the model, forerunner, or example for believers to follow, and particularly since the trajectory Christ followed “through suffering into glory” is the course on which the believers have been set (see 2:10; 6:19-20; 10:19-20).”² If Jesus is perfected through suffering, then the call to Christian maturity is to realize that God uses suffering to help bring maturity.

Zoom In: Text Notes

5:12; 6:2 - “teachers... teach... teachings” Gk. *Didaskalos...* *didaskw...* *didache*. This word group with the noun and verb used here are rich terms, which carry more than just the idea of teaching. Jesus often refers to himself as *didaskalos* (John 13:13-14). Likewise, the basic doctrines of the church are often referred to as *didache* as in 6:2. Notice though, in 6:1 below, that *teachings* is not *didache* in that usage.

5:12 - “unskilled” Gk. *apeiros*. Literally, “without making trial or attempt.” This hapex legomena contains the idea of being inexperienced. The idea is that the righteousness from God has not even been attempted to be tasted by those still drinking milk of immaturity.

5:14 - “solid food” Gk. *trophy*. Literally, “food,” “nourishment,” or “meat.” In some cases throughout the NT this word refers specifically to meat (Acts 27:33-34) as the KJV translates it here. In other circumstances, it refers to food that nourishes (James 2:15; Mat 3:4). It seems best to understand it in the sense of nourishing, rich food in this verse in comparison to the weak milk. Yet, meat might actually carry the food metaphor better.

6:1 - “teachings” Gk. *logos*. Literally, “word.” Though the author is building rhetorical momentum in these passages with the word group stemmed from “*didache*,” he choose instead to use the word *logos* in this occasion when referring specifically about the elementary word of Christ. He is continuing to thematically weave *logos* throughout the sermon (see also 5:11, 13).

6:2 - “cleansing rites” Gk. *baptismos*. Literally, “the act of washing, purification.” The verbal form of this word, *baptizw*, is often transliterated “to baptize.” There are two approaches to translating the word in this usage. The first is to take it as it is used in other NT sources as washing (Mar 7:4, 8). Yet, as the word is used here in a series of elementary teachings of the Christian faith, it is better to understand it alongside the verbal form as baptism or ceremonial washing.

¹ James Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 121.

² David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 42-43.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
5:11-6:3

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Who was a memorable teacher you had in your education?

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

Scripture Questions:

How does this passage describe the basic teachings of the Christian faith?

Why does the author of Hebrews want his audience to grow up?

What are the connections between this passage and the rest of chapter 5?

Living Questions:

What keeps Christians in a state of delayed adolescence today? Or, what keeps Christians from maturing?

How is the importance of education and teaching often overlooked in Christian life in today's world?

What do you think it would look like to be a part of a church that was overflowing with mature Christians?

Memory Verse of the Week

SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BY CONSTANT USE HAVE TRAINED
THEMSELVES TO DISTINGUISH GOOD FROM EVIL.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 6:4-12

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

Hebrews 6:4-6 is regarded by many scholars as one of the most theologically difficult passages in the NT. Yet, the difficulty of this passage should not prevent the reader from missing out on the abundance of Hebrews 6:4-12. The audience is reminded of their eternal provisions through rich, sensory enticing language. They have “tasted the heavenly gift” and “the goodness of the word of God.” They are partakers in the Holy Spirit and they have experienced the power of the coming age. They are like land that “drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful for those for whom it is farmed.” In doing so, they are receiving “the blessing of God.” Their continued work and love will never be forgotten by God and they will inherit all that God has promised! For as much as the author of Hebrews uses fear as a warning against falling away, he also uses goodness to allure the audience deeper into their commitment to Christ. This style of writing reflects his urgent pleas found previously in the letter (2:1-4; 3:12-14; 4:1, 9-13). It also serves to explain his discussion of the mature and immature that immediately precedes these verses. The author longs for the audience to feed on the meat that will sustain their faith. This meat is the abundant provision of God. The baby food of the immature leaves them wishy-washy and prone to search for something more. The author reminds his audience there is nothing more cognitively, emotionally, holistically enriching than the goodness of God. In fact, when you’ve tasted God’s abundance and spit it out, you shame him in the same way that his Son was shamed in the crucifixion.

Devotional Thought:

One of the iconic movie scenes from the 80's is John Cusack holding a boom box over his head as it blares, "In Your Eyes." It is a magnificent expression of love. It might not match the soliloquy of Juliet expressing her love to Romeo, but it is iconic, nonetheless. Actually, if you think about every great romantic play or movie probably ever written, they all have that singular moment when the depth of love is expressed in a grandiose gesture. Be it, "you had me at hello," or, "you should be kissed and often, and by someone who knows how." It's funny how often a wife complains to me that her husband never does dramatic displays of his affection like the movies! As if the standard for love is a bad romantic comedy from the 80's. Hebrews 6:10 says, "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." When you have tasted the goodness of all that Jesus offers in eternal life and the depth to which he went to offer us this goodness, it is easy to want to show our love to God in some magnificent singular expression. Yet, the way that we as Christians are called to express our love for Jesus is in service to Jesus' people. Specifically, note that the love is "shown him" because they have "helped his people." We don't have to offer some grandiose, overly dramatic expression of love to God. Like the wise wife says to her husband, "show me you love me by how you love our children." It is in the daily activity of loving others, loving those that Christ loves, that we express our love to Jesus.

Memory Verse of the Week

WE WANT EACH OF YOU TO SHOW THIS SAME DILIGENCE TO THE VERY END, SO THAT WHAT YOU HOPE FOR MAY BE FULLY REALIZED.

HEBREWS



Zoom In: Impossible to Repent

Hebrews 6:4-6 is regarded by many scholars one of the most theologically difficult passages in the NT. It is not necessarily difficult in translation or word usage but in the theology that appears to be presented by the author. The author blankly states that it is “impossible for those who have once been enlightened... and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance.” It is possible to understand this to mean that God’s grace is only effective a first time. Some have argued from this passage that if you have been a Christian and turned away from the faith, you cannot find forgiveness and life in Christ again. Of course, this is difficult theologically because in multiple places throughout both the OT, NT, and Church History, those who have fallen away come back to the fold of God. Likewise, Jesus himself contends that a brother should be forgiven seventy times seven times (Matt 18:22), a number which represents without ending. How can scripture and Jesus himself teach the abundant provision of forgiveness while the author of Hebrews contends a person can only come to enlightenment a singular time? The following four points help in understanding what this passage means *and is intended to do*.

1. It is important to remember how the author of Hebrews is intentionally using emotional rhetoric to frighten his audience toward change. Within this emotionally charged sermon the author is imploring his audience to stop drifting away from Christ. He is desperately concerned with their eternal salvation and trust in Jesus. An apt modern analogy might be that of an exhausted father pleading with his son recovering from drug abuse who is hanging around with his user friends again. The father says, “You have to stay away because you can’t come back from this again!” In truth, the son might be able to come back from another round of abuse. That doesn’t mean the father is lying or that he’s wrong. Rather, the validity of the statement meets the volatility of the situation.

2. The opening word of this section, *adunaton*, is often translated with the phrase, “it is impossible” (see note below). This appears to be a rhetorically loaded word. Aristotle in *Rhetoric* (2:19) starts a diatribe, “Let us first speak of the possible and impossible...” It was a common rhetorical approach to demonstrate how something was impossible or possible innately. For example, Aristotle continues that it is innately impossible for the diameter of a square to be the same as one of the sides. On the other hand if something has a beginning then it is possible for it to have an end. The author of Hebrews wants to demonstrate that which is possible.

3. Most approaches to the text get concerned with the salvation status of the audience, but that is not actually the language of the author of Hebrews. He refers to them not as “saved,” but as, “once enlightened.” This distinction might be important as the author does refer to Christians as saved in other places. Yet, he refers to the enlightened ones only one other time in 10:32, “remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering.” Whereas “saved” denotes a status of being, once enlightened invokes the idea of a singular event. Can people who have been “once enlightened” be “once enlightened again”? By the very nature of “once,” it is impossible for this to take place a second time. You can’t be once enlightened twice!

4. The following phrase translated by the NIV as “to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again” (6:6) is an attempt to capture the purpose of the participles “crucifying... holding.” While the NIV chooses “to their loss” other translations choose “while” or “since.” The participles can be translated causally or temporally. If taken causally it means that the falling away caused Jesus to be crucified all over again. Thus, “since you have crucified...” If taken temporally it might implicitly indicate the authors’ understanding of the current status of those who have fallen away. Thus, “to be brought back to repentance while they are crucifying the Son of God all over again...” Despite the second approaches’ theological usefulness, it is not clear grammatically whether it should be understood this way.

5. The author follows this statement with an agricultural metaphor comparing crop rich land with thistle cursed land. This metaphor can either be taken to expand upon the initial thoughts of the passage or to explain the initial thought. If taken to explain, then there is a simplicity to the author’s thoughts; the faithful bring goodness, whereas, the unfaithful will be burned.

Zoom In: Text Notes

6:4 - “impossible” Gk. *Adunaton*. Literally, “without power.” The stem of this word is “*dunamis*,” which is translated power or strength. Of course, the addition of “a” to the front negates the meaning. Through the LXX and NT this word can often be translated “weak” (Acts 14:8; Rom 15:1). Yet, it is commonly translated as impossible as well (Mar 10:27; Luke 18:27). Within the scope of Hebrews it is used four times (6:4, 18; 10:4; 11:6). In each use in Hebrews it refers to that which is impossible.

6:6 - “crucify again...” Gk. *Anastaurw... paradeigmatizontas*. Literally, “recrucify,” and “to expose to public shame.” The first word is a *hapex legomena* intended to invoke imagery of a second crucifixion of Jesus. The second word is only used in one other place in the NT (Mat 1:19), where Joseph doesn’t want to expose Mary to public disgrace. This combination of words is powerfully used by the author to express the significance of falling away after having been enlightened. Not only do they lose forgiveness but they bring public shame on the benefactor who has blessed them abundantly! They aren’t just making a personal decision, their falling away has communal and theological impact.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
6:4-12

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

When is a time you have been publicly humiliated or watched someone else be publicly humiliated?

Read Hebrews 6:4-12.

Scripture Questions:

What is it exactly that is impossible in this text?

What are the different ways that the author describes the Christian life in this text?

How does this passage relate to the large purpose of Hebrews?

Living Questions:

Why can it be hard at times to keep heading in a Godly direction?

Do you think God will never forgive someone if they fall away and then try to return to Christianity? Why or why not?

How does falling away effect the kingdom of God?

Memory Verse of the Week

WE WANT EACH OF YOU TO SHOW THIS SAME DILIGENCE TO THE VERY END, SO
THAT WHAT YOU HOPE FOR MAY BE FULLY REALIZED.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
6:13-20

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

The author has urged his audience to grow up (5:10-6:3), warned them about the dangers of falling away (6:4-8), and applauded their reslient faithfulness and continued hope in God's promises (6:9-10). Now he moves to deeply embed their hope in God's promises. He shows how Abraham was blessed by God and received what he was promised because of his faithfulness but more importantly because of Gods faithfulness. Abraham serves as a prototype of the kind of commitment Christians are called to. The audience is reminded that God makes and establishes his promises on nothing but God himself for two reasons. First, there is nothing greater than God. An oath is taken based upon something of great value or meaning. For example, we might promise on our life or lay our hand on a Bible. Since there is nothing greater than God, God makes the promised based upon himself. Second, it is impossible for God to not keep his word. Thus, the quality of the promise is ensured by God's own nature. Based upon these two things, those faithful to God have a hope so tangible and real that it can only be assured by God himself. This hope serves as a steadfast anchor to hold them through whatever trouble might come. DeSilva captures the overarching view of this passage well. "The author seeks thus to embed the reliability and certainty of the Christian hope (the promise of entry into the divine, unshakable realm, as well as the assurance of enjoying access to God now) in the truthfulness of God, something that should be beyond question in the minds of the hearers."¹

Devotional Thought:

I was meeting with a middle-aged woman to talk about some problems she was having with her teenage boys. They were good kids but would occasionally, randomly get in minor trouble at school or at home. When we dug in deeper there was always a correlation between the lack of one on one time they were getting with her and their corresponding trouble. I said, "well why don't you make a promise to spend at least one evening a month with each one individually and see if that helps." She responded, "No I don't think I can do that because what if I don't keep that promise?" Her fear of being unable to keep her promise kept her from making a promise to begin with. I don't know which is better: to make a promise and break it or to never make a promise at all. Of course I suggested a third option to her. "You could make your promise and keep it." Keeping our promises is as important in our maturation as is having promises kept for us. In keeping promises we learn integrity and strength. Yet, we also need others to keep their promises for our maturation as well. In others keeping their promises for us we learn trust and faithfulness. The problem is that in our flawed humanness we often neglect or break promises and have promises neglected or broken against us. Yet Gods never neglects nor breaks his promises. In trusting God's promises we are never disappointed, never forsaken, never broken. In fact, through his promises to us we learn faithfulness in our own lives.

Memory Verse of the Week

WE HAVE THIS HOPE AS AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL, FIRM AND SECURE.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Abraham's Promise

The author of Hebrews uses the faithfulness of Abraham as an example of what God desires for his people. "And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised" (6:15). As God calls Abram to leave his home and move to the promised land, he makes him a promise, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:1-3). This seven-fold blessing is reaffirmed to Abraham in Gen 15 & 17 and then referenced throughout the rest of the OT (See Gen 35:1-12; 1 Chr 16:15-18, Psa 105:5-11). Though this covenant is not conditioned on Abraham's faithfulness, Abraham does receive the blessings of the covenant upon his faithfulness. In the same way, Christians today receive the blessing of faithfulness, though the conditions of the covenant are not based upon their faithfulness.

Zoom Out: Inner Sanctuary

One of the most quoted lines from Hebrews is, "we have this hope as an anchor for the soul." Yet, what is often overlooked is where this anchor is actually embedded. The text says that the anchor itself goes into the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. In the OT, the inner sanctuary is referred to as the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy place. It is the connecting place where heaven intersects earth. It is the dwelling place of God on earth. Because of God's great otherness, no one can enter the most holy place and live. Except that once a year a priest, who has been made holy through a rigorous process of cleansing, can enter into the Most holy place to offer a sacrifice directly to God for the atonement of sins for the people (Lev 16). The Most Holy Place is separated by a veil or curtain as directed in Exodus 26:33, "Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place." Thus, the author of Hebrews contends that there is an anchor that goes behind this separating curtain and into the Most Holy Place. It is not simply that Christians have hope as an anchor. It is where this anchor is embedded. N. T. Wright beautifully describes the significance of this imagery, "What he's going to say, more fully, in the passages to come is that Jesus has gone in, not into the earthly Temple in Jerusalem, but into the true sanctuary, the world of heaven itself, right into the innermost courts and into the very presence of the loving father. And he has gone there on our behalf. We are attached to him as though by a great metal cable. He is there, in the very presence of God, like an anchor. As long as we don't let go of the cable, we are anchored to the presence of God; all the winds, tides and storms that may come can't shift us."²

Zoom In: Abraham and Melchizedek

The transition from Abraham to Melchizedek at first might seem odd until the reader is reminded that it is Abraham himself who has the encounter with the priestly line established in Melchizedek. In Genesis 14, Abraham is welcomed by the king of Sodom and the high priest of Salem brings out a covenant meal (Gen 14:18). The reader is informed that not only was he King of Salem, but Melchizedek "was priest of God Most High" (14:18). The priest then blesses Abram on behalf of God Most High and in return Abram tithes to the priest (14:20). Thus, in this story, God's blessing of Abraham and the priesthood of Melchizedek are forever intertwined.

Zoom In: Text Notes

6:14 - "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." Literally, "in blessing I will bless you, in multiplying I will multiply you." A straight translation is awkward in English. This appears to be a Hebrew idiom in Greek that carries the idea of overflowing blessing and abundance. The idea is equivalent to "blessing upon blessing."

6:15 - "waiting patiently" (Gk makrothumew). Literally, "to persevere patiently." The idea of this word is more than just patience, but a perseverance combined with patience. It has the idea of an expected result. Though this is the only time it is used in Hebrews, it is found in numerous places throughout the NT (Mat 18:26, 29; Luk 18:7; 1 Cor 13:4; 1 The 5:14; Jas 5:7-8, 2 Pet 3:9).

¹ David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 64.

² Tom Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2004), 66-67.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
6:13-20

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is one promise that you have kept in your life?

Read Hebrews 6:13-20.

Scripture Questions:

How does God's relationship with Abraham serve as an example of Christians' relationship with God today?

According to Hebrews, why does God make a promise upon himself?

What is the anchor and where is it embedded?

Living Questions:

Why is it so hard to keep focused on hope in our Christian walk?

What are some ways that have helped you stay anchored to Jesus in your walk?

What are God's promises and why can we trust in God's promises?

Memory Verse of the Week

WE HAVE THIS HOPE AS AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL, FIRM AND SECURE.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 7:1-22

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

Melchizedek is a mysterious and mystical figure from the deep history of the OT that often piques our interest and captivates our imagination. The back page of these notes provides an extensive look at the development of Melchizedek over the centuries. Yet, in the biblical narrative, Melchizedek is a fairly insignificant figure who is actually given more attention in Hebrews 7:1-21 than he receives in the rest of the Bible. It is important to remember, in reading and interpreting this section of Hebrews, that the focus of the passage is not Melchizedek but Jesus. The author has gone to great lengths to prepare the audience for this section since he first introduced Melchizedek in 5:6-10. Though the OT and extra-biblical background of this passage is fairly complex, the author's point is actually quite simple. He wants his audience to know that Jesus is the great high priest above all high priests! To do this he must demonstrate Jesus' priestly lineage. Jewish priests must come from the lineage of Aaron of the tribe of Levi. Jesus does not because he is born into the kingly lineage of David. How then can Jesus serve as a high priest? The author adopts the wonderfully ancient figure of Melchizedek just for this purpose. Melchizedek works to establish Jesus' priesthood for three reasons. First, this priestly lineage precedes the Mosaic covenant allowing for its priority over the Levitical priesthood. Second, since Abraham tithed to Melchizedek it shows how Melchizedek is greater than the Levite's lineage in Abraham. Finally, because Melchizedek was not established a priest by lineage but by his eternal character, so Jesus is established as priest in the same way.

