HEBREWS
JESUS IS GREATER

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE :: BY JUSTIN HUTTS
OVERVIEW OF HEBREWS

OUTLINE OF HEBREWS

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE

APPENDIX A: WHO WROTE HEBREWS? p.49

APPENDIX B: 12 REASONS WHY JESUS IS GREATER p.50

APPENDIX C: HOW THE NEW COVENANT FULFILLS THE OLD COVENANT p.51

APPENDIX D: 33 EYES OF FAITH p.52
OVERVIEW OF HEBREWS

Do you realize what you have in Jesus, right now?

One of the greatest truths you’ll receive in your lifetime is this: There’s nothing in your life that’s greater than Jesus. Nothing.

It is possible to grow familiar with who Jesus is and forget what he has done, is doing, and will do. You can grow discouraged and apathetic and distant from Jesus, your first love. You forgot who Jesus is. And something else becomes greater than Jesus.

This is the message of Hebrews. Jesus is greater. He’s greater than your sin. He’s greater than your enemy. He’s greater than your failure. Jesus is greater and there is no other substitute.

Hebrews is not for the shallow of faith. The author will push you into the deep end of the promises and purposes of God. As you swim in the deep waters of this Hebrew you will appreciate more wholly your Rescuer and Redeemer—Jesus the Great.

a brother who is learning his lesser place,

J. Thomas Hults

---

1 The word “better” or “greater” is repeated 13 times in Hebrews, while the “perfect” is repeated 14 times.
OUTLINE OF HEBREW

JESUS IS THE GREATER THAN ANY OTHER (Hebrews 1:1-4:13)

Jesus is the Greatest (1:1-3)
Jesus is Greater than Angels (1:4-14)
Jesus Gives Greater Salvation (2:1-4)
Jesus is the Greater Savior (2:5-18)
Jesus is Greater than Moses (3:1-6)
Jesus Offers Rest for Rebels (3:7-19)
Jesus is the Greater Rest (4:1-13)

JESUS HAS THE GREATER PRIESTHOOD (4:14-7:28)

Jesus Gives Greater Access to God (4:14-16)
Jesus is the Greater Priest (5:1-10)
Jesus is the Greater Hope (5:11-6:8)
Jesus is the Greater Hope to the End (6:9-12)
Jesus is the Greater Promise Given to Abraham (6:12-20)
Jesus is a Priest in Order of Melchizedek (7:1-10)
Jesus is Greater than Melchizedek (7:11-28)

JESUS IS A GREATER PRIEST (8:1-10:18)

Jesus is the Mediator of a Greater Covenant (8:1-13)
Jesus is the Sacrifice of a Greater Covenant (9:1-28)
Jesus is the Eternal Sacrifice of a Greater Covenant (10:1-18)

JESUS CALLS YOU TO A GREATER FAITH (10:19-12:29)

Jesus Calls You to a Life of Faith (10:19-39)

*Before Jesus Others had Great Faith (11:1-40)
What is Faith (11:1-3)
What Faith First Looks Like (11:4-7)
What Enduring Faith Looks Like and Looks Forward Towards (11:8-22)
What Faith in Action Looks Like (11:23-31)
What Reward for Faith Looks Like (11:32-40)

*Jesus Calls You to a Live by Faith (12:1-29)
Jesus is the Great Object of Our Faith (12:1-2)
God’s Work in Faith (12:3-11)
The Church’s Work in Faith (12:12-17)
The Future’s Work in Faith (12:18-29)
JESUS CALLS YOU TO A GREATER WALK (13:1-25)

Walking with Others (13:1-3)
Walking Purely (13:4-9)
Walking with God (13:10-16)
Walking in Obedience (13:17-19)

Brief but Big (13:20-25)
HEBREWS 1:1-4:13
JESUS IS THE GREATER THAN ANY OTHER

Jesus is the Greatest (1:1-3)

Most letters start with a greeting like “Dear Bob”. Not the letter to the Hebrews. The very first lines of this letter declare the greatness of Jesus Christ being greater than any other person, prophet or spokesman for God.