Devotional Thought:

How do we introduce ourselves to others? I was recently at a youth rally attended mostly by the iGeneration who probably haven't learned the best way to meet new people face to face. There was a bunch of us who didn't know each other standing in a casual circle. The most gregarious of the group suddenly pointed at me and said, "what's your name?" I replied, "what?" He said with a smile, "I don't know you. What's your name?" I suddenly realized the great opportunity before me and spoke to the whole group, "let me teach all of you how to meet some new." I stuck out my hand with a welcome palm to the gregarious young man who had asked my name and said, "Hi! I'm Brandon. I like your shirt." He chuckled and said, "Thanks! I'm Brian." Just like that, the group started trying it out with one another. Introductions done well are a wonderful thing. They can make someone feel welcome and even jumpstart a friendship. Yet, when done wrong they can be intrusive. They can cause people to be put off. Hebrews 7:19 says that through Christ "a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God." God tried to bring his people close to himself through the law, but the law did not accomplish what it was intended to do. It was a bad introduction to God. The author of Hebrews even says "it was weak and useless" (7:18). So God tried a new introduction. He became flesh in Christ and introduced himself as tangible hope in a darkened world. Through this wonderful and welcoming introduction, God jumpstarted a friendship with us in which we now "draw near to God." What an introduction!

Memory Verse of the Week

JESUS HAS BECOME THE GUARANTOR OF A BETTER COVENANT.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Melchizedek in Biblical Perspective

In Genesis 14, Abraham is welcomed by the king of Salem introduced as Melchizedek. This king brings out a covenant meal (Gen 14:18). The reader is informed that Melchizedek “was priest of God Most High” (14:18). The king and priest then blesses Abram on behalf of God Most High and in return Abram tithes to the priest (14:20). This is the only biblical narrative concerning Melchizedek. Yet, in Jewish tradition especially near the turn of the 1st century AD, Melchizedek sees a renewal of interest and is often used as a mystical figure predating the covenant with Abraham. Especially intriguing is the recent discovery (1950’s) of a dead sea scroll fragment that provides an extended portrayal of the first century understanding of Melchizedek. In summary, Paul Rainbow notes, “The best preserved portion of the document thus weaves around someone named Melchizedek several themes of biblical eschatology, including the liberation of Israel from captivity, their return to the land, a final atonement for their sins, the judgment of their captors, a proclamation of peace to Israel, and the inauguration of God’s reign.”¹ The following chart shows every biblical reference to Melchizedek and a selection of relevant extra-biblical sources.

Genesis 14:18-20	Introduced as King of Salem and “priest of God Most High.” He enters into covenant with Abram through a meal and blessing. “Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”
Psalm 110:1-7	The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” This Psalm seeks to establish the priestly and kingly lineage of David.
Hebrews 4:14-15; 5:6, 10; 6:19-20; 7:1-21	The author of Hebrews establishes the priestly lineage of Jesus through the order of Melchizedek.
11Q13 - Manuscript from Qumran Cave, 1st Cen. BC	Portrays Melchizedek as a type of Davidic Messiah who serves alongside the true and anointed priest in the temple.
Philo of Alexandria, <i>Legum Allegoriae</i> 3.79; <i>De Congressu 89</i> ; <i>De Abrahamo 235</i> , 20 BC - 50 AD.	Philo uses his standard allegorical approach to interpret the interaction of Abraham and Melchizedek. He sees Mel as a reference to the divine Logos, a pattern by which man was originally constructed.
2 Enoch, 1st Cent AD	Melchizedek is born of the recently deceased sister-in-law of Noah as a priest praising God and is saved from the flood by the Angel Michael who takes him briefly to paradise. Mel serves as the chief priest in the post-flood world and will return as the chief priest in the end times.

Zoom In: Priest Forever

Of the many descriptions given of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7, one that is especially interesting is that he is thought to be an eternal priest or a priest forever. In his studies into the Jewish background of Melchizedek, Donald Hagner points out an interesting note on the overarching biblical silence about Melchizedek, “What actually is being pointed out by the author, however, is the surprising silence of Scripture about the lineage and the birth and death of Melchizedek. In a rabbinic way, the silence is seen to be significant rather than simply fortuitous, especially for a person of such great status, who was both a king and a priest. Because there is no record of Melchizedek’s death, nor therefore of the termination of his priesthood (or of any succession to it), the conclusion can be drawn that he remains a priest forever.”²

Zoom In: Text Notes

7:3 - “resembling” (Gk. *Aphomoio*w). This *hapex legomena* is common in extra-biblical literature and somewhat easy to understand from its composition. The word combines “omoio,” which means to be like something, with the prefix “apw,” which means to form something. The word then means “to be made like” or “resembling.” Though it is a verb, Ellingworth rightly contends it should be taken adjectively.³ Thus, “like the Son of God.”

7:10 - “Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.” Literally, “he was still in the loins of his father.” This is strong language about Abraham who of course is the father of the Hebrews. The idea appears to be that all of the descendants of Abraham are within his loins when he offers a tithe to Melchizedek.

7:11 - “perfection” (Gk *teleiosis*). Literally, “a completing, perfecting.” Though this exact form of the word only occurs in one other place in the NT (Luk 1:45) it is related to the *telei* stemmed words that fill Hebrews. Notably, this word points back to the Christological (5:9) and maturity sections (6:1-3).

7:16 - “indestructible” (Gk. *Akalutos*). This *hapex legomena* is easy to understand in that it is a strong word with an “a” prefix added to negate the meaning. The root word is *kataluw*, which means to dissolve or dissipate.

¹Paul Rainbow, “Melchizedek as a Messiah at Qumran” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997): 181.

²Hagner, Donald A., *Hebrews* (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series) (Kindle Locations 2470-2473). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, in The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 359.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
7:1-22

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Who is a person you have been told you resemble or look like?

Read Hebrews 7:1-22.

Scripture Questions:

Who is Melchizedek and what do we know about him?

In what ways is Jesus like and superior to Melchizedek?

What descriptions of Jesus stand out to you in this passage and why?

Living Questions:

Is it important in our Christian walk to know the OT and the Law? Why or why not?

What is the relationship between hope and drawing near to God?

What has it meant in your Christian walk to be able to “draw near to God?”

Memory Verse of the Week

JESUS HAS BECOME THE GUARANTOR OF A BETTER COVENANT.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
7:23-28

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

The continued purpose of this section is to keep new Christians from slipping back into Judaism by showing how much better the priesthood of Jesus is than the priesthood of the OT. Yet, David DeSilva notes that there is more in play in these verses. "One purpose may be to make the priesthood of Jesus more real for the hearers. The author is, after all, describing events in the "life" or "career" of Jesus that are unavailable for human observation. That Jesus should be understood as a "priest" at all is probably a claim requiring demonstration. Arguments concerning the inefficacy of the first priesthood... serve to demonstrate the necessity, and hence the reality, of this new order of priesthood on which the hearers are asked to rely so completely and for which they are to risk so much. That Jesus was consecrated to priesthood after his ascension "through the heavens" (4:14), took his own blood into the heavenly holy of holies, cleansed that immaterial and invisible sacred place, and sat down at God's right hand certainly requires some substantiation. How indeed could the author know what Jesus does in heaven? Rather than answering this question as a visionary who claims to see into the invisible realm, the author approaches it as an exegete. The author's discussion of the priestly ministry of Jesus alongside that of the Levitical priesthood can be understood as an exercise in typology, whereby present and forthcoming acts of God... are understood in terms of past acts. Based on this principle, the author of Hebrews has access to knowledge about Jesus' post-ascension priesthood based on the patterns of priesthood known from the prototype discussed in the Torah."¹

Devotional Thought:

There are times when a pickle jar can humble the strongest of men. It can be in these simple moments that we recognize our weakness. Yet, more often it is the moments of true humility, of failure or, even, illness, that we recognize our weakness. It is not surprising that the Greek word for weakness, *astheneia*, can also be translated infirmity, disease or sickness. In fact, the translations often differ with how to translate it in the passage at hand. Some say, "men in all their weakness," while others "high priest which have infirmity." There is a connection here that is authentic, but downplayed in our culture. Recently, I was visiting a friend at the hospital who was struggling through cancer. This friend tried to be upbeat, but I could tell there was something unexpressed. I asked, "how are you doing?" The reply was automatic, "Oh great... feeling good. We are going to beat this. I'm stronger than this cancer." Yet, the eyes told a different story so I asked again, "how are you doing?" With a deep exhale, "I'm weak. Down to my bones, weak. No other way to put it. I can smile and put on a strong front, but I'm sick." Illness, infirmity, weakness. This is our broken humanness. Like the strong man broken before the pickle jar, we confess, "I am weak." Like the healthy ravaged by the cancer, we admit, "I am sick." This is why, like the priest of old, we must realize we are unable to save, unable to heal, unable to offer atonement. It's not for a lack of desire, but for a lack of strength. Yet, Hebrews reminds us that there is one who can save, one who is strong enough. One who knew weakness but remained faithful. One who serves on our behalf. One "who has been made perfect forever."

Memory Verse of the Week

SUCH A HIGH PRIEST TRULY MEETS OUR NEED—ONE WHO IS HOLY, BLAMELESS, PURE, SET APART FROM SINNERS, EXALTED ABOVE THE HEAVENS.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Jesus in Hebrews

Hebrews 7:26 offers this wonderful description of Jesus as “one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.” The author of Hebrews provides not only one of the most robust portraits of Jesus in the NT, but also one of the most beautiful. In each point of exaltation by comparison, the author elaborately paints in the audience’s mind a detailed image of the majesty of Jesus. Note the following descriptions:

- “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...” (1:3).
- “Yet we do see Jesus... now crowned with glory and honor...” (2:9).
- “In order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God...” (2:17).
- “Fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest...” (3:1).
- “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 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (5:8-10).
- “Our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever...” (6:20).
- “Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant” (7:22).
- “Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (7:24-25).
- “We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being” (8:1-2).
- “But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool” (10:12-13).
- “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” (12:2).
- “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (13:8).
- “Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood” (13:12).

Zoom In: He Became Us

English versions struggle to translate the phrase that begins 7:26, “Such a high priest truly meets our needs.” The variety of translational approaches demonstrate this: “for it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest” (ESV), “for it was fitting for us to have such a high priest” (NASB), “for this is the kind of high priest we need” (HCSB). Yet, it might be the KJV that most accurately captures the meaning with their awkward phrasing, “for such a high priest became us.” This phrase is linked grammatically with Hebrews 2:10, “It was fitting that God...” It appears that there is a deeper understanding than simply “it was fitting” at play. The author is emphasizing the necessary activity of Jesus on our behalf. The emphasis is not upon us but upon what Jesus has done. Thus, Donald Hagner points out, “The words “meets our need” are an interpretation of the literal “it was fitting.” The inference that Jesus is able to meet our needs is a correct one, but the emphasis here falls rather upon the superior character of Jesus and hence the superior character of his work, as the following verses show.”²

Zoom In: Text Notes

7:24 - “forever” (Gk *eis ton aiona*). Literally, “into the ages.” . This phrase which is often translated forever carries the idea of eternity but also of the expectation of the coming age of God’s perfect rule. In this usage it is undoubtedly a reference to Psalm 110:4, “you are a priest forever.”

7:25 - “completely” (Gk *pantelys*). Literally, “all-complete.” Though this word is not a *hapex legomena*, it is used only this time in Hebrews and in one other place in the NT (Luk 13:11). A closer examination of the stem of this word adds insight. The word is constructed from two words. The first is *panta*, which means all or every. The second word is *teles*, which has been used repeatedly in Hebrews and ties directly into 7:28 that describes Jesus as having “been made perfect forever.” The word then describes Jesus’s work as saving all-completely.

7:27 - “once for all” (Gk *ephapax*). Literally, “once upon all.” This wonderful little construct word combines *epi* (on behalf of, upon) with *apax* (once). This ties together the priestly, salvific activity of Jesus. His one time sacrifice has an effect upon those for whom it was offered.

¹David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Kindle Edition), Kindle Location 3,552.

²Hagner, Donald A., *Hebrews (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 2470-2473.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
7:23-28

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

If you could live forever, what is one thing you would definitely get bored with?

Read Hebrews 7:23-28.

Scripture Questions:

How would you describe the lineage of Jesus' priesthood?

In just these verses, what description of Jesus stands out to you and why?

Compare and contrast the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Jesus.

Living Questions:

Why does it matter that Jesus serves as a priest still today?

How does our weakness accentuate Jesus' perfection?

What does it mean for your daily Christian walk that Jesus "saves completely?"

Memory Verse of the Week

SUCH A HIGH PRIEST TRULY MEETS OUR NEED—ONE WHO IS HOLY, BLAMELESS,
PURE, SET APART FROM SINNERS, EXALTED ABOVE THE HEAVENS.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
8:1-13

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

The author of Hebrews has spent the previous four chapters establishing the priestly role, lineage, and function of Jesus. Chapter eight begins with a summary of clarification and purpose for the author's intention of this entire section. Note especially the author's introduction, "Now the main point of what we are saying is this" (8:1). Having reflected on how Jesus serves as an eternal and perfect priest in the lineage of Melchizedek, the author now wishes to show how Jesus offers a better priestly sacrifice than the previous covenant allowed. Since Melchizedek has no association with the Mosaic covenant, he now moves to compare Jesus to the Levitical priests and their sacrificial activity. Thus, he spends verses 3-13 comparing the old Mosaic covenant with the new Jesus covenant pausing only to demonstrate the prophetic foretelling of this replacement by quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is important in reading chapter eight to keep from being bogged down by the difficult covenantal language. The author's point here is not to show the failures of the old covenant. Rather, it is to demonstrate the power of Jesus' sacrifice. This is not an obscure discussion for Midrashic debate. Rather, at the core of Christian life is the salvific significance of Jesus' perfect covenant. Thus, he opens, "We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being" (8:1-2).

Devotional Thought:

It is not unusual after a bad loss for a coach in any sport to stand at the podium to answer questions and say, "This ones on me. We weren't ready to play. We didn't execute. We've got to do better." Maybe to some extent that might be true but the reality is only the players actually play the game. The coach has never struck out with the bases loaded, thrown an ill-advised pass for an interception, or missed a free throw. It is the ones actually playing who are responsible for the loss and failure. Yet, the coach stands there and takes responsibility. This metaphor might be useful as we struggle to understand what the author of Hebrews is saying about the old covenant. "For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said..." (8:7-8). The last line could also read "But God found fault and said to the people..." The point either way is the same, there is failure and fault in the old covenant. What is this failure? In quoting Jeremiah, the author provides an answer, "because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord" (8:9). The fault of the old covenant is the failure of the people, but God, like the great coach, takes the failure upon himself. It is not that the law was innately flawed, (why would God construct a flawed system?) but that the flaws of the people distressed the old covenant. God says we will do better this time and establishes a new covenant that allows for no human error by confirming it through the faithfulness of Jesus.

Memory Verse of the Week

"THE MINISTRY JESUS HAS RECEIVED IS AS SUPERIOR TO THEIRS AS THE COVENANT OF WHICH HE IS MEDIATOR IS SUPERIOR TO THE OLD ONE,"

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: The Heavenly Reality in Judaism

The idea of the earthly sanctuary as a type of the heavenly sanctuary precedes the writing of Hebrews. In fact, the author of Hebrews points out as much in his quoting Exodus 25:40 to show how the earthly sanctuary relates to the heavenly sanctuary, “see that you make them according to the pattern (type) shown you on the mountain.” This is consistent with the broader belief in Judaism that the entire earthly sanctuary reflected the heavenly sanctuary (See Ezekiel 40-48; 1 Chronicles 28:11-12, 18-19; Wisdom 9:8-10). Likewise, Gary Steyn has shown how later Judaism held strongly to this idea both in the writings of Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹ This idea can also be seen in other NT writings such as Colossians 2:16-17, “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

Zoom In: Antithesis in Hebrews

As has been demonstrated throughout the homily, the author of Hebrews employs great rhetorical strategy and technique to support his argument that Jesus is superior to any other form of religious practice. Within chapter 8, the author begins a series of thesis and antithesis arguments to defend his view. By juxtaposing the superior (thesis) with the inferior (antithesis), he is able to briefly but powerfully defend his point that Jesus is the high priest “who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord [thesis], not by a mere human being [antithesis].” The side chart taken from James Thompson lists the following antithesis through chapter ten.²

Zoom In: Type and Prototype in Hebrews

Hebrews 8:5 describes the earthly sanctuary in three different but related ways. First, it is described as a “prototype” or “blueprint” (see note below). Second, it describes the sanctuary as a shadow (Gk *skia*). The first of these descriptions often causes confusion as it contends that the earthly sanctuary precedes the heavenly one. The NET Bible offers a poignant description of the idea in play. “There are two main options for understanding the conceptual background of the heavenly sanctuary imagery. The first is to understand the imagery to be functioning on a vertical plane. This background is Hellenistic, philosophical, and spatial in orientation and sees the earthly sanctuary as a copy of the heavenly reality. The other option is to see the imagery functioning on a horizontal plane. This background is Jewish, eschatological, and temporal and sees the heavenly sanctuary as the fulfillment and true form of the earthly sanctuary which preceded it. The second option is preferred, both for lexical reasons... and because it fits the Jewish context of the book (although many scholars prefer to emphasize the relationship the book has to Hellenistic thought).”³

Zoom In: Text Notes

8:5 - “copy” (Gk *upodeigma*). Literally, “blueprint,” or “prototype.” Copy is a poor translation of this word which is better understood as that which is to be copied such as a blueprint or prototype. For example, this is the word that Jesus uses to describe his footwashing as an example for the disciples in John 13:15. See also Heb 4:11; 9:23; Jas 5:10; 2 Pet 2:6.

8:6 - “ministry” (Gk *letourgia*). Literally, “public service.” This word carries the idea of any publicly held office or positions of service. In other usage it is often translated service (Php 2:17, 30). Yet, in its current concept it appears to point backwards to the very specific public tasks of the Jewish priesthood. This is consistent with its usage in Heb 9:21 as well.

8:8 - “But God found fault with the people and said.” There are significant manuscript differences with this theologically tricky phrase. Other manuscripts have, “God found fault with it and said to the people.” Though it is theologically more difficult, the latter appears to be the original reading grammatically.

Thesis	Antithesis
True Tent (8:2; 9:23)	Antitype of True Tent (9:24)
Which the Lord Made (8:2)	Handmade (8:2; 9:11)
Archetype (8:5)	Copy and Shadow (8:5; 9:23)
More Perfect Tent (9:11)	Earthly Sanctuary (9:1)
Most Holy Place (9:3)	Holy Place (9:2)
Second Covenant (8:7)	First Covenant (8:7)
New Covenant (8:13; 9:15)	Old Covenant (8:13)
Better Ministry (8:6)	Serve in a Copy (8:5)
Once for All (9:26; 10:10, 14)	Constantly / Each Year (10:1)
Once (9:27-28)	Many Times (9:25-26; 10:11)
Conscience (9:9, 14)	Flesh (9:10, 13)
Time of Reformation (9:15)	Present Time (9:9)
His Blood (9:12)	Bull & Goat Blood (9:12, 13)

¹ Gary J. Steyn, “‘On Earth as it is in Heaven’... The heavenly Sanctuary motif in Hebrews 8:5 and its textual connection with the ‘shadowy copy’... of LXX Exodus 25:40.”

² James Thompson, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2008), 167.

³ NET Bible, “Hebrews 8:5” See footnote 6 &7.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
8:1-13

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is something in your life that you thought was really important at one time but now you don't think is that important?

Read Hebrews 8:1-13.

Scripture Questions:

What are the differences between the New and Old Covenant in chapter eight?

What does it mean that the earthly sanctuary was a "blueprint" or "prototype" of the heavenly sanctuary?

How does the quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34 help us understand the weakness of the old covenant?

Living Questions:

Why does it matter for your spiritual life that Jesus is at the right hand of God?

What stands out to you about the promise of the new covenant given in the Jeremiah quotation?

Memory Verse of the Week

"THE MINISTRY JESUS HAS RECEIVED IS AS SUPERIOR TO THEIRS AS THE COVENANT OF WHICH HE IS MEDIATOR IS SUPERIOR TO THE OLD ONE,"

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 9:1-15

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

On first glance, chapter nine appears to be simply a continuation of the author's overarching argument for the supremacy of Jesus' priesthood that he has been making through the previous three chapters. There is a continuation of the temple theme (9:1-5) and continued conversation about the priesthood (9:6-10). Once again, these elements are compared to the work of Jesus (9:11-15) and he returns to the importance of the promise and oath made to the Israelites and Christians (9:16-22). Likewise, the author compares the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries as done in chapter eight (9:23-28). Yet, the author is actually making a subtle but significant shift in this chapter. David DeSilva articulates this well, "The argument turns from comparison of the "staff" of the two priesthoods (the order of Levi and the order of Melchizedek) to a comparison of the "cultic regulations" and the sacrifices enacted by these priesthoods. The first covenant's regulations for worship prevented all but the priests from approaching the holy place and all but the high priest from approaching the holy of holies. The author's fundamental critique of the arrangements under the first covenant is that the sacrifices offered 'are unable to perfect the conscience of the worshiper,' so that he or she could enter into the presence of the living God. The mass of God's people was kept at a distance from the holy God, unable to discover their entry into the "holy places."¹ Thus, the author has shifted to now explaining how Christians have a standing in the most holy place through the eternal sacrifice of Jesus.

Devotional Thought:

The author of Hebrews again points out that Jesus did not go into the earthly representation of the temple. Rather, he went into the heavenly reality of the temple itself. N.T. Wright in his commentary on Hebrews points out the significance of what this means, "It reaches to the depths of the personality. Just as Jesus has gone into the very heart of the presence of God, not simply into a man-made building with an inner chamber but into the place where God lives in light and holiness, so the effects of his sacrifice are to be felt not only in the outer lives of his people, in terms of restoration to fellowship or being made 'clean' again in a bodily sense, but in the inward depths, the 'holy of holies' at the core of each individual person, the place where we really are who we are. Hebrews will speak several more times about the 'conscience' of worshippers (see 9.14; 10.2; 10.22; 13.18). Each time, the writer is stressing the fact that under the new covenant there is a purification available which goes to the center of things."² How few people in our lives really want our heart? So often I cringe these days when I get a phone call or text message because I know that it is somebody wanting something from me. Not wanting *me*, but wanting something from me. They don't care about the inner part of me, they just have a demand of the external. Not God. Not ever with God. God so wants the deep inward, Holy of Holies, part of us that he brings his own son to offer the blood sacrifice to redeem the Holy of Holies within us. God wants me. The deep conscience of who I am. That's where God wants to be.

Memory Verse of the Week

FOR THIS REASON CHRIST IS THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT, THAT THOSE WHO ARE CALLED MAY RECEIVE THE PROMISED ETERNAL INHERITANCE

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: The Sanctuary in Judaism

The author of Hebrews begins chapter nine with an extended description of the furnishings of the tabernacle. For the most part, these elements are consistent with the descriptions given in Exodus: Holy Place (Heb 9:2, 6; Ex 26:33-34), Golden Lampstand (Heb 9:2; Ex 25:31-40), Table of Showbread (Heb 9:2; Ex 25:23-30), Inner Curtain (Heb 10:20; Ex 26:31-35), Holy of Holies (Heb 9:3, 7; Ex 26:33-34), Ark (Heb 9:4-5; Ex 25:10-22). Yet, there are some notable differences such as the location of the Altar of Incense which Hebrews describes as within the Holy of Holies (Heb 9:4) and Exodus describes as before the curtain in the Holy Place (30:1-10). Likewise, the author includes manna and Aaron's rod within the ark of the covenant though there is no OT account of these items being in the ark (See Ex 16:33 and Num 17:2-9). Despite these minor differences, the author finally moves to his real focus in describing the tabernacle furnishings: the mercy seat. As the most important furnishing within the temple, the mercy seat was a gold seat laid upon the top of the ark of the covenant, surrounded by the cherubim, where the blood of atonement was offered for the sins of the people (Lev 16:15). By taking his audience quickly through a imaginative tour of the Tabernacle, he has now reached the point of true comparison between the old and new covenant as he will expound in 9:6-10:18.

Zoom In: "We cannot discuss these things in detail now."

Why not? Though the original audience surely knows why these things couldn't be discussed in detail, the modern reader is left asking, "why not?" Three theories seem viable. First, though as modern readers we read this letter often with excruciating detail, it was intended originally as a single event homily. Any preacher knows that what is not included in a sermon is often as important as what is. The author simply excludes these details for time concerns. Second, if the audience is indeed of a Jewish heritage which is often surmised from the rest of the homily, then there wouldn't be a need to rehash the furnishings of the temple that would have been well-known to the audience. Finally, there might also be a theological and rhetorical purpose to this statement. The author doesn't want the audience to get bogged down in the details of the temple and miss the overarching point of the supremacy of Christ in comparison to the Levitical priesthood.

Zoom In: First and Second

There are two wonderfully simple Greek words that the author of Hebrews uses that tie together chapter eight through ten. They are "protos" (first) and "deuteros" (second). They are both introduced in 8:7, "For if that *first* (protos) covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a *second* (deuteros)." There are four main points of comparison the author makes between the first and second. First, there is the comparison of the first and second covenant as already displayed in 8:7 and returned to in 8:13, 9:1; 15, 18. Second, the author compares the *protos* and *deuteros* room or the holy place with the most holy place within the tabernacle, "A tabernacle was set up. In its *first* room where the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was call the Holy Place, behind the *second* curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place" (9:2-3, see also 9:6-7). Third, in 9:28, the author speaks of the coming of Christ, "So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a *second* time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Finally, the author concludes this theme with an overarching first and second in 10:9, "Then he said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the *first* to establish the *second*."

Zoom In: Text Notes

9:5 - "cherubim" (Gk xeroubim). The Cherubim were an order of angel (Ez 1:5-14) whose representation was placed around the top of the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:18-20). Though mentioned routinely in the OT, interestingly enough, this is the only NT reference to them (though some contend Rev 4:6-9 refers to them).

9:8 - "Holy Spirit" (Gk pneumatos tou aiou). The attentive reader will notice a significant pneumatological motif in this verse. The author of Hebrews is attributing the writing of the OT law and directions for the making of the tabernacle to the Holy Spirit. Interestingly enough, the first person in all of Scripture to be described as being full of the Holy Spirit is Bezalel in Exodus 31:1-6 who was, in fact, charged with the making of the temple furnishings.

9:13 - "outwardly" (Gk sark). Literally, "flesh." The ESV does a good job of translating this phrase, "for the purification of the flesh." It is important to not place Paul's flesh/spirit dualism upon Hebrews. Instead, in Hebrews, flesh is most often affiliated with earthly life (2:14; 5:7; 9:10; 10:20; 12:9).

¹David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Kindle Edition), location 3,962.

²N.T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* in *The New Testament for Everyone* (Kindle Edition), 95.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
9:1-15

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

In your life, who is a person who truly cares about you?

Read Hebrews 9:1-15.

Scripture Questions:

What was the significance of the temple furnishings for the Old Covenant?

Why was the Most Holy Place so significant for the Israelites?

What are the similarities and differences between the earthly and heavenly tabernacle?

Living Questions:

Read this quote from N.T. Wright on the importance of Jesus' sacrifice in the Most Holy Place: "It reaches to the depths of the personality. Just as Jesus has gone into the very heart of the presence of God, not simply into a man-made building with an inner chamber but into the place where God lives in light and holiness, so the effects of his sacrifice are to be felt not only in the outer lives of his people, in terms of restoration to fellowship or being made 'clean' again in a bodily sense, but in the inward depths, the 'holy of holies' at the core of each individual person, the place where we really are who we are. Hebrews will speak several more times about the 'conscience' of worshippers (see 9.14; 10.2; 10.22; 13.18). Each time, the writer is stressing the fact that under the new covenant there is a purification available which goes to the center of things."

Based on this quote and what we've read, what does it mean to you that God wants to redeem your Most Holy Place?

Memory Verse of the Week

FOR THIS REASON CHRIST IS THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT, THAT THOSE
WHO ARE CALLED MAY RECEIVE THE PROMISED ETERNAL INHERITANCE

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
9:16-28

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

As noted last week, in Chapter nine, the author is making a subtle but significant shift in his continuing discussion of the temple furnishings. David DeSilva articulates this well, "The argument turns from comparison of the "staff" of the two priesthoods (the order of Levi and the order of Melchizedek) to a comparison of the "cultic regulations" and the sacrifices enacted by these priesthoods. The first covenant's regulations for worship prevented all but the priests from approaching the holy place and all but the high priest from approaching the holy of holies. The author's fundamental critique of the arrangements under the first covenant is that the sacrifices offered 'are unable to perfect the conscience of the worshiper,' so that he or she could enter into the presence of the living God."¹ This contrast is further strengthened with the importance of sacrificial blood as brought forward in 9:16. Although blood has always been a necessary part of the ritualistic cleansing of the temple elements, this blood was never sufficient to provide for the completion of the covenant or will. This appears to be for three reasons. First, what was being purified by the sprinkled blood was only a copy of the heavenly reality (9:23-24). Second, the blood sacrifices had to be continually repeated (9:25). Finally, the blood offered was not potent enough to enact the will (9:25). In contrast, Jesus went into the heavenly reality where he offered one sufficient blood sacrifice, his own, that was potent enough to enable force of the will. Thus, Jesus' cleansing is not on the earthly ceremonial and copied level, but on the heavenly substantial level of prototype consciousness.

Devotional Thought:

Tom Petty was right, the waiting is the hardest part. I was humming his little tune as I was standing in line at the pharmacy recently. They were doing a great job at Walgreens, but it was cold season and the line was loooong. I fiddled with my phone for a bit, but there are only so many Facebook reposts and ESPN insider stories you can read. As I stood there, I began to think about all the things I had waited on in my life. Some were significant. Most were not. Still they came fast to mind. I've waited for food from a restaurant. Why was that the first that came to mind? I waited to turn sixteen to get my driver's license! That took forever. I wait for green lights constantly, constantly, more than any human should have to wait for anything. I waited at the alter as my soon-to-be wife slowly walked towards me. That was a good wait. I wait in the doctor's office. They are busy though, and sick people have to be the worst to keep on time. I waited for both my children to be born. The anticipation was overwhelming. I'm sure my wife didn't appreciate the wait, but there was something holy in it for me. I wait for commercials to be over, and I wait for the batter to get back in the box! All of these things and a hundred more ran through my head. Waiting creates anticipation and cultivates patience. Sometimes in the midst of the hectic chaos of our lives we forget that spiritually, faithfully we are in a place of waiting. The author of Hebrews reminds us in 9:28, "So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

Memory Verse of the Week

CHRIST WAS SACRIFICED ONCE TO TAKE AWAY THE SINS OF MANY; AND HE WILL APPEAR A SECOND TIME, NOT TO BEAR SIN, BUT TO BRING SALVATION TO THOSE WHO ARE WAITING FOR HIM.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Blood

The author of Hebrews states, “This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.” He continues over the next few verses to describe the cleansing activities given through the Mosaic covenant that included the sprinkling of blood over both the tabernacle and its fixtures. Without a doubt, blood was the primary tool for ritual cleansing in OT law. Still, the significant difference between the blood of the Mosaic covenant and Jesus’ covenant is that the blood of the Mosaic covenant was always the blood of animals whereas the blood of the new covenant is, in fact, human blood. There is never a command for human blood sacrifice in the Mosaic covenant. Yet, the new covenant required Jesus’ blood sacrifice. How does the author of Hebrews reconcile this? To hear his answer we must think in three dimensions: Spatially, Temporally, and Substantially. Or maybe it’s better for us to think of it this way; Jesus was the right man in the right place at the right time.

1. Right Place - The first part of the author’s argument is spatial. This refers to the place in which the sacrifice of Jesus takes place. This point is vital to understanding Hebrew’s Christology. The author of Hebrews contends that the temple was an earthly type or copy of the heavenly prototype or archetype (see text note below). In the earthly copy of the temple the bloods of birds, goats and bulls was allowed. Yet, Jesus’ sacrifice was not offered in the earthly type or copy. In fact, he was sacrificed outside of the temple and, even outside of the walls of Jerusalem, but the author contends that where Jesus really offered the sacrifice was in heaven itself in God’s actual presence.

2. Right Time - The priests had to enter into the earthly copy of the temple time and time again to offer the blood sacrifice because it was always bound by the continuing flow of linear, earthly time. Yet, Jesus only appeared one time in heaven to offer that sacrifice. This was “at the culmination (or consummation) of the ages.” In Jewish thought, God’s interaction with humanity was marked by “ages” (aiwn). They were living in the present age where God was in battle to install his kingdom. Yet, in the age to come, God would rule completely over everything. Thus, the author interprets the consummation of the age to come with the heavenly, eternal sacrifice of Jesus.

3. Right Man - Being in the right place at the right time, we are now able to understand why Jesus’ own blood was required. The cleansing blood of animals was just a copy or type of the heavenly reality because it was offered in the earthly copy of the temple and had to be repeatedly offered. As the author points out, “it was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” The true sacrifice had to not only be in the right place and at the right time but also had to be the right sacrifice. A “better” sacrifice was needed. A sacrifice without blemish, without fault and whose blood was worthy of the heavenly courtroom of God. There is one type of flesh and blood that is worthy.

Zoom In: “Diatheke” - Covenant or Testament or Will?

Last week introduced the discussion around the Greek word *diatheke*, which though used sparingly throughout the NT, over half (17 of 33) of its occurrences take place in Hebrews. Likewise, 15 of the 17 uses occur between chapters seven and ten, and the word is used climactically four times in 9:15-18. There are fundamentally two different ways to translate the word: Covenant or Testament. Last week it was proposed that the better translation is covenant. That having been said, this week’s text offers a more specific understanding of how the author might be using *diatheke* in verses 16-18 as a particular type of covenant. This type of covenant is only put into place after proof of death (9:16) and cannot take effect while a person is living (9:17). Both in modern and ancient cultures this is true of one particular kind of covenant (or contract), that being a will. The author appears to be making a play on words with the common Greek word *diatheke* by alluding to its contemporary Greek meaning of will and still holding its common Old Testament (LXX) meaning of covenant. In doing so, he is able to show how Jesus’ death was necessary to fulfill the OT covenant (*diatheke*) because a will (*diatheke*) cannot be in effect without the testator’s death.

Zoom In: Text Notes

9:23 - “copies” Gk. *Upodeigma*. Literally, “blueprint,” or “prototype.” Copy is a poor translation of this word which is better understood as that which is to be copied such as a blueprint or prototype. For example, this is the word that Jesus uses to describe his foot washing as an example for the disciples in John 13:15. See also Heb 4:11; 9:23; Jas 5:10; 2 Pet 2:6.

9:24 - “copy” Gk. *antitupos*. The author has commonly used the word “type” (*tupos*), but now uses a word that specifically means a thing resembling another. This word is only used one other place in the NT. Peter uses it to describe the relationship Noah and the Ark saved through the waters has with baptism today (1 Peter 3:21). This relates to the concept of pattern, copy, or type found in 8:5 and 9:23.

¹David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Kindle Edition), location 3,962.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
9:16-28

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

How do you usually deal with the death of a loved one?

Read Hebrews 9:16-28.

Scripture Questions:

According to this passage, what relationship is there between blood and covenant?

In what ways is Jesus' sacrifice different than the sacrifices under Moses?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to be offered as a sacrifice?