In this short salutation, the author describes Jesus in all his greatest. He is greatest in at least five categories. First, Jesus is the heir of the universe (vs.1-2a).\(^2\) He owns it all and oversees it all. Second, He is the Creator (vs.2b, 3b). He spoke world into existence and he holds it all together. Third, he is the radiance of God’s glory and shows what God is like (v.3a).\(^3\) Fourth, he is the greater sacrifice (v.3c).\(^4\) Fifth, he is seat at the right hand of God. He is in a position of power and authority (v.3d). He rules and reigns. In all five categories, no one compares or outshines Jesus.

If Jesus is greater than any other thing in the universe, if he created everything and holds it together by the power of his word, if he is the final and once-for-all sacrifice for sin, then he greater than any other thing in this life. Jesus won’t settle to be less than your greatest.

What makes something or someone great? How does Jesus blow the roof off greatness?

What about the open verses of Hebrews separate Jesus from every other man who has ever lived? Which of the five categories wows you the most?

---

\(^2\) Col. 1:13; Ps. 2; Rev. 5; 11:15

\(^3\) John 1:18

\(^4\) 7:27
How does looking at Jesus as the greatest help cure spiritual apathy and discouragement?

How does God speak to us through Jesus? In what ways does Jesus show you what God is like?

What things do you often make greater than Jesus?

Take these verses and make a prayer to Jesus.

Jesus is Greater than Angels (1:4-14)

Angels are impressive and awe inspiring creatures. They aren’t like the cute and chubby knickknacks one buys for their curio-cabinet. Whenever an angel was present in Scripture the onlooker trembled and thought it was God.5

Angels, although god-like, are created beings. Since they are created by God they are lesser than God, not equal. They were created to be God worshippers. They worship Jesus.

Jesus himself was not created. He has always been. Since he has always been, he has a greater name (v.4-5), honor (v.6), authority (v.7-9), tenured (v.10-12), and greater destiny (v.13-14). No angel can say he is greater than Jesus within any of those categories. Only Jesus.

5 cf. Gen. 18:2; 19:1ff; 2 Kgs 6:16-17

HEBREWS :: JESUS IS GREATER
As fascinating and mysterious as angels are, Jesus is far greater than they will ever be. Before Jesus all the angels bow and are in awe.

What do you know about angels? Why are people fascinated by angels? How are angels great and awe inspiring creatures?

In what ways is Jesus greater than angels?

How does this passage also help you understand that Jesus is greater than your agendas, plans, even you yourself?

What awes you about Jesus?

Jesus Gives Greater Salvation (2:1-4)

Have you ever been on a road that had a sign that read, “Warning! Falling Rocks Next 8 Kilometers?” You know that sign is there because at one time someone felt the carnage of a falling rock.

Attention! These verse tell the first of five warnings mentioned in the letter to the Hebrews. This particular warning is for those who intellectually know Jesus saves, but are spiritually uncommitted to him. These people are in grave danger of drifting away from what they know (cf. Mt. 7:21-23). In the end the Rock will fall as be their Judge rather than their Savior (10:26-27).

---

The cure for spiritual drift is to acknowledge the warning sign and heeds its good news. Step towards Jesus, not away from him. Hear what Jesus has already declared (v.3b), hear what his followers have attested (v.3c), regard the marvelous signs and wonders Jesus has done (v.4a), and witness the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit (v.4b). When you consider each of those categories, how could you drift from what you know or consider any other promise of salvation is so great?

What things cause us to meander from what we know will truly save? (Mt. 13:18ff)

What does it mean to neglect (vs. reject) such a great salvation? (Mt. 22:5)

What are the dangers of neglecting salvation? How is Jesus both Judge and Savior?

What makes salvation through Jesus so great?

How can you protect yourself from drifting?