Living Questions:

Why do you think the shedding of blood is necessary for forgiveness as noted in 9:22?

Read 9:27-28 again. How is waiting an important aspect of a Christian's spiritual journey?

What line or phrase sticks out to you in chapter nine and why?

Memory Verse of the Week

CHRIST WAS SACRIFICED ONCE TO TAKE AWAY THE SINS OF MANY; AND HE WILL APPEAR A SECOND TIME, NOT TO BEAR SIN, BUT TO BRING SALVATION TO THOSE WHO ARE WAITING FOR HIM.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 10:1-18

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

This week's text is best understood as concluding remarks with an expositional summary. Before moving into the final chapters of the sermon where the author exhorts the church into greater faithfulness and commitment, he concludes the argument he has been building since the first chapter, and more specifically since chapter five, that Jesus is greater than any OT cultic expression because he perfectly fulfills, once for all, the needs of the law. The author finalizes this point by once again quoting Psalm 40, alluding to Psalm 110, and quoting Jeremiah 31:33-34 again. William Lane notes the significance of the Jeremiah quotations, "In the quotation of Jeremiah 31:33-34, two blessings of the new covenant are underscored: (1) God will inscribe his law on the hearts and minds of his people; (2) he will no longer remember their sins and misdeeds. These provisions are the 'better promises' of the new covenant to which the preacher alluded in 8:6."¹ As commonly used in Greek rhetoric, the audience is given a strong *synkresis* punctuated with a seemingly inflammatory statement, "He sets aside the first to establish the second" (10:9). What is the first and second? The first is the sacrificial system of the OT based upon the routine activities of the priesthood. The second is the faithful self sacrifice of Jesus' own body once for all. In fact, Jesus' faithfulness, and his commitment is accentuated by the author who twice quotes Jesus as saying, "Here I am, I have come to do your will."

Devotional Thought:

"One last game... winner takes all?!" Although my team had lost four straight pickup basketball games, these arrogant words flowed from my mouth anyway. The other team just shook their heads laughing. Finally, one of them spoke up, "Sure, winner takes all." Somehow, despite myself and all the odds, we managed to win the final game. We grinned from ear to ear. As we sat beside the basketball court recounting the games one of the guys from the other team said, "well I'm glad you guys got the last one to let you leave on a good note." A guy from our team immediately spoke up, "what are you talking about? We won them all!" The other guy said, "yeah right..." to which I kindly replied, "we did win them all, remember, winner takes all."

We don't really mean that when we say it though. Maybe in some kind of high stakes game I've never been a part of, but for the most part, it's just an expression. A way to make it count for something. Winner doesn't really take all. I think we often think the same about what Jesus has done for our sin. The author of Hebrews states adamantly, "we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (10:10). Once for all. All of our sin is taken care of. Jesus takes all. All of our sin. All of our indebtedness. All of our blemishes, failures, shame, and guilt. We have been made holy once for all. These aren't meaningless words at the end of a pickup basketball game. These are meaningful words at the beginning of our new eternity. You don't owe anything for your sins. Once for all, winner takes all.

Memory Verse of the Week

WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY THROUGH THE SACRIFICE
OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: A Body You Have Prepared for Me

The author of Hebrews begins another section of systematic biblical quotations to support his overarching point of the supremacy of Jesus' once for all sacrifice. He begins with this quote from Psalm 40:6-8, which must be examined in the LXX. The LXX stands for the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the OT. The author up to this point has primarily quoted from the LXX, but the quotation from Psalm 40:6-8 reveals a further glimpse into how the author interprets, understands, and uses the OT. The LXX does not read "a body you have prepared for me." Rather, it reads, "ears you have dug out for me." This does not appear to be simply a textual error. Instead, the author appears to be intentionally interpreting or paraphrasing the original text to help clarify and support his homiletical point. Indeed, "ears you have dug out for me" is easily stood as a metaphor speaking about how God prepared for each of us a specific body. As has been demonstrated throughout Hebrews, the author is deeply knowledgeable of the LXX, and because he understands Jesus as the supreme revelation of God (1:1-4), he reinterprets all of the OT through Jesus. Thus, he is perfectly comfortable reimagining Psalm 40 as speaking specifically of Jesus whose body was not only prepared by God but was specifically prepared to be a blameless sacrifice to God. This can also be seen in 10:8-14 where the author provides commentary on how Psalm 40 should be interpreted through Jesus.

Zoom In: Sit or Stand?

There is an important nuance in 10:11-13 that is overlooked if the reader is not careful. In continuing the themes of the supremacy of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood, the author points out that every OT priest "stands and performs his religious duties" (10:11). This is a perpetual standing, day after day, "which can never take away sins." In contrast, Jesus doesn't stand. Instead, he sat down at the right hand of God. This is important for two reasons. First, Jesus sits because his work has been completed. Unlike the perpetually standing priests whose work is never finished, Jesus can sit because his work is accomplished. In fact, this passage contends that he won't even stand for the final culmination. He is seated, waiting for "his enemies to be made his footstool" (10:13). Second, this imagery of Jesus sitting is about Jesus' kingship and derived again from Psalm 110. Though the priest stands for his work to be accomplished, Jesus' priestly work is also kingship work, and the king's work is accomplished while he sits upon the throne.

Zoom In: Reminder of Sin

What does the author mean by writing, "those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins" (10:3)? The word uses for reminder is anamnesis, which is only used four times in all of the NT. In the other three uses it directly refers to the remembrance of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25). This has led some scholars to read this phrase as a communion text that is intended to either reprimand the church for not practicing the Lord's Supper or to encourage them to think about their sins while taking the Lord's Supper. Either case seems a stretch and out of context for the author's entire argument in this section especially as the word is used in the LXX in association with the priestly sacrifices (Lev. 24:7). He appears to simply be arguing that one of the consequences of the OT sacrificial system was that it created this yearly reminder of how sinful the Israelites are. This wasn't a reminder to God of their sinfulness, but rather to the peoples' very consciousness (10:1). Because the blood of goats and bulls could never really cleanse the consciousness, the Israelites were always reminded of their sinfulness without any real long-term solution. As Jesus is the perfect, once for all sacrifice, Christians now are not reminded of their sinfulness, but rather, they are reminded of how they have been "made perfect forever" (10:14). This is an important transitional idea as the author will describe in the coming verses.

Zoom In: Text Notes

10:2 - "worshipers" (Gk. *latreuontas*). This word is primarily and most often in Hebrews translated "to serve" or "service." It is specifically used in reference to the role of the priests (9:9; 13:10). It is unclear whether it refers in this context specifically to the priests or to the broader concept of all Israelites that came to offer sacrifices.

10:10 - "once for all" (Gk. *ephapax*). This portmanteau combines *eph* (for all) and *hapax* (once) to mean "once for all." It is only used five times in the NT and three of them occur in Hebrews (7:27; 9:12; 10:10). In each of the uses in Hebrews it refers specifically to Jesus' sacrifice.

10:12 - "right hand of God." This is undoubtedly an allusion again to Psalm 110, which has been the primary text of commentary throughout the sermon.

10:13 - "he waits for his enemies to be made a footstool." Another allusion to Psalm 110.

¹William Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 136.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
10:1-18

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is something in life that you'll only ever do once?

Read Hebrews 10:1-18.

Scripture Questions:

How does this passage relate to the previous few chapters in Hebrews?

What is the significance of Jesus "sitting down" compared to the priests "standing?"

What does the author of Hebrews mean by the phrase "he sets aside the first to establish the second?"

Living Questions:

Why do we struggle so much to believe that Jesus sacrificed for our sins "once for all?"

What does it mean to you that God has put his laws in your hearts and written them in your minds?

As we've come to the conclusion of this extended section, why was Jesus' sacrifice necessary?

Memory Verse of the Week

WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY THROUGH THE SACRIFICE
OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
10:19-25

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

As we parse out the singular force of the sermon that we call Hebrews, we at times can get bogged down in the point to point details of each week's text and forget that the preacher is, in fact, getting somewhere, somewhere practical and livable. In this week's text, we finally arrive at this point and the rest of the sermon will continue this trend. In Paul's writings we receive clear statement of the indicative and imperative moods in Greek. These are two different forms of verbs that Paul uses intentionally. The indicative is used to describe what has been done for us and the imperative is used to teach what we should do in response. The author of Hebrews uses the same approach in this week's six verses which are actually one singular, poignant sentence. First, he lays out the two primary indicative statements with the key word "since." "Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place" and "since we have a great priest over the house of God." The author has spent the previous six chapters establishing both of these indicative statements through the sacrificial ministry of Jesus who is both the great high priest and the sacrifice that gives us to God. Second, he lays out three imperative exhortations with the key phrase being "let us:" "let us draw near to God," "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess," and "let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." What Jesus has done for us through his death is not simply for our reflection and thankfulness. Rather, his ministry propels the church to draw near to God in holding tightly to hope and encouraging one another on toward love!

Devotional Thought:

When are you at your most confident? Last year I performed a fairly large and fancy wedding. I've done dozens of them at this point and was feeling confident. About five minutes before the wedding started I was making sure that everyone was in their place when a very tall person came walking over to me. He said with a quiver in his voice, "Hi. I'm Derrick. I'm supposed to read the scripture." I introduced myself as well and showed him where he was supposed to sit. I noticed his hand shaking substantially and finally just asked, "Derrick, are you alright man?" He replied, "Yeah. I'm just pretty nervous right now. Reading scriptures for guys like you. I don't belong up here. I'm not as confident." I kind of chuckled and said, "don't worry man. I'll give you the nod and you'll do great." I still kind of laugh and shake my head when I think of that moment. The Derrick I was talking to was Derrick Chievous. He is the all-time leading scorer in University of Missouri basketball history and played three years in the NBA. He has shot big game free throws in front of crowds of tens of thousands in packed stadiums. He has been in front of crowds of people that would make my knees shake, but at this wedding with a few hundred people he was a wreck. Confidence is about being in a place we know we belong. Hebrews says, "we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place." We should be confident to enter the place where God dwells because we belong there. Not because of our talents or abilities, but "by the blood of Jesus." Do we enter God's presence with confidence, knowing we belong?

Memory Verse of the Week

LET US HOLD UNSWERVINGLY TO THE HOPE WE PROFESS, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Draw Near

Hebrews 10:22 uses the phrase or single word in the Greek "draw near" (Gk. Proserxomai) to urge the audience to activity in response to all that Christ has done. This is a loaded word throughout Hebrews (4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22). As early as the fourth chapter, the author exhorts the audience to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence!" In fact, it might even be said that the entire sermon of Hebrews centers around the idea of drawing near to God. The author of Hebrews suggests that there are two directions life can take. Either a believer is drawing near to God, which the Old Covenant never fully allowed but has been now provided through Jesus, or a person is shrinking away.

Zoom Out: New and Living

The author of Hebrews describes access to God through a "new and living way" (10:20). This phrase is as rhetorically beautiful in English as it is in Greek. Yet, in the Greek it also carries a nuance of irony that is overlooked by most English translations. As described in the notes below, the Greek word translated "new" is better translated as "freshly killed." Therefore, the author is describing the sacrifice of Jesus as both freshly killed and living.

Zoom In: Spur One Another On

Hebrews 10:24 is often used in sermons and devotionals to teach how part of our job as Christians is to spur other Christians on toward doing more in the kingdom of God. Yet, this is not what the author originally intended. As David DeSilva points out, "English translations since the KJV often err in regard to 10:24. The Greek does not speak of considering how to provoke other disciples to do good and to show love (CEB; NIV; NLT; NRSV); rather, the author urges his hearers to consider their fellow believers with the result that they themselves will be motivated by what they see to show love and do good (NJB; Lane 1991b, 273; Ellingworth, 526). The author would have the hearers feel confidence in regard to continuing in this path."¹

Zoom In: The Curtain

Hebrews 10:20 says that Christians now have access to the most holy place, the dwelling place of God, "by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body." In the temple, the curtain or veil served to separate the holy place from the most holy place. This space was entered only once a year on the day of atonement by the High Priest who had ceremonially washed his clothes, clothed himself in the bells for the people, carried the burning incense, and sprinkled the blood of a sacrificed bull and a sacrificed goat on the cover of the ark as atonement for people's sins. The most holy place was important because it was the place where God himself dwelled on earth (Exodus 40; 2 Chronicles 6). Interestingly enough, the author of Hebrews contends that the real point of separation between God and man is Jesus' own flesh (Gk. Sarx). This curtain is mentioned six times in the NT. Three of them are in Hebrews, but the other three occurrences all recount the same event where at Jesus' crucifixion the curtain is suddenly torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). What does it mean that Jesus' own flesh is the curtain? Is the author simply being symbolic or is there something more? The curtain served to protect humanity from God's holiness. It was in fact the physical point of delineation between the Divine and created. Of course the culmination of this ethereal space comes in the incarnation of Jesus who holds the same spatial and temporal existence in being both the full nature of God and the full nature of the created. Like the curtain, he is the singular point of delineation. In his sacrificial death, that delineation no longer exists.

Zoom In: Text Notes

10:19 - "new" (Gk. Prophatos). Literally, "freshly slaughtered" or "newly killed." The Greek word most often translated "new" is kainos. This is not the word used here. Rather, the author uses a *hapex legomena* (word only used once in scripture), which was used in Greek culture to describe meat that was fresh or freshly killed. This symbolism should not be overlooked.

10:20 - "curtain" (Gk. katapetasma). This word is used six times in the NT. Three of the uses occur in Hebrews (6:19; 9:3; 10:20). The other three occurrences all reference the same event (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

10:20 - "body" (Gk. Sarx). Literally, "flesh," or "body." It is best understood in this context simply as body.

10:22 - "draw near" (Gk. Proserxomai). This is used throughout Hebrews (4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22).

10:13 - "he waits for his enemies to be made a footstool." Another allusion to Psalm 110.

¹David DeSilva, "Hebrews" in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible* (Kindle Edition), location 55,147.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
10:19-25

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

When have you had to hold on tightly to something?

Read Hebrews 10:19-25.

Scripture Questions:

These verses are one extended sentence in the Greek. What line or thought catches your attention and why?

How do these six verses relate to what the author of Hebrews has been writing about up to this point?

What relationship is there between the body of Christ and the curtain of the temple?

Living Questions:

In the notes this week, we pointed out that this text does not actually say to spur others on toward love and good deeds but to be spurred on toward love and good deeds for others. Why is this an important nuance in understanding this passage for our Christian living?

How do we draw near to God?

Memory Verse of the Week

LET US HOLD UNSWERVINGLY TO THE HOPE WE PROFESS, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
10:26-39

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

There is this wonderful conversation in the novel by C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, between one of the young girls, Susan, and Mr. Beaver, in which Mr. Beaver is teaching her about Aslan the true king.¹

"Aslan is a lion-the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he- quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"...

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver ..."Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

This conversation summarizes so well the gist of this week's passage. Having spent the first nine plus chapters of Hebrews talking about how God has blessed his people abundantly through Christ with eternal life, hope, and access, this week's passage reminds the readers that God is good, but that doesn't make him safe. Though Christ has been offered as a once for all sacrifice for sins, for those who deliberately keep on sinning, there is "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" (10:27). The audience is reminded that if they shrink back from the stance they have taken in God because of the fear of worldly persecution, they face an even more dreadful foe, God himself. He reminds them that they have already endured suffering and persecution, side by side, and persevered joyfully through it all. God rewards this faithfulness. Yet, for those who turn away, "it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of a living God." "'Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

Devotional Thought:

We live in a use it and lose it culture. Based on our heavy consumerism, America has often been referred to as a throw-away society. This term, first coined by Time Magazine in 1955, "describes a critical view of overconsumption and excessive production of short-lived or disposable items over durable goods that can be repaired."² In fact, the average American produces 4.4 pounds of trash per day and Americans as a whole produce 254 million tons of trash per year.³ We can see this in our day-to-day life experiences as well. One of the first things my wife and I have taught our young children is "pick it up and throw it away." It doesn't take long for a young child to enjoy this disposable game, and soon they are throwing away all sorts of things. When my daughter was just over a year old, throwing things away became her favorite game. She was really good at it too. She threw away stuffed animals, plastic toys, books, the remote control, unopened food, shoes, socks, and, one time, dad's truck keys. We had lots of fun throwing things away! It is unreasonable to think that our faith is not influenced by being a part of a throw away society. So easily long-time church friendships are discarded when they seem no longer needed. The widowed are often deemed less useful without their spouses and often set aside. Sometimes it is even our trust in God that is trashed when it is seemingly no longer useful. The author of Hebrews writes, "So do not *throw away* your confidence; it will be richly rewarded!" Of all the things we quickly discard, it is vital that our trust in God never be one of them.

Memory Verse of the Week

WE DO NOT BELONG TO THOSE WHO SHRINK BACK AND ARE DESTROYED, BUT TO THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH AND ARE SAVED.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Intentionally Sinning

One of the more theologically difficult passages within Hebrews occurs in 10:26-30 wherein the author says, “If we deliberately keep on sinning... no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire.” This passage has often been misunderstood to support the idea that after baptism a Christian is then responsible for every committed sin without the sacrifice of Jesus any longer being able to cover that sin. Nothing could be further from the truth and this idea stands in stark contrast to the theology of Hebrews as a whole. Rather, the author is alluding to the Mosaic covenant’s idea of intentional and unintentional sins. In the law, there is differing punishment for sins committed unintentionally and those committed with arrogance and deliberation. Sacrifice can be offered for unintentional sins, but there is only punishment for intentional sins (see Numbers 15:22-31). In the new covenant a once for all sacrifice has taken place for sins, but for those who shrink back and arrogantly sin willfully without repentance, punishment will be earned. What does this sinfulness look like? The author describes the person as one “who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace” (10:29).