Jesus is the Greater Savior (2:5-18)

We live in a world fascinated by saviors. Every summer the masses cram into cinemas with bubbly drinks and buttery fingers to watch the next Marvel or DC hero duke out good versus evil. Yet no superhero or man in human history can touch Jesus’ feat.
Jesus was the founding member of the Universe Club. He was there. He spoke the universe into existence. He was not only the founder of creation, he was also the founder of salvation for all mankind (v.10). Wow. The always existing God stepped into time and skin to sacrifice himself for man’s greatest need: the curse of sin (vs.7-8).

What did you do to deserve such a heroic salvation? Not a thing. For a moment, think about all that Christ did for you. He became a man “becoming a little lower than the angels” by taking on human flesh like yours (vs.9, 14). He took your place on the cross. He tasted your death and curse. He restored your relationship to God. He led the way to your salvation through his suffering (v.10). He became your brother and sanctifier (vs.11-13). Ultimately, he succeeded where you failed (v.15, 17-18). And that’s a very good thing for if he didn’t save you nothing you do could save yourself.

Compared to Jesus all comic book characters or nonfictional heroes are piddly and have imperfections. Jesus is the perfect real-life Savior who he deeply cares for the downtrodden, distressed, and destitute (vs.5-6). No other Savior can fulfill the promise that Jesus can by becoming the curse for sin. He is truly heroic. That makes him your great Savior and worthy of your trust.

What makes Jesus the founder of our salvation?

How is our salvation made perfect through the suffering of Christ?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to come to earth to become your Savior?

How can Jesus free you from the fear of death? Or help you when tempted?

7 Jesus has made perfect our salvation through suffering; 4:15; 5:8-9; 7:26; 9:14

8 cf. Rom. 8:18ff; 6:3; Gal. 2:20
Jesus is Greater than Moses (3:1-6)

Moses is a legend and hero among the Jewish people. In miraculous fashion, he led the children of Israel out of Egyptian slavery to the border of the Promised Land (v.2). God gave him the Law, he built the tabernacle marking the presence of God with his people, and he was an example of faithfulness (Num. 12:7; Heb. 11:26-29).⁹

As much of a star Moses was in history and Scripture, Jesus is even more stellar. Consider Jesus. Take a good look at him. He became a servant and man. He was faithful to do all the Father sent him to do as Apostle¹⁰ and High Priest (v.1). Even Moses, prophesied about him, the Greater One who would come after him (v.5; Deut. 18:15-19).

Jesus is worthy of greater glory than Moses simply because Jesus is the Creator and center of all things (v.3), he is the builder and architect of the house in which Moses served, fulfiller of the Law (cf. 8:5; 10:1), he is the heir and ruler of all things (v.6), he is the master-servant, and he is the author salvation (v.4).¹¹ There isn’t a man in all of history who can make that claim except Jesus.

We have no greater hope than Jesus. When you consider the greatness of Jesus it encourages and empowers your faithfulness to endure in your heavenly calling (v.1), which you share with other believers and members of the house of God (v.6)¹² who are wandering this world eagerly awaiting the eternal Promised Land.

---

⁹ cf. Ex. 14:31; Deut. 34:5; Josh. 1:2; 8:31; Ps. 105:26; Rev. 15:3

¹⁰ As apostle, Jesus was “sent” by God as God’s ‘last Word’ to the world. cf. John 1:1; 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3

¹¹ Ps. 95; Eph. 2:10; 3:9

¹² 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5
Why might Jews have thought Moses was greater than Jesus?

How are Jesus and Moses similar? How is Jesus greater than Moses?

What is your heavenly calling? (3:1; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 3:14) How is it a shared calling?

How will you consider Jesus and hope in him today? In what areas is God calling you to be faithful?

Jesus Offers Rest for Rebels (3:7-19)

To rebel is an “in” thing within our Western culture. Just listen for a few seconds to the news media talk about the nations leaders or see how Hollywood portrays the bad guy as the likable hero. Rebellion isn’t just the generations of the Roaring 20’s or Rockin’ 50’s and 60’s, but youth and adult alike from every generation are prone to private and public disrespect of authority.

Israel had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. Yet God did not forget them (Ex. 2:23ff). In fact, he showed them immense mercy by raising up Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt through extraordinary miracles. It didn’t take long for the people of Israel to forget all the miraculous things God had done to free them from the hardships in Egypt. You’d think after all they saw God do it would be enough to keep them on the straight and narrow, but within three days they were already complaining. Their hearts became hard. And for 40 years they wandered in the Wilderness until they reached the border of the Promised Land. Many, including

13 cf. The Burning Bush (Ex. 3), The Staff Snake (Ex. 4), The 10 Plagues (Ex. 7-11), The Passover (Ex. 12), The Pillar of Cloud and Fire (13:17ff), The Red Sea Splits (Ex 14:1-15:21), Bitter Water Made Sweet (Ex. 15:22ff), Manna from Heaven (Ex. 16), Water from the Rock (Ex. 17), The 10 Commands (Ex. 19-20).
Moses, did not enter “[God’s] rest” because of the people collective rebellion (vs.7-11, 16-19)\(^{14}\)

When the author of Hebrews says, “Take care,” it is meant to be a warning to all who follow Jesus (v.12).\(^ {15}\) Like Israel, we are prone to wander. Our hearts gravitate towards hardness and anti-authority. We are bent towards unbelief in God’s character and promises.

At the heart of every problem is the problem in the heart. The heart grows hard. Yet there is a cure: a tender teachable heart. Intentionally surround yourself with brothers and sisters who will frequently challenge and correct your heart (vs.13-14; 10:23-25). If not we will fall into the same mindset as Pharaoh, who heard from God’s servant and saw many supernatural wonders, but rejected God flat out and became hardhearted.

A rebels heart is never at rest. Rest is found when you joyfully trust God, willingly submit yourself to the community of faith, and lovingly exhort one another. Enter his rest.

*What is the meaning of “rest” (v.11)?*

*Why are people, even Jesus followers, prone to wander, hardheartedness, and bent on unbelief?*

*What leads to a hard heart? What are the dangers of developing a hard heart?*

*Why is the responsibility of all Christians to share the load in encouraging one another*

\(^{14}\) Num. 14:2; Deut. 1:34, 35

\(^{15}\) This is the second warning passage in Hebrews.
to have a tender and teachable heart? Who do you allow to ask tough questions of your heart?

How can we exhort one another every day, stir one another’s faith and confidence, and share the load of helping one another not to be hardened by sin?

Jesus is the Greater Rest (4:1-13)

We are busier than ever. We think to ourselves, if only there was more hours in a day. If only rest or sleep weren’t so necessary. There is always pressure to do more, to work harder, and to rest less. Our egos are boosted by what we can get done but in the process we are sacrificing our souls. The busier we are the less we rest and the more we are exhausted by an always-demanding slave master.

Busyness isn’t a sin. Work is necessary and good. God is pleased by hard work. But being busy in an endless pursuit of things that leave us empty and unsatisfied cannot be pleasing to God. Sometimes the most godly thing we can to is stop and listen. We need to be still. We need to rest.

There is only One who never stops working. One who never tires. One who never takes a break. He is God. Even when he rested on the seventh day of creation it wasn’t because he was weary, but because he knew humans needed an example and would be exhausted from six days of hard work. God is wise. Rest is wisdom from God.

Rest for Israel was more than just sabbath rest or a much needed vacation in the Promised Land after wandering in the Wilderness for 40 years (Ex.34:6-7). It was a temporary rest that pictured a greater rest to come—an eternal rest with God forever. Rest ultimately is being with God, a heavenly rest.

There are five important times in history that God offered rest to humanity: 1) Creation (Hebrews 4:4; cf. Gen. 2), 2) David in the midst of battling (v.7), 3) Wandering in the Wilderness (v.5; Ps. 95:7-11), Joshua enters the Promised Land (v.8), and our Sabbath

---

salvation (v.9). The final rest is ultimately secured for us in Christ. Jesus is the greater rest.