Zoom Out: Persecution

This passage is one of the few places in Hebrews where we get a glimpse into the history of Christian community to which this sermon is addressed. The insight is a bit startling to the modern reader, but was more common of conversion stories during the early church. The author makes it clear that persecution, both physical and social, was a normal part of the communities’ early conversion. David DeSilva points out the impact of this persecution, “Wealth (the enjoyment and security of land and movable possessions) and reputation (“being considered a person of worth by all,” Rh. 1.5.8) were directly lost. For such hardships to be inflicted in such a variety of ways, however, it is clear that the believers’ networks of friendship and protection (i.e., patronage) were also severely weakened.”⁴ Conversion to the Christian community had real consequence for the early Christians. Yet, the author reminds them that in the midst of their early conversion, they came to rightly realize that joy was not found in wealth or status. In the same way, they should find joy again in the promises and faithfulness of God rather than return to their old ways.

Zoom In: Parallel Passages

If this week’s passage sounds weirdly familiar, it is because it rhetorically parallels Hebrews 5:11-6:12 as shown below:

5:11-6:12		10:10-39
5:11-6:3	“Reminder of the actual situation of the community.”	10:19-25
6:4-8	“Warning against apostasy.”	10:26-31
6:9-10	“Encouragement based on past performance.”	10:32-34
6:11-12	“Appeal focused on the future.”	10:35-39 ⁵

Zoom In: Text Notes

10:29 - “how much more” (Gk. poso). This word also used in 9:14, denotes a specific kind of Jewish philosophical argument called Qal Wahomer meaning from light to heavy. This was Hillel’s first rabbinic rule of exegesis. It simply means that if this occurs in a lesser place, how much more will it occur in a stronger occurrence. Thus, if punishment for intentional sins was bad under the lesser, old covenant, how much greater will it be under the better new covenant.

10:31 - “dreadful” (Gk. phoberos). Literally, “fearful.” Though the word for fear (phobew) is a commonly used Greek word, in its current form it is found only in Hebrews 10:27, 31; 12:21. The usage in this passage appears to rhetorically point toward the mountain seen portrayed by its usage in 12:21.

10:33 - “side by side” (Gk. Koinwnos). Literally, “partaker, partner, sharer.” The author is contending that not only has the audience suffered personally, but many times they shared in the sufferings of others. They were partakers and partners in other believers’ suffering.

10:39 - “shrink back” (Gk. Upostole). This word is used as the direct contrast to the author’s main contention that believers should “draw near” to God (4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22).

¹C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throw-away_society

³<https://www.treehugger.com/environmental-policy/trash-numbers-startling-statistics-about-americans-and-their-garbage.html>

⁴David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 56.

⁵Charted adopted and quoted from William Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment*, 138.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
10:26-39

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

When have you legitimately been scared?

Read Hebrews 10:26-39.

Scripture Questions:

How would you explain to a new Christian what is being taught in Hebrews 10:26-31?

Is it good for us as Christians to be reminded that “it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?”

Based on this week’s passage, what have we learned about the Christian community addressed in Hebrews?

Living Questions:

What worldly thing have you had to give up to be a Christian?

Why is persecution, even social persecution, a normal part of the Christian life?

What will it be like to “receive what he has promised?”

Memory Verse of the Week

WE DO NOT BELONG TO THOSE WHO SHRINK BACK AND ARE DESTROYED, BUT TO THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH AND ARE SAVED.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 11:1-40

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

The author introduced the theme of chapter eleven near the conclusion of chapter ten, "But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved" (10:39). Though faith is the focus of chapter eleven, it has been a present theme throughout Hebrews (4:2; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 38). Even when it is not explicitly stated, Jesus' status as better than the old way is evident in his faith (10:9-19). What then is faith? Besides offering over twenty specific examples of people who lived by faith, he also provides a four-fold interrelated, working definition of faith. First, faith is "confidence in what we hope for" (11:1). Confidence is a corollary of faith for the author of Hebrews. It takes confidence in God to trust God. Second, faith is "assurance about what we do not see" (11:1). The word for assurance (*elegkos*) means evidence or a proof. It has the idea of that which can be tested. Faith requires assurance without the ability to be verified with the senses. This is the way in which Hebrews is most Pauline as Paul describes faith in similar ways. "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Third, faith is belief that God exists (11:6). The author offers this point of definition further into the chapter as a common aside, but the point is still important. It is not only assurance of the unseen. Many people believe in the unseen. It is belief in God. Finally, faith is belief that God "rewards those who earnestly seek him." Again, faith is not just belief in the unseen nor is it just belief in God. Rather, it is the precise trust that YHWH is God in the fullness of his revealed character.

Devotional Thought:

I walked down into my new friend's man-cave and was immediately surrounded by an amazing amount of Dale Earnhardt Sr. memorabilia. On every wall and in nearly every free space throughout the entire basement, from the clock on the wall to the faux gas pump in the corner was Earnhardt. I knew exactly what we would spend the next hour talking about, and I was proven correct. The more I came to know this man the more I realized how important NASCAR was to his life. All things were put aside, be it family, friends, church, when a big race was on. Don't get me wrong, he was a good man who I believe loved the Lord. Yet, who we revere says a lot about what we believe in.

Hebrews 11 has often been referred to as the Hall of Faith wherein the author lists over twenty people or groups of people that should be honored for their faith. Once again, this list shows a lot about what the author of Hebrews believes in. The list includes a murderer (11:23), a prisoner (11:22), and a prostitute (11:31). Hardly qualities we would expect to find revered by the author. Yet, it is not their flaws and failures that defined their life with God. Instead, it is their faithfulness. It is through their faithfulness that each of these people from Enoch to Barak are revered. In fact, the author says specifically, "these were all commended for their faith." It begs the question to us today, who do we revere? Who do we honor? Who we revere and admire says a lot about what we really believe in.

Memory Verse of the Week

NOW FAITH IS CONFIDENCE IN WHAT WE HOPE FOR AND ASSURANCE ABOUT WHAT WE DO NOT SEE.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Faith in the Christian Community

James Thompson wonderfully describes the important role that faith plays for the Christian community throughout the ages, “A distinctive contribution of Hebrews is the depiction of the nature of faith. Although the author shares with the NT writers the focus on the singular importance of faith as a response to God, he never speaks of faith *in Jesus*. Instead, he describes faith as the ‘reality of things hoped for’ and ‘evidence of things not seen’ and offers examples of those who embodied this definition. As the author indicates... faith is inseparable from endurance. Those who see another reality can endure the deprivations created by their Christian commitment. This capacity to see beyond temporal realities creates distance from the perceptions of others. As the community has already demonstrated (10:32-34), the knowledge that their abiding possession lies in the future creates the refusal to accept materialistic solutions to human problems. This knowledge empowers Christians to see beyond crass commercialism and consumerism and to recognize that material goods are not the ultimate value.”¹

Zoom In: Confidence and Boldness

The author describes faith, to begin chapter eleven, with two strong words: confidence and assurance. Confidence has been a central theme throughout Hebrews as seen in 10:35, “Do not throw away your confidence,” and in 10:19, “since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place.” Yet, the word that is used in 11:1 is actually a different word: *upastasis*. This word is used only five times in the NT and does mean confidence or assurance (2 Cor. 9:4; 11:17; Heb. 3:14). It can also mean substance or make up. It seems though that the author is being more intentional with its usage here. It is the same word that is used in Hebrew 1:3 to describe Jesus’ relationship to the Father, “the exact representation of his *being*.” There appears to be a correlation between the substance of a believer’s faith and the nature of the Son. The second word, “assurance,” is only used one other time in the NT (2 Tim 3:16). It is a word that carries a concept of a proof or evidence. That which is empirically verifiable. The irony here is noticeable again. Just like throughout the rest of Hebrews, the author juxtaposes two contrasting ideas (see notes on 10:20). In this case the proof or evidence is that which cannot be empirically proven. For a Christian’s faith is not simply belief. It might even be described as trust. Indeed, it is bold, confident, and assured.

Zoom Out: A Hall of Faith

It was common in Greek rhetoric to support an argument by citing a series of virtuous examples as is found in Hebrews 11. This style of rhetoric is referred to as an *ecomia*. David DeSilva shows how Seneca’s *De beneficiis* has an extensive list which carries the similar rhetorical device of *anaphora*.² *Anaphora* is where each example begins with the same word or phrase. In the case of Hebrews 11, this device is found in the repetition of “by faith,” which is a single word in the Greek (*Pistei*). Though there is a Greek background for this list, there is also a robust Jewish background to this style of lists as well, especially during the intertestamental time. Most notably, 4 Maccabees believed to have been written early in the first century AD. 4 Maccabees 16:20-22 reads, “For his sake also our father Abraham was zealous to sacrifice his son Isaac, the ancestor of our nation; and when Isaac saw his father's hand wielding a knife and descending upon him, he did not cower. 21 Daniel the righteous was thrown to the lions, and Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were hurled into the fiery furnace and endured it for the sake of God. 22 You too must have the same faith in God and not be grieved.”

Zoom In: Text Notes

11:25 - “for the sake of Christ.” It is interesting that the author of Hebrews ascribes to Moses’ faith based upon his suffering for the sake of Christ who suffered himself a thousand years later. Still this is consistent with the author’s prevailing belief in the eternal and preexistent nature of Christ (1:2).

11:21 - “staff” (Gk. *Rabdos*). This is a direct reference taken from Genesis 47:31. In the LXX, the text reads “leaned on his staff” while the MT (followed by bible translations) will read “laid on his bed.”

11:40 - “made perfect” (Gk. *Teleiw*). Literally, “to carry through to completion” or “to complete.” Once again, the author returns to the idea of being made perfect. Indeed, these ancients in the hall of faith are not made perfect until God brought something better. This something better is in fact Jesus who has also been made perfect (5:9). The author of Hebrews uses this often to refer to completion or fulfillment (2:10; 7:19, 28; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23). This phrase sets the stage for the returning to Jesus as the ultimate perfecter of faith in 12:1-2.

¹ James W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 249-250.

² David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Kindle Location, 5089.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
11:1-40

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is one thing you are well known for?

Read Hebrews 11:1-40.

Scripture Questions:

How does the author of Hebrews define faith?

After spending so much time talking about the OT laws and Christ's superiority, why does the author now talk about faith?

Who sticks out to you on this list and why?

Living Questions:

In what ways have you struggled with faith in your life?

How does the biblical definition of faith often differ from the way we use it in modern church life?

What does it mean to you that "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect?"

Memory Verse of the Week

NOW FAITH IS CONFIDENCE IN WHAT WE HOPE FOR AND ASSURANCE ABOUT WHAT WE DO NOT SEE.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
12:1-3

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

Within these short few verses the author moves into the full force summary and conclusion of his major arguments. To strengthen and encourage his audience he adopts the inspiration of runners entering into the grand stadium to finish their course. The great crowd of those who have run the race before fill the stadium and their roar of encouragement supports and enlivens the runners. Not only do they hear the roar of the crowd, but they look up and see the ultimate champion before them waiting and they fix their eyes upon him. They recall his strength and superiority. They remember him pushing through his own suffering to complete the perfect race with supreme endurance. Rather than growing weary and tired at the end of the race, they just stare at Jesus and find themselves with renewed strength and courage. His courage motivates them.

Often the purpose of Hebrews gets confused with its means. When asked, 'what is the purpose of Hebrews?' Christians often answer, 'to show Christ as superior.' Indeed, this is the most significant point made by the author of Hebrews, but it is not actually the purpose of Hebrews. It is the means by which he supports his purpose. The purpose of Hebrews is to encourage Christians to finish the race that they began. To not fall back into the ways of their Jewish raising, slip to the ground of persecution, or turn wrongly into the culture that surrounds them. This text reminds the audience again, the true purpose of the sermon is that they finish the race that has been set before them.

Devotional Thought:

Three years ago I ran my first real mountain trail race. I have been a trail runner for nearly a decade but was always too intimidated by both the legitimacy of a race and its cost. Still, the local trail race supports the trails around our home and I thought it was time I give it a try. So, on a rainy morning in May, I stood with a couple hundred runners anxiously stretching and waiting for the gun to go off. A few people I recognized smiled and we briefly caught up while I wondered if I would beat them. Then the gun went and we took off. I shot out early and fast towards the front. As I ran past people, I noticed something I didn't expect. People were encouraging. "Get on it!" "Great kick!" We came around the corner up the first big hill. There were crowds of people lining the street making a raucous and rooting for us. Things got more serene after a few miles on single wide mountain trail. I finished the first ascent strong, but on the second ascent I started really feeling my pace. I even hit a wall. I was trying to push through. I wasn't halfway through the race, but I felt like I had nothing left. Suddenly, an older runner nearly double my age runs up beside me. "First race?" "YE... A... H," I responded between breaths. "Slow down for a bit... you'll catch your second wind," he replied and shot up the hill. I wanted to push through, but took his advice instead. He was right. I slowed down and within just a few minutes caught my second wind and finished strong. It's good for us to listen to the advice of the ones who have gone before us. It's good at times to slow down and catch our second wind.

Memory Verse of the Week

CONSIDER HIM WHO ENDURED SUCH OPPOSITION FROM SINNERS,
SO THAT YOU WILL NOT GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Athletic Imagery and the Olympic Games

The author uses strong athletic imagery in these hard hitting verses. The author imagines Christians as running, setting out on their course, and casting aside anything that binds them or weighs them down. Even the great cloud of witnesses is athletic imagery which calls upon the great crowds of the stadium looking down upon the runners as they continue their race. Greco-Roman Culture was ripe with athletics including both local gyms within the cities and the famed Olympic games that made their circuit around the empire. In fact, Alexandria, where it is possible the author is writing from, was one of the first conquered cities to host Olympic style games referred to as the Ptolemaia in the 4th century BC. Egypt was famed for their Olympians who trained extensively in local gyms with private trainers. By the third century AD, even smaller Egyptian towns began holding their own small version of Olympic competitions for local competitors.

Zoom In: Pioneer and Perfecter

One of the most important descriptions of Jesus in Hebrews comes in 12:2 where the author describes Jesus as the “pioneer and perfecter.” Different versions translate these two words differently. NASB chooses, “author and perfecter,” and KJV, “author and finisher.” The phrase in the Greek contains the two words *arxegon* and *teleoten*. The first word, *arxegon*, is a common word in the LXX used nearly forty times, but is used only four times in the NT (Heb 2:10; 12:2; Acts 3:15; 5:31). In each NT use it only refers to Christ. The word can mean prince, but it carries the idea of the first in a series. So Jesus is both the prince and originator or initiator. In this instance, he initiates faith. The only time in the NT that the second word, *teleiutes*, is used is in this occurrence, but it is directly related to the common and important word stems throughout the book of Hebrews, *tel.* (2:10; 5:9, 14; 7:19, 28; 9:9, 11; 10:14; 11:40; 12:23). This word means finisher, completer, or one who wins the prize. This word then serves as a double entendre in this circumstance as both an athletic word as the one who has finished the race and as related to a major concern for the author of Hebrews, the perfection or maturity that is only found in Jesus.

Zoom In: “Because of” or “Instead of”

Scholars have long debated what the author intended in his use of the word “for” in the phrase, “for the joy set before him” (12:2). The Greek preposition *anti* often means “instead of.” Yet, it can mean a wide variety of things depending on context and usage. The debate in Hebrews is to whether it means “instead of” or “because of.” This is not mere scholastic blabber. Did Jesus endure the cross *because of* “the joy set before him,” or instead of the “joy set before him.” In one sense, Jesus deprived himself of joy by facing the crucifixion. In another, it was actually the eternal joy he could see in the distant future that motivated him toward the cross.

Zoom In: Therefore

It is easy to overlook the rhetorical force of “therefore” in the English translation. The commonly used word for therefore in the Greek is *oun*. Yet, here the author uses the emphatic word *toigaroun*. The word is a particle used to introduce a forceful concluding statement in summary of what has previously been written. The word is only used in one other place in the NT: 1 Thess. 4:8, “Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God.” Similarly, Paul stresses the importance of his argument with this word. The author of Hebrews is finally reaching the tour de force of his argument. The audience hears *toigaroun* and leans in to hear the concluding impact of all that has been said.

Zoom In: Text Notes

12:1 - “witness” (Gk. *Martus*). Literally, “one who remembers something.” Witness is a good translation but is colored by our modern court concept of that word. The idea is that there is a cloud of those who have witnessed God’s faithfulness beforehand and are rooting the Christians on! All the names of chapter 11 and more are that great cloud.

12:2 - “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Gk. *Rabdos*). This is another allusion to Psalm 110.

12:3 - “consider” (Gk. *analogizomai*). Literally, “to count up” or “to reckon.” Though this word is only used here in all of the NT, it is related to other words that the author has used throughout Hebrews (4:13; 10:24; 11:19; 13:17). The idea is to take a mental reckoning. Don’t simply make emotional decisions or unconscious decisions when it comes to following Christ.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
12:1-3

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Have you ever competed in a race of any kind?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3.

Scripture Questions:

What aspects of athletic metaphor do you see in these verses?

Why do you think the author chooses to use an athletic metaphor at this point in the text?

What is so significant about Jesus being described as the “pioneer” and “perfecter?”

Living Questions:

In what ways has Jesus released you from the burden of shame in your life?

How does considering Jesus keep you from growing weary and losing heart?

How would you describe the joy set before us?

Memory Verse of the Week

CONSIDER HIM WHO ENDURED SUCH OPPOSITION FROM SINNERS, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT GROW
WEARY AND LOSE HEART

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
12:4-13

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

In the first three verses of chapter twelve, the author uses a strong athletic metaphor to urge his audience into continued faithfulness. In this week's text, the author builds upon this metaphor by providing an educational metaphor that is often missed by the modern reader. The primary place for education in the ancient world was the home. Thus, when the author speaks of God treating his people as his children, he is adopting a common educational metaphor. This can be seen most obviously in how the author interprets their current hardship as discipline from God. The word used for discipline is *paideia*, which basically refers to the entire training and education of children. This word is only used six times in the NT and four of those occurrences take place in this passage (Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 3:16). Though discipline is a fair translation, this word carries a broader idea of the entire educational and character development of a child. Often, we understand discipline to mean punishment especially in the context of suffering and hardship. That's not exactly what the author intends though. He is contending that his audience understand their current trouble as God's way of growing them up and teaching them. The author is not saying they are being punished for doing something bad, he is suggesting that God is disciplining them as a father disciplines his child. God is training them like his own children. A father's discipline and correction should always be educational, and with God it is. Thus, he calls upon the Christians in the midst of their trials to "endure hardship as *paideia*; God is treating you as his children."

Devotional Thought:

The little boy was ashamed of what he had done. The rage and the constant confusion left him feeling like this often. Torn inside where he should be whole, he would lash out. Tantrums were routine. The only way he could control anything in his world was to destroy it. Still, as he stood in his foster parent's bedroom, he was ashamed of the extent of his disaster. He was horrified he would be sent away... again. To another home just like last time. He liked these people too. Foster mom was gentle and kind and told him constantly that he was here to stay for good. Maybe not now though. "I'll never be like one of their real children anyway," he whispered to himself. He began to leave the scene of the offense when his foster dad walked in. He began to back pedal. "I didn't do it!" He shouted and threw a broken frame at him. The foster Dad just walked over past him and picked up one of the ripped family pictures. He held it up to the boy. With a gentle but stern voice he said, "I didn't like these pictures either, do you know why?" The boy in fear of coming wrath shook his head no. "Because they don't have you in them and you are a part of this family." The boy simply cried. The father continued, "but because you are a part of our family I am also going to discipline you." The father sat down on his bed and told the boy he had a five minute time-in. Unlike a time-out which makes a kid be on their own, a time-in is used to help those with attachment problems learn attachment. The boy walked over to his dad and sat in his lap. Though he hated time-ins, for the first time he began to feel something different. In this discipline, he began to know that he really was a son.

Memory Verse of the Week

THEREFORE, STRENGTHEN YOUR FEEBLE ARMS AND WEAK KNEES. "MAKE LEVEL PATHS FOR YOUR FEET," SO THAT THE LAME MAY NOT BE DISABLED, BUT RATHER HEALED.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Background and Context

The combination of athletic and educational metaphors through which to understand suffering would not have surprised the audience. In fact, there is an immense background to this text that shows how suffering was often interpreted by Jews and Greeks as training. The Jewish background is best summarized in three dimensions. First, the author of Hebrews directly quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 from the LXX from where the author picks up the word *paideia* (education, training, discipline). The LXX commonly uses this word (Prov 15:5, et al.). It was also common for the Israelites to interpret their suffering as discipline from God. For example, Moses understands the wilderness wandering as discipline in Deut 8:2-5, which also uses the word *paideia* in the LXX. Second, this idea remained through the intertestamental times especially in the wisdom literature and throughout the Maccabean period. Finally, the Alexandrian, Jewish philosopher Philo, specifically speaks of persecution and trials through athletic and educational imagery. In fact, he cites Proverbs 3:11-12 himself in *On the Preliminary Studies*. The Greek philosophical background is abundant as well. James Thompson wonderfully demonstrates how the Stoic philosophers of the day reflected on suffering through athletic and educational metaphors. In fact, Seneca (c. 4 BC-AD65) specifically uses this imagery to show how God disciplines his children. Thompson concludes, “This background is significant for the interpretation of Heb 12:4-11, for the author’s reflections rely not only on Prov 3:11-12 but images current in philosophical discussion in his own day. Like the Stoics, the author combines education and athletic metaphors to interpret suffering.”¹

Zoom In: Word of Encouragement

It should not be overlooked that the author introduces Proverbs 3:11-12 by referring to it as a word of encouragement. From this we can draw three things. First, the encouragement is that what they are enduring is not new. In fact, the word of encouragement for the audience today is the same word of encouragement needed for the Israelites long ago. Second, the Christians should use scripture as a word of encouragement during these hard times. Third, it is encouragement once again to finish the race that has been set before them. I am reminded of the famous quote from Elie Wiesel “the opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.” It might appear to the audience that God does not love them because of their hardship, but in their hardship they should understand not God’s indifference but his disciplining presence.

Zoom In: To the Point of Drawing Blood

In a quick reading, this appears to be one of the more difficult texts in the NT. There are two fields of interpretation. First, as noted below, blood is a major motif throughout Hebrews. Most commentators suggest this passage should be read with Hebrews 10:32-34 in mind. Though the audience has suffered, they have not suffered “until blood.” In other places in the NT the phrase, “until death,” is used in description of suffering (Phil 2:8; Rev 12:11), but in this context the suffering is until blood. The first view understands this to refer to an acceptance of suffering to the point of martyrdom which was then and continues to be a Christian reality. Yet, the second field of interpretation suggests that this phrase “until blood,” should be understood not within the realm of martyrdom but as a continuation of the athletic imagery. In fact, it is not against persecution that the Hebrews are struggling, it is “against sin.” Likewise, the word translated struggle is an athletic word meaning to fight against an opponent in athletics (see below). On basketball courts today you can hear the phrase, “no blood, no foul.” Might this be a similar idea?

Zoom In: Text Notes

12:4 - “struggle” (Gk. *Antagonizomai*). Literally, “striving against,” “fighting against,” or “struggling against.” This hapex legomena (only used once in the NT) is from where we get the word antagonist. This is the only occurrence of the word in the NT, but it was a word commonly used in Greek culture within the athletic realm.

12:4 - “shedding your blood” (Gk. *Aima*). Literally, “until blood.” Blood has been important throughout Hebrews (2:14; 9:7, 12-14, 18-22, 25; 10:4, 19, 29; 11:28; 12:24, 13:11-12, 20). See note above for more information.

12:7 - “endure hardship” (Gk. *Upomeno*). Literally, just “endure.” The word hardship is added by NIV for clarity. The author is intending to make a connection between the endurance of Jesus (12:2-3) and the Christian’s endurance.

12:11 - “pleasant” (Gk. *Xara*). Literally, “joyous.” The author is again connecting the Christian’s present experience with Jesus’ experience through usage of the same word, *xara*, which he used in description of Jesus in 12:2.

12:11 - “trained” (Gk. *Gumazo*). The author finishes this section of encouragement with one final word taken from athletics. The word translated “trained” literally means “to exercise,” and was commonly used around the gymnasiums and Olympics of the time. See also 1 Tim 4:7; Heb 5:14; 2 Pet 2:14.

¹James W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 251-52.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
12:4-13

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

How did your parents teach you or instruct you?

Read Hebrews 12:4-13.

Scripture Questions:

What role does discipline or training play in Christian maturity according to this passage?

What is the relationship between adoption and discipline in the Christian life?

What do you think it means when the author says, “you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood?”

Living Questions:

How have you grown in your faith during hardship?

Why is submission such an important part of faith and why do we struggle to be submissive?

How would you describe a harvest of righteousness and peace in your life?

Memory Verse of the Week

THEREFORE, STRENGTHEN YOUR FEEBLE ARMS AND WEAK KNEES. “MAKE LEVEL PATHS FOR YOUR FEET,” SO THAT THE LAME MAY NOT BE DISABLED, BUT RATHER HEALED.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
12:14-17

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

In this week's text the author begins by continuing to urge his audience toward the finish line of their faith with the affirmations of seeking peace and being holy. The author then provides three negative motivational images that the audience should avoid. First, in sustaining the athletic imagery prevalent throughout the chapter, he warns the audience against falling short of their goal. In classic Christian formula though they are not actually falling short of the finish line. Rather, they will fall short of the grace of God! The imagery is of a gracious God waiting to welcome them at the finish line, but they fail to persevere. Second, they should make sure that "no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." In his commentary on this text, David DeSilva has demonstrated how this phrase is a reinterpretation of Deuteronomy 29:16-18. He suggests that just like for the Israelites, "the wavering believer, and especially the apostate, disrupts the well-being of the community and brings the danger of defilement.... that the apostasy of a few can defile the man would be a figurative way of expressing the disillusionment and weakening of resolve that would be felt by those who witnessed their former sisters and brothers give up the race."¹ Finally, the author points to Esau, who sold his birthright for one meal. Surely, it wasn't worth the cost! His whole inheritance for a simple meal. In the same way, the audience shouldn't give up their eternal inheritance because of their momentary trials, social pressure, and sexual desires.

Devotional Thought:

"Megan Erickson spotted another runner wobble, then fall onto the grass Thursday during the final stretch of a cross-country race. The 18-year-old Erickson had promised herself that if a competitor needed help, she'd lend a hand. Erickson did not waver. "We're going to finish," she told the fallen runner.

In an act observers called true sportsmanship, Erickson helped Emma Bixler cross the finish line during a district meet in the north-central Nebraska town of Ainsworth. With the finish line in sight, Erickson veered toward Bixler, a sophomore at Neligh-Oakdale High School who had fallen to her hands and knees from overexertion. Erickson knew that she might be disqualified from the race for helping. Still, she reached down and lifted Bixler to her feet. Erickson put an arm around Bixler's back and guided her toward the finish line. But Bixler's legs kept buckling, and she fell again right before the finish line. Erickson said she couldn't manage to lift Bixler up, so she pulled Bixler across the finish line."²

This story went viral across social media as the masses applauded the selfless courage of one young woman helping another cross the finish line. In a similar way, we as Christians are running a race of perseverance. Along the way, some of us will stumble or grow exhausted, but the author of Hebrews exhorts us, "See to it that no one falls short!" Our responsibility is not only to ourselves, but to the others in the race with us! Who needs your help across the finish line?

Memory Verse of the Week

MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH EVERYONE AND TO BE HOLY;
WITHOUT HOLINESS NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Athletic Imagery

The author began chapter 12 with strong athletic imagery of the runners, surrounded by a great crowd, running with perseverance so that they “not grow weary and lose heart.” He continues this theme through the next verses as the audience is described as “struggling” against sin (v. 4) to the point at which they have been truly “trained” (v. 11). He encourages them to “strengthen... feeble arms and weak knees” (v. 12). This imagery continues through this week’s verse though it is a bit more subtle. First, the author tells the audience to “make every effort” (NIV), “pursue” (NASB), or “follow” (KJV) peace. The word is *dioko*, which means literally “to cause to run” or “to follow after.” This was a common word in athletics of the time. The audience is to run toward peace with all men. They should also see to it that no one “falls short” (NIV) or “fails” (KJV) of God’s grace. Again, the word is *ustereo* which means “to be last” or “not to reach.” This is a metaphorical idea that points back to the beginning of the chapter. The author is encouraging his audience to finish the race and not to fall short of the finish line.

Zoom Out: Place of Repentance

Often missed in this text is the quick phrase in v. 17 “no place for repentance” (NASB), which the NIV simply translates “he could not change what he had done.” The phrase is literally, “place for repentance.” The author of Hebrews uses this complicated phrase for three reasons. First, in the narrative of Esau losing his birthright, he literally loses the place of his inheritance. The audience remembers that Esau became a wanderer without a right to his home upon Jacob stealing his blessing. Indeed, Isaac offers Esau the wanderer’s blessing, “Your dwelling will be away from the earth’s richness, away from the dew of heaven above...” (Gen 27:39). Esau had no place of forgiveness. Second, the phrase “place of forgiveness” is found in the Jewish *Book of Wisdom* believed to have been written in the late first century BC. This book ponders upon wisdom and would have been well known to the author of Hebrews. In *Wisdom* 12:10, God is talking about his patience in not destroying the Canaanites all at once in order that the godly ones might have a “place of repentance.” Finally, this verse might point back to Hebrews 11:8 wherein the author is describing the faith of Abraham who obeyed “when he was called to go out into a *place* which he should after receive for an inheritance” (KJV). In contrast, Esau gave up his inheritance and then had no place, even for repentance.

Zoom In: Seek Peace with All.

Much ink has been spilled over the line “seek peace with all.” There seems to be a couple main issues with this line. First, what is meant by “with.” Does this mean to seek peace toward all people? Or that believers should seek to have peace with all? The debate suggests that some believe it an impossibility at times to have peace with all people, but that Christians should at least seek peace toward all people. Second, who is the “all?” The KJV and NASB provide “all *men*,” but the word *men* is not included in the text and is only added for clarification. The text simply reads, “seek peace with all.” Some have suggested that the all refers to all believers as the author has pointed toward throughout Hebrews. Yet, for two reasons it seems best to understand the all as referring to all people. First, just nine verses later the author of Hebrews refers to God as the judge of “all” (12:23). This is the exact usage of the word given in 12:11. Second, this phrase seems to have been common in early Christian lingo as Paul uses it in Romans 12:18 though he includes the word *men* (or mankind), “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Zoom In: Text Notes

12:14 - “Make every effort to live in peace.” This is an allusion to Psalm 34:14, “Seek peace and pursue it” (33:15 in LXX).

12:14 - “be holy” (Gk. *ton agiasmos*). Literally, “the holiness.” The author contends that during this time of strife and turmoil while awaiting the finish line there are two things that the audience should be seeking. First, to live in peace, and second, to be sanctified or holy. Holiness is a central theme of God in Judaism. In fact, if the goal of the Hebrew’s faith is to draw near to God, this is only a possibility because they are being made holy. “Without holiness no one will see the Lord” (12:14).

12:16 - “godless” (Gk. *bebelos*). Literally, “profane.” The author chooses this word intentionally as it is the word that directly contrasts *ieros*, sacred. The idea is that the believer should seek “to be holy” and not associate with that which is “profane.”

¹ David DeSilva, *Hebrews: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Kindle Edition, Location 6168.

² Michael O’Conner, “We’re going to finish”: Runner helps fallen competitor cross finish line during high school meet” *World Herald*, October 16, 2017. Available online at https://www.omaha.com/news/goodnews/we-re-going-to-finish-runner-helps-fallen-competitor-cross/article_9720701e-b07f-11e7-b495-43dd94df94c0.html

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
12:14-17

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Has anyone ever jumped in to help you finish something?

Read Hebrews 12:14-17.

Scripture Questions:

What is the connection between holiness and seeing the Lord? Where else do you see it besides this passage?

Who is Esau and how does he serve as an example for Christians today?

What does this passage teach about repentance?

Living Questions:

Who is someone who has or is going to help you along to the finish line in your Christian race?

Who is someone you are going to help to the finish line in your Christian race?

What do you think it will be like to “see the Lord?”

Memory Verse of the Week

MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH EVERYONE AND TO BE HOLY;
WITHOUT HOLINESS NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
12:18-29

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

In these triumphant verses the author reaches his destination and brings the audience along with him. Throughout the book of Hebrews the audience has been encouraged to draw near to God and to remain faithful to the end, even in spite of persecution and suffering. Chapter twelve has contained the primary metaphor of athletes running their course toward victory. Where are the faithful headed? Where does this course end? The author chooses to answer this question by contrasting two images: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. Though the imagery is stark, it shouldn't be surprising. Throughout Hebrews the author has built his entire argument around the supremacy of the Christ over the all elements of the old covenant. For the Israelites, Sinai was a pinnacle moment in their history and religion for three main reasons. First, this event is referred to as a *theophany*, which simply means "an appearance of God." This is where God showed up not only to a single person but to all the Israelites. Though the Israelites were afraid to enter into the cloud upon the mountain, God still appeared before all of them. Second, Sinai is where the Israelites received the Law. Moses entered into the cloud and received in direct revelation the Law from God. Despite the significance of these two things, the author of Hebrews argues that the mountain the faithful are currently headed to, Mount Zion, is even greater than Mount Sinai. Yet, it is more than Mount Zion, it is actually the heavenly Jerusalem filled with worship. In continuing their course, they will join in worship "acceptably with reverence and awe!"

Devotional Thought:

"Life is a Journey, Not a Destination."

This quote attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson is scattered throughout the internet in a plethora of different colors and fonts. The idea is that what truly matters in this life is not the destination that one reaches, but the journey that brought them to that point. The 2006 movie "Peaceful Warrior" accentuates this idea as a young man is taken on a long journey by his mentor to see something great. Yet, at the end of his journey he is disappointed to find only a rock. He finally reflects, "The journey... the journey is what brings us happiness... not the destination." Of course, in grand irony Ralph Waldo Emerson never said, "life is a journey, not a destination." Despite what we might think, life has a destination just as a quote must have origination. Actually, if you think about it there is nothing in our world that doesn't have a destination. The acorn falls not for the fancy of flight but for the goal of growth. The stream runs over a falls not for beauty but to continue toward the ocean. The snow geese fly in formation not for the ease of group flight but so that together they can reach the rich grain fields. So it is in our lives as well. The faithfulness of our journey is important as Hebrews has accentuated, but it is not an end in and of itself. Instead, "you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" (Heb 12:22-23).

Memory Verse of the Week

THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE RECEIVING A KINGDOM THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN, LET US BE THANKFUL, AND SO WORSHIP GOD ACCEPTABLY WITH REVERENCE AND AWE, FOR OUR "GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE."

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

The following chart shows the comparisons between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion:

Mount Sinai	Mount Zion
Can be touched (<i>Earthly</i>)	Heavenly Jerusalem (<i>can't be touched</i>)
Burning with fire; to darkness, gloom, and storm	Thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly
Trumpet Blast	Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven
A voice speaking words that those who heard it begged it no longer speak	God, the Judge of all
Couldn't bear the command	Righteous made perfect
Moses saying, "I am trembling with fear"	Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, sprinkled blood
"if even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned to death"	Sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel
Voice shook the earth	Voice shakes the heavens
Warning from earth	Warning from heaven
Kingdom that can be shaken	Kingdom that can't be shaken
Our God is a consuming fire	Our God is a consuming fire

Zoom In: Shaken

Throughout the Psalms it was a common poetic reflection to say that the voice of God shook the earth at a variety of historical events such as the parting of the Red Sea (Psalm 77:18), parting of the Jordan (Psalm 114:7), and, most notably, the Mount Sinai theophany (Psalm 68:7-8). Routinely, the OT reflects on the earth shaking at the anger of the Lord. The author picks up this motif in saying that if a person was scared at the shaking of the earth wait till God speaks and shakes the heavens as well (Haggai 2:6). Still, the faithful can remain upon that which cannot be shaken.

Zoom In: A Better Word

The author points toward the blood of Abel as speaking out. This reference comes from Genesis 4:10 where after being murdered by his brother, Abel's blood cries out from the ground for justice and vengeance. In contrast, the blood of Jesus is scattered in the heavens as a once for all sacrifice that speaks of forgiveness and redemption (Heb 9:11-14; 11:4). The author returns again to the theme of blood that has run throughout the sermon and though this might seem like a final thought on this topic, he will return once more in the following chapter (13:11-12; 20).

Zoom In: A Consuming Fire

The concept of God as "a consuming fire" appears to have been a common Jewish motif especially in regard to God's forthcoming judgment, purge, and redemption of the world (see also 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Pet 3:7; Jude 1:7). The specific reference to a consuming fire comes from Deut 4:24 where Moses warns the people against making idols and forgetting the covenant. In this text he is also referred to as "a jealous God." Interestingly enough, the next usage comes in Deut 9:3 where Israel is told they will "dispossess nations greater and stronger than you" because "God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire." Both ideas might be intended by the author.

Zoom In: Text Notes

12:18 - "mountain." The Greek word for mountain, *oros*, does not actually occur in this verse though it does in the contrasting verse of 22. Most translations provide the word for clarity.

12:18 - "touched" (Gk. *Pselaphao*). Literally, "to touch." This word is only used four times in the NT (Luke 24:39; Acts 17:27; 1 John 1:1). It means that which is tangible and can be grasped.

12:16 - "I am trembling with fear." This appears to be an allusion to the LXX reading of Deut. 9:19, "I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord."

12:22 - "city" (Gk. *Polis*). The author has introduced the important theme of city in 11:10-16 and returns to it again here in preparation for his final exposition in 13:11-14.

12:23 - "firstborn" (Gk. *Prototokos*). This word is commonly used for the firstborn in a lineage or family. Yet, what does it mean in light of the church of the firstborn? It could simply refer to the church of Jesus as the first born. Yet, in its plural form it appears to refer to all believers as carrying the inheritance of the first born.

¹David DeSilva, *Hebrews: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Kindle Edition, Location 6168.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
12:18-29

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

What is the tallest mountain you have ever climbed or visited?

Read Hebrews 12:18-29.

Scripture Questions:

What are the main differences between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion according to Hebrews?

Why is blood important in this text and how does it relate to the use of blood throughout Hebrews?

What is the significance of Jerusalem being a “heavenly Jerusalem” and how does that relate to the rest of Hebrews?

Living Questions:

How does it change your understanding of worship when this text teaches that we gather with the righteous made perfect?

How does an eternal perspective help us in day to day life?

What is your favorite part of the mountain we have come to?

Memory Verse of the Week

THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE RECEIVING A KINGDOM THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN, LET US BE THANKFUL, AND SO WORSHIP GOD ACCEPTABLY WITH REVERENCE AND AWE, FOR OUR “GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.”

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews 13:1-6

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

After reaching the pinnacle of his sermon to conclude chapter twelve, chapter thirteen suddenly takes a significant stylistic shift. Rather than building upon extensive arguments, the author now uses quick hit lines to encourage and admonish his audience. After spending multiple chapters throughout the work making single arguments, the author now touches on the following topics in just six verses: brotherly love, hospitality, remembering prisoners, marriage fidelity, greed, and fear of man. Why this sudden shift? There are two plausible and faithful suggestions. First, the author is using common Greco-Roman rhetorical technique to conclude his thoughts. The main body of the sermon took extensive work and lengthy supporting quotes, but the concluding exhortations can be poignant and effective. Second, the first twelve chapters of Hebrews contain a sermon given in a single sitting. The sermon was so effective and powerful that it was copied and sent to other churches for encouragement. Yet, before sending the letter, the author added concluding thoughts, as well as a greeting to give it a customary letter makeup. Either proposal seems plausible. Likewise, in either case, the author's intent is the same with the concluding chapter. Since the faithful can approach the throne of God with confidence in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, and because the audience then and now we are striving to be faithful, we are called to tangible, impactful ways of living in this world. Our love, marriage, care for the imprisoned, and relationship to money are now based in the eternal.

Devotional Thought:

After brotherly love, the author of Hebrews' second exhortation is to show hospitality. Hospitality was an important element of Jewish life, but the type of hospitality the author promotes here should have been redefined by Christian faith as Daryl Tippens points out. "While Jesus affirmed the ancient Hebrews' understanding of hospitality, he also adapted the concept, enlarging the definition of neighbor. One's neighbor is not only the alien dwelling in one's own village, but the stranger far afield--beyond one's immediate community. An unprecedented love of all humankind permeated Jesus' teaching and practice, and his first followers caught the spirit of it... According to the way of Jesus, hospitality does not concern fine linens, elegant crystal, or gourmet cooking. Rather, it consists of a generous heart and a welcoming spirit that leads to tangible expressions of care for others. Very importantly, it entails an active concern for those different from ourselves. The English word "hospitality" does not quite capture the meaning of the Greek word used in the New Testament. *Philoxenia* actually suggests loving foreigners or aliens. This is a challenging, paradoxical love: a kinship, friendship love extended to a stranger, someone not related or known to us. No one before Jesus had taken hospitality this far, but the early Christians became inflamed with the spirit of *philoxenia*, and this radical love of those on the margins (the sick, the hungry, the homeless, destitute widows, wayfarers) took the ancient world by storm."¹

Memory Verse of the Week

KEEP YOUR LIVES FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY AND BE CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Love

Some scholars contend that there is no harmony to these scattered verses. Yet, a deeper look at the language shows not only harmony but even intentional unity. The author uses three words in the first four verses that all contain the same stem word “philew.” This word simply means love and when combined with other words it modifies to whom the love is oriented or how the love is described. In 13:1, the author says, “Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.” This verse is actually only three words in the Greek and the main noun is *philadelphia* (see text note below). The author’s first exhortation then in his concluding chapter is for Christians to love one another. He continues in 13:2 to encourage the audience to “show hospitality.” In Greek, this is the noun *philoxenia* (see text note below). The rhetorical harmony is becoming evident as is the prevalent theology. Love your brothers and love strangers, the author encourages. He is not done yet though. In 13:5, the author encourages them to “keep your lives free from the love of money.” “Free from the love of money” is actually one word in the Greek: *aphilarguros* (see text note below). The *philo* stem can once again be found, but this time the author adds an *a* before the word to negate it. The audience should love brothers, love strangers, and not love money. It wouldn’t be a stretch rhetorically to say that the author also includes those in prison and your spouse within the realm of those you should show love to. Thus, love brothers and sisters in the kingdom, love the stranger as your own family, love the prisoners, love your spouse, and do not love money, for God is to be honored not the desires of men (13:5-6).

Zoom In: Brotherly Love

What exactly does the author of Hebrews mean by brotherly love? The simplest answer might be best. Brotherly love is simply the love that siblings share for one another. In our current culture that might not carry a lot of significance as siblings often move away from one another and share life only on holidays or vacations. Yet, David DeSilva points out the significance of sibling love during the time Hebrews was written, “The relationship between siblings was the closest, strongest, and most intimate of relationships in the ancient world. Aristotle considers brotherly love to be a special and augmented form of friendship... relationship between siblings was, by nature, marked by agreement, cooperation, sharing, and harmony.” Thus, “Fostering an ethos of kinship within the Christian group was a widespread technique grounded in the conviction that the believers have become kin by the blood of Christ, being adopted into the one household of God as the many sons and daughters. Applying such a model to the voluntary group known as the church (which is called “fictive kinship”) allows community leaders like our author to fuel mutual support, solidarity, and aid by appealing to the obligations that family members have toward one another, and especially to the ethical ideals of how siblings ought to regard one another and care for one another.”²

Zoom In: Those in Prison

The majority of the scattered exhortations the author offers the audience are common throughout the NT. Yet, once again the author pleads with the audience to “remember those in prison” (13:3). He has previously mentioned those in prison in 10:34, “you suffered along with those in prison.” This is not a common imperative in the NT though Paul does write routinely from his place in prison (Eph 3:1; 4:1; Phm 1:1, 9). The author of Hebrews links these passages not only by their reference to the prisoners but also in how the faithful are to relate to the prisoners. In both cases they are called not only to serve those in prison but to have empathy for them and, even, suffer alongside them.

Zoom In: Text Notes

13:1 - “brotherly love” (Gk. *Philadelphia*). This is the wonderful NT word for the love shared among brothers and sisters in Christ. It is found in other places in the NT (Rom 12:10; 1 Th 4:9; 1 Pet 1:22; 2 Pet 1:7).

13:2 - “show hospitality” (Gk. *Philoxenia*). Literally, “to love strangers.” This word is only used in one other place in the NT wherein Paul makes a similar plea to his audience to “practice hospitality.” The idea of this word is to love someone that is not known by showing generosity and welcoming them into your family.

13:5 - “free from the love of money” (Gk. *Aphilarguros*). This appears to be an allusion to the LXX reading of Deut. 9:19, “I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord.”

13:5 - “Never will I leave you...” This quote would’ve been well known to the audience as it is from Deut 31:6 wherein Moses is encouraging the people to remain faithful to God. He tells them to “be strong and courageous... for the LORD your God goes with you.” In the same way the author encourages his audience to be courageous in their character and perseverance.

¹Darryl Tippens, *Pilgrim Heart: The Way of Jesus in Everyday Life* (Abilene: Leafwood, 2006), 55.

²David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, Kindle Edition, Location 6,504-6,507.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
13:1-6

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

Have you ever stayed the night with a stranger? Why would you do that?

Read Hebrews 13:1-6.

Scripture Questions:

Why do you think this letter ends with really practical suggestions or commands?

Why is hospitality such an important virtue for the Christian life?

What is the significance of Jerusalem being a “heavenly Jerusalem” and how does that relate to the rest of Hebrews?

Living Questions:

Of the five things listed in these verses (brotherly love, hospitality, taking care of prisoners, marital love, and greed), which of these do you struggle with the most?

Which do you find the easiest?

How does contentment relate to having an eternal perspective?

Memory Verse of the Week

KEEP YOUR LIVES FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY AND BE CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
13:7-17

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

The primary purpose of this text is to encourage the audience to remain loyal to their leadership in the church. The author bookends this discussion with a specific reference to leaders in v. 7 and v. 17. In v. 7 the author urges the church for a threefold relationship with their leaders. He calls upon them to remember, consider, and imitate their leaders. It is interesting that the author does not initially tell his audience to obey their leaders. Instead, he tells them to reflect on the type of people they are. The idea is similar to the great cloud of witnesses described in chapters 12-13. By reflecting on their character and endurance, the church will be encouraged in their present trouble. Having reflected upon their character and trying their best to imitate it, they are then also called to "have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority" (v. 17). It is unclear exactly who these leaders are as the author nowhere else even mentions leadership, but we are given insight by a few quick phrases. First, he says that the leaders are those who "spoke the Word of God to you." Evidently, they were responsible for their conversion. Likewise, in v. 17 he suggests that they are those who "keep watch over you as those who must give an account." This implies that the leaders are serving locally in and among the church. The giving an account language is similar to the standard of teachers (James 3:1) and the watching over is similar to the description of elders (1 Peter 5:2-3). It seems likely the leaders are elders in the church and the church should be thoughtful of bringing joy not burden to this role.

Devotional Thought:

Recently, I met a friend for lunch and was startled to watch him order a salad. It was completely unexpected. To the point of shock and dismay. After ordering my cheeseburger and fries. I asked, "what's up with the salad?" He replied, "Doctor recommended a heart healthy diet when I was in the other day. We are going to try that for a few months instead of getting on a pill. I'm hoping it works." I kind of appreciated my friend even more after he said that. Though taking a pill would've probably been easier, he chose instead to exercise more and eat healthier.

The author of Hebrews offers some suggestions for being heart healthy Christians as well. He says in 13:9, "It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods." What is it then that strengthens a Christian's heart during troubled times? The author makes it clear that it is not a cheeseburger... or a salad... or any kind of ceremonial foods. He continues that these are "of no benefit." What is beneficial for strengthening a Christian's heart? How would you reply? Prayer? Bible reading? Moral discipline?

The author says our hearts are strengthened by grace! We cannot strengthen our own hearts. There is not a strong heart pill for Christians. The heart healthy diet for Christians is a feast of grace. It is a life of received and given grace. A life of approaching the "throne of grace" (4:16) with confidence. May grace be the strength of your heart.

Memory Verse of the Week

DO NOT FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE WITH OTHERS,
FOR WITH SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS PLEASED.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Connected

An important theme for the book of Hebrews that is often overlooked is the theme of the “word” (Gk. *logos*). When the author states in 13:7 to “remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you,” it is not simply about evangelism, preaching or teaching. For the Israelites, the word was the revelation of God. It was God’s voice to his people carried through Moses and the Prophets. The author of Hebrews takes this idea and adds new covenant meaning to it as can be seen throughout Hebrews:

- 2:2 - The word spoken by angels was binding, but even more binding is the word that was spoken by the Lord and confirmed by his witnesses. It has now been heard by the Hebrews audience.
- 4:1-13 - The word of God is dynamic. It is sharp enough to cut to the core of a person. Only in obedience to this word can a person enter into God’s eternal rest.
- 5:13; 6:1 - The word (translated as “teaching”) is for the maturation of those who are being trained in righteousness. The word is the foundational teachings of Christ.
- 7:28 - The word is the basis of the oath which “appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.”
- 12:19 - The people at the Old Covenant mountain beg to not hear another “word” from the Lord.
- 13:7, 17 - In the bookend of v. 17, the leaders will have to “give an account.” The word is *logos* that is translated “account.” The leaders who spoke the word will also have to give a word in the end.

Zoom In: Jesus Christ is the same...

This verse must be one of the most commonly cited passages from Hebrews. Though it might seem as a blanket statement about Jesus or a summary statement for Hebrews, it actually serves a specific purpose in the concluding remarks. The author is encouraging his audience to remember, consider, and imitate their leaders in the previous verse (13:7) and to not stray away from what they have been taught in the following verses (13:9-10). Thus, the author points toward the unchanging nature of Jesus to provide both a solid theological foundation for following leadership and avoiding “strange” teachings. This point is especially important as they face social and physical persecution. As James W. Thompson points out, “the declaration Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever is the conviction that unites the community with the past leaders and sustains them in a time of trial.”¹

Zoom In: Sacrifice of Praise

Interestingly, this is the only occurrence of this exact word, “praise,” in the NT, though it was commonly used in the LXX. In fact, “sacrifice of praise” is a theologically loaded OT concept. Leviticus says that when they plant fruit trees they are not to eat of any fruit until the fifth year. On the fourth year they are to take all of the fruit as a “sacrifice of praise” to the Lord (Lev 19:23-25). More specific to the passage at hand, Jeremiah uses this phrase to prophetically describe the hope of Israel, “The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD.” (Jer 33:11KJV, see also Jer 17:26).

Zoom In: The City

Somewhat surprisingly, in the midst of a discussion concerning church leadership the author inserts a rich theological metaphor concerning Christians’ current place. He contends that they are outside of the city and outside of the camp. In doing so, he returns to the metaphor that he used just a dozen verses earlier in the conclusion to chapter twelve. At the end of twelve, the author contends that the church has come to the “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22). This is pilgrimage language that calls to mind the great journey to Jerusalem that all Jews were called to take for the day of atonement. They have arrived at the city. Yet, in chapter 13 he makes it clear that they have not entered into the city. Instead, they go to Jesus outside of the city or camp where he was crucified. Before entering the city, Christians are called to join Jesus, “bearing the disgrace he bore” and “looking for the city that is to come.”

Zoom In: Text Notes

13:7, 17- “leaders” (Gk. *Hegeomai*). This is an uncommon word for leadership in the NT though it is used elsewhere (Luke 22:26; Acts 15:22). It appears to refer more to a political or regal position in Greco-Roman culture though it might often refer to someone who performs administrative tasks (Acts 7:10; 14:12).

13:10 - “tabernacle” (Gk. *skene*). The author reintroduces the theme of the altar of the tabernacle that he first developed in chapter nine (9:1-6, 8, 11, 21). The author returns to this theme to support his argument that only grace will strengthen the heart and acceptable praise comes not in the tabernacle but through Jesus (13:15-16).

¹James W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 280.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
13:7-17

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

If you could visit one city anywhere in the world, what city would it be and why?

Read Hebrews 13:7-17.

Scripture Questions:

What is the relationship that Christians are called to have with their leaders according to this passage?

In the metaphor of coming to the city of God that has permeated the last two chapters, where are Christians currently standing? Why? What are we supposed to do here?

What does the author mean that through Christ we offer a sacrifice of praise? What is a sacrifice of praise?

Living Questions:

Who do you consider a leader in your faith who has shared the word of God with you?

In what ways have you joined with Jesus in “bearing the disgrace he bore?”

What does it mean to your perseverance that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever?

Memory Verse of the Week

DO NOT FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE WITH OTHERS,
FOR WITH SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS PLEASED.

HEBREWS

Notes & Highlights

Hebrews
13:18-25

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Introduction to this Week's Text:

These are the final closing verses of one of the most magnificent pieces of early Christian writing. Though the letter concludes with a traditional letter closing, the prayer of blessing offered in 13:20-21 is staggeringly beautiful and offers a glimpse into the depth of the heart that the author has for this church. He says, "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." As we conclude in Hebrews, we are called to serve, called to live out our faithfulness, called to do good works and do God's will. The beyond-all-comparison greatness of Jesus not only redeems us and adopts us, it also propels us! So often we think that this task is according to our training or hard work, but N. T. Wright in his concluding thoughts on this chapter points out well the author's real perspective. "Here we are at the heart of the mystery of Christian living, Christian leadership and Christian work for the kingdom. It is quite clear from the whole letter that to engage in such work requires effort, determination and patience. The fact that God is at work within us, as individuals and as communities, doesn't take that away. But, as we prepare for the work, engage in it and thank God for it when it's done, we must never forget that it is, ultimately, something that he does, mysteriously, in and through us."¹

Devotional Thought:

"Pray for us." It is a simple request. One Christians make everyday in some form. "Pray for me!" "I'm praying for you!" "You are in our prayers!" What do we really mean when we say this? Often we say it with little thought like "hello" or "see you later." Other times, it means something like "I'm thinking about you." Occasionally, we use it to get out of a conversation we aren't sure will have an ending. "Well... we'll be praying for you" as we turn away. Yet, the author of Hebrews has demonstrated time and time again that Christians have been given confident presence with God. These aren't shallow words fading into Neverland. When Christians pray, God hears. And he is a God at work. The same God who raised Christ from the dead, who is working in us to equip and strengthen us. This God hears us. I had a great friend who would pray for a different person every day of the month. I always relished my day. I knew I was lifted up. I knew not only was someone thinking about me, but they were lifting my concerns before the only one who could truly do something about it! It is telling that the author of Hebrews closes this letter with two prayers. First, he asks the church to pray for them. He covets their requests before God. Specifically, he asks that they pray so he can return to them! Is there any more passionate a prayer, than a prayer of homecoming! Second, he prays over them a prayer we should hear over ourselves every day. Take time this week to pray 13:20-21 over someone who needs to hear this blessing!

Memory Verse of the Week

GRACE BE WITH YOU ALL.

HEBREWS



Zoom Out: Closing Remarks

The final verses of Hebrews follow a standard letter closing formula that was common throughout the Greco-Roman world at the time and is also found in Romans 15:30-16:23; 1 Thes 5:23-28; 2 Tim 4:19-22 and 1 Peter 5:10-14. Much like we might address a contemporary formal letter with an address, date, and “to whom it may concern” line. Ancient letters carried the common formula as follows:

- Request: Hebrews 13:17-19
- Benediction: Hebrews 13:20-21
- Doxology: Hebrews 13:21, “to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
- News and Travel Plans: Hebrews 13:23
- Farewell: Hebrews 13:24-25

Zoom Out: Well-Pleasing

One final theme weaves together the conclusions from chapter 12 with the main body of chapter 13. In 12:28, the author concludes with the exhortation “let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” The word translated “acceptably” (Gk. Euarestos) means well-pleasing or acceptable. This idea is introduced in 11:5-6 where pleasing God is tied to faith. In some sense then chapter 13 offers some quick hit advice on how to be well-pleasing to God. In 13:16, the audience is called to “do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is *pleased*.” Likewise, in the final blessing of 13:20-21, the author prays that God “may work in us what is *pleasing* to him.”

Zoom In: Timothy

The author finally gives a little insight into his current circumstances by the mention of Timothy in 13:23. We assume this is the same Timothy that trained under Paul and to whom 1 & 2 Timothy are addressed; nothing guarantees this as Timothy was a popular name. Though we have no account of Timothy being held in prison, it seems possible based upon his relationship with Paul and Paul’s routine imprisonments that Timothy was held in prison from time to time as well. Most notably, the author of the magnificent letter suggests that he will come to the church only upon Timothy’s release. Many have taken this to mean that the author of Hebrews is indeed Paul, but the rhetorical and grammatical style still suggests otherwise. It is important to understand that there was a much more extensive missionary network throughout the early church than just that recounted in Acts or the Pauline Epistles.

Zoom In: Word of Exhortation

One of the issues in studying Hebrews has always been understanding precisely what genre or form of literature it is. Though it concludes with the traditional marks of a letter, it does not open as a letter, nor does most of the body sound like a letter. It is no surprise then that the author refers to the work as a “word of exhortation” (13:22). The word for exhortation (Gk. *paraklesis*) literally means to call alongside. It is commonly translated as implore (2 Cor 8:4) or, even, encouraged (Acts 15:31; Heb 6:18). In Acts, it is used to refer to a sermon (13:15). Most interestingly, it is one of the items that Paul charges Timothy to do in his ministry in 1 Tim 4:13, “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to *preaching* and to teaching.”

Zoom In: Text Notes

13:22 - “briefly” (Gk. *Brachus*). Literally, “short, small.” It might seem for the modern reader that this letter is quite lengthy, but in comparison to some ancient philosophical treatises it is short. That having been said, it would be interesting to know exactly what the author thought was a long letter.

13:24 - “leaders” (Gk. *Hegeomai*). This is the same word used in 13:7, 17. It is an uncommon word for leadership in the NT though it is used elsewhere (Luke 22:26; Acts 15:22). It appears to refer more to a political or regal position in Greco-Roman culture though it might often refer to someone who performs administrative tasks (Acts 7:10; 14:12).

13:24 - “Italy” (Gk. *Italia*). The author specifically sends greetings from Italy, which is only ever referenced in two other places. First, in Acts 18:2 Priscilla and Aquila are described as coming from Italy. Second, in Acts 27 Paul is a prisoner headed to Italy (27:1, 6) to appear in judgment. You might remember that on that trip he was shipwrecked. Interestingly enough, Luke specifically mentions in Acts 27:6 that the ship that was used was stationed from Alexandria where most of the crew would have been from. Most of the crew also came to belief in God as a result of the wreck.

¹N.T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone (The New Testament for Everyone)*, Kindle Edition, Location 179.

Discussion Guide

Hebrews
13:18–25

FIXING
OUR EYES
ON JESUS
THE PIONEER
AND PERFECTER
OF FAITH

Opening Question:

If you could write a letter of encouragement to any person, who would it be and why?

Read Hebrews 13:18–25.

Scripture Questions:

What insight do you get about the author from these verses, especially regarding his relationship with the church?

How does the blessing in 13:20–21 relate to the rest of Hebrews?

What has been your main takeaway from Hebrews?

Living Questions:

How and with what does God equip us as Christians?

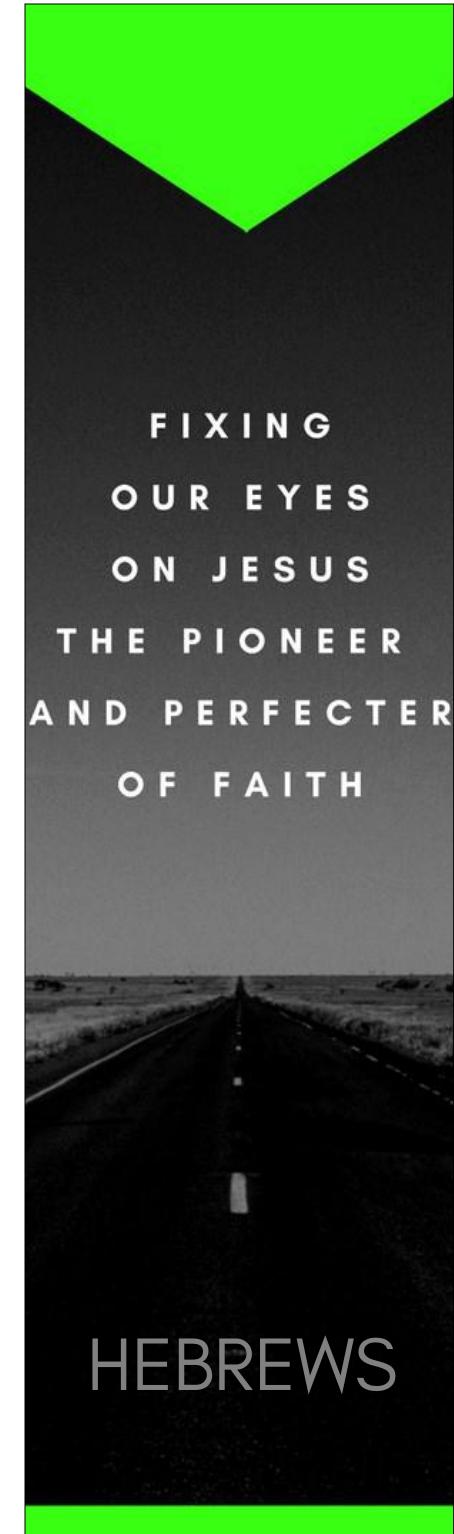
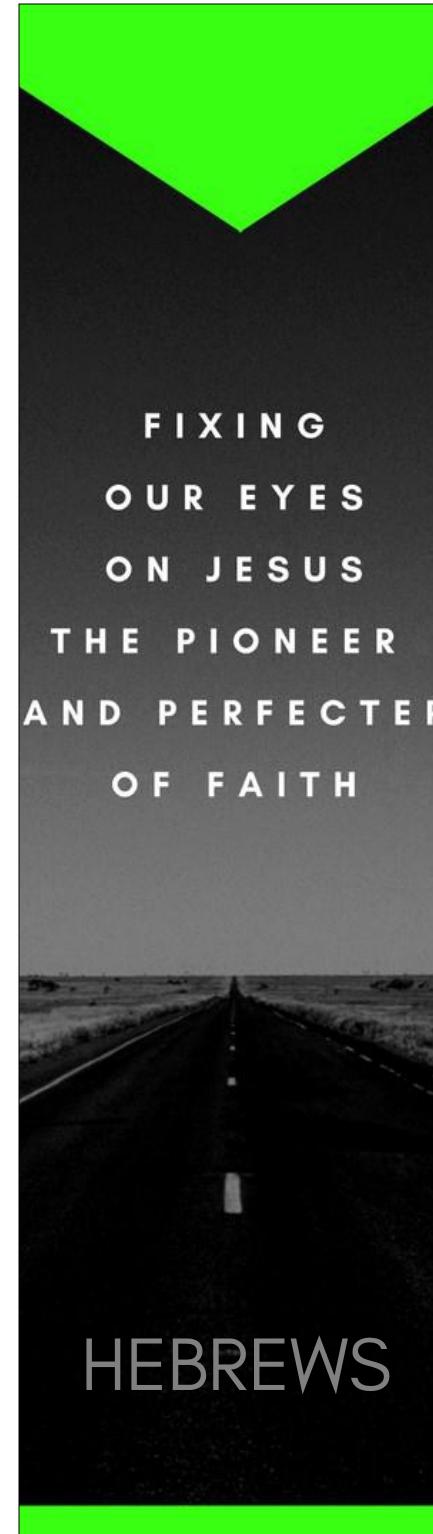
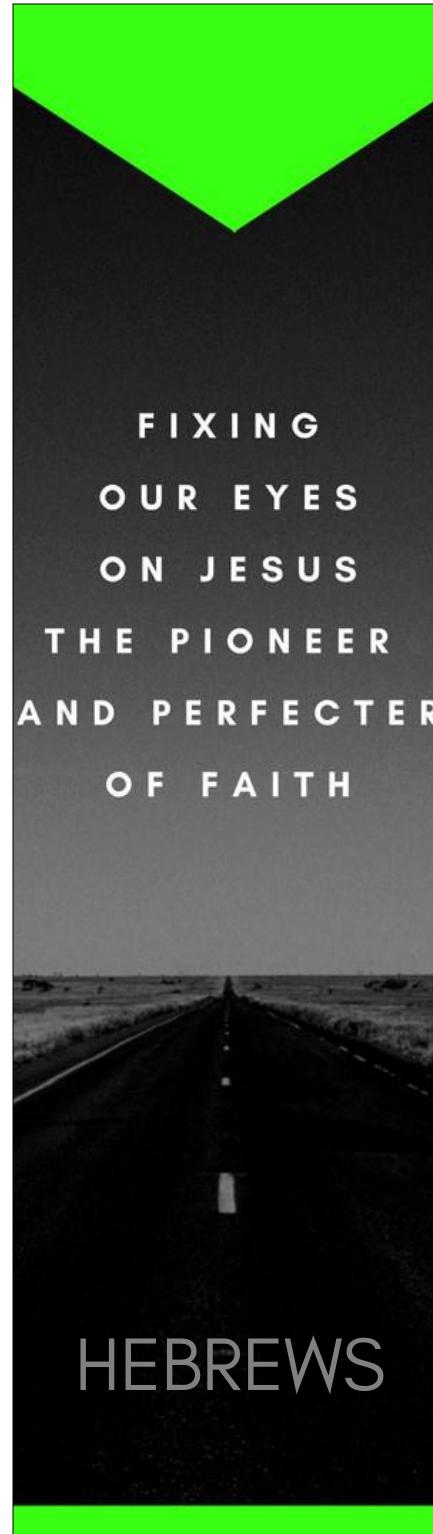
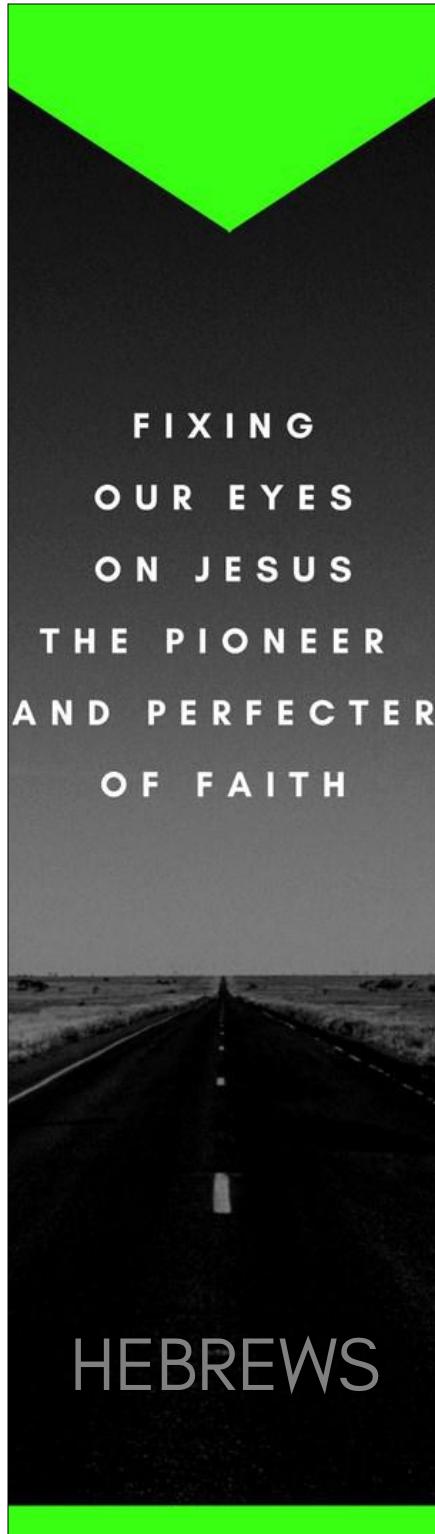
According to the entire letter of Hebrews, what does it mean for us to be pleasing to God?

This letter closes with grace. How would our Christian walk change if grace was the final word we always spoke to one another?

Memory Verse of the Week

GRACE BE WITH YOU ALL.

HEBREWS



HEBREWS

Hebrews 1:1-4
Hebrews 1:5-14
Hebrews 2:1-4
Hebrews 2:5-18
Hebrews 3:1-6
Hebrews 3:7-19
Hebrews 4:1-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Hebrews 4:14 -16
Hebrews 5:1-10
Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3
Hebrews 6:4-12
Hebrews 6:13-20
Hebrews 7:1-22
Hebrews 7:23-28
Hebrews 8:1-13
Hebrews 9:1-15
Hebrews 9:16-28
Hebrews 10:1-18
Hebrews 10:19-25
Hebrews 10:26-39
Hebrews 11:1-40
Hebrews 12:1-3
Hebrews 12:4-13
Hebrews 12:14-17
Hebrews 12:18-29
Hebrews 13:1-6
Hebrews 13:7-17
Hebrews 13:18-25

HEBREWS

Hebrews 1:1-4
Hebrews 1:5-14
Hebrews 2:1-4
Hebrews 2:5-18
Hebrews 3:1-6
Hebrews 3:7-19
Hebrews 4:1-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Hebrews 4:14 -16
Hebrews 5:1-10
Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3
Hebrews 6:4-12
Hebrews 6:13-20
Hebrews 7:1-22
Hebrews 7:23-28
Hebrews 8:1-13
Hebrews 9:1-15
Hebrews 9:16-28
Hebrews 10:1-18
Hebrews 10:19-25
Hebrews 10:26-39
Hebrews 11:1-40
Hebrews 12:1-3
Hebrews 12:4-13
Hebrews 12:14-17
Hebrews 12:18-29
Hebrews 13:1-6
Hebrews 13:7-17
Hebrews 13:18-25

HEBREWS

Hebrews 1:1-4
Hebrews 1:5-14
Hebrews 2:1-4
Hebrews 2:5-18
Hebrews 3:1-6
Hebrews 3:7-19
Hebrews 4:1-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Hebrews 4:14 -16
Hebrews 5:1-10
Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3
Hebrews 6:4-12
Hebrews 6:13-20
Hebrews 7:1-22
Hebrews 7:23-28
Hebrews 8:1-13
Hebrews 9:1-15
Hebrews 9:16-28
Hebrews 10:1-18
Hebrews 10:19-25
Hebrews 10:26-39
Hebrews 11:1-40
Hebrews 12:1-3
Hebrews 12:4-13
Hebrews 12:14-17
Hebrews 12:18-29
Hebrews 13:1-6
Hebrews 13:7-17
Hebrews 13:18-25

HEBREWS

Hebrews 1:1-4
Hebrews 1:5-14
Hebrews 2:1-4
Hebrews 2:5-18
Hebrews 3:1-6
Hebrews 3:7-19
Hebrews 4:1-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Hebrews 4:14 -16
Hebrews 5:1-10
Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3
Hebrews 6:4-12
Hebrews 6:13-20
Hebrews 7:1-22
Hebrews 7:23-28
Hebrews 8:1-13
Hebrews 9:1-15
Hebrews 9:16-28
Hebrews 10:1-18
Hebrews 10:19-25
Hebrews 10:26-39
Hebrews 11:1-40
Hebrews 12:1-3
Hebrews 12:4-13
Hebrews 12:14-17
Hebrews 12:18-29
Hebrews 13:1-6
Hebrews 13:7-17
Hebrews 13:18-25