Rest is a means of showing God’s care and grace to his people. It bolsters our faith and trust in God, today. It reminds us we are weak and God is strong. When life punches us in the gut we can trust that God is faithful and we can trust and obey him even when we feel like giving up in moments of exhaustion. Resting is a great remedy for the soul.

*What is exhausting you right now? How is God calling you to rest as a result of this passage?*

*What do you fear the most? What do you fear that could reveal an unbelieving heart?*

*How is the illustration of Israel’s unfaithfulness and unbelief helpful for us?*

*How do you respond when life punches you in the gut?*

*What does it look like to get serious about your spiritual heart condition? (v.12-13)*

*How is the Word of God a powerful and penetrating scalpel to help expose the heart?*

*How is giving a heart check or exam a community process? (vs. 2, 11-13)*
Jesus Gives Greater Access to God (4:14-16)

I live only a few blocks from the sultan’s palace. The sultan is a king who rules over his tribe. Most days he is sitting in his palace, giving counsel, and ruling over matters concerning his people. When visiting the sultan there is a certain protocol. One cannot burst in and demand what he wants without consequences. In order to gain access to the king you first approach the palace and wait for permission to see him. If permission is granted you remove your shoes and hat and sit at a distance. If you wish to speak you wait until you are invited. The sultan is not always accessible. Somedays you have to come back and try again.

When gaining access to the King of kings it is different. While he is holy and to be revered, he invites anyone to approach him anytime. He is never too busy to give ear to what you have to say. Isn’t that incredible? The King of the universe is always accessible.

How is accessing God possible. First, Jesus makes accessing God possible through his sacrifice (v.14). Without Jesus access to God would be impossible because of sin I am too unholy to be in the presence of the King of kings in the holy of holies. Ironically, the high priest and intercessor for sin also became the sacrifice for sin.

Second, Jesus makes accessing God possible because he is my sympathizer (v.15). Jesus knows what its like to walk in my shoes. He knows the temptations I face, yet he never succumbed to them. Therefore he knows the full weight of temptation because he overcame temptation without sinning.\(^{17}\) Knowing that God is a sympathetic King means accessing him is a joyful thing not a fearful one.

Finally, Jesus makes it possible to stand before God’s throne with confidence,\(^{18}\) particularly in my time of need. I may be tempted to think I need a better something, but what I need most is a better Someone. I need Jesus.

One of the greatest stories in the Bible that shows the accessibility of God is in Luke 7:36-50. The main character is a woman who had a sinful reputation. When she learned that Jesus was eating at a Pharisee’s house she confidently enter the room with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind Jesus at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume worthy of a king on them. As the religious leaders baulked, the woman bowed knowing who Jesus was. She knew Jesus was her forgiver and sympathizer. She

\(^{17}\) cf. 7:26; 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5; John 8:46; 14:30

\(^{18}\) cf. 7:19, 25; 10:19; Eph. 3:12
needed Jesus and he was accessible. Through Jesus you too have unlimited access to God anytime, anywhere.

*What does God see as our greatest need if Jesus is given the title great high priest?*

*How is Jesus a greater high priest than the OT priests? How were OT priests inadequate? How does Jesus fulfill what they could not? (Lev. 16)*

*How can Jesus be sympathetic towards our temptation yet never have succumb to it?*

*Where does the confidence come from to draw near to the throne of God?*

*Read Luke 7:36-50. What does this story teach you about what kind of King Jesus is? How will you approach the him today confidently?*

**Jesus is the Greater Priest (5:1-10)**

Each of us carry a weigh of responsibility. Whether we are spouse, parent, student, or employee we have people around us or under us that can demand our care.

Up until 70 AD Israel had high priest who would bear the weight of responsibility of the entire nation of Israel and plead to God on their behalf for the forgiveness of their sins. What an enormous responsibility and yet he was just a mere man chosen among men to act on behalf of men (v.1).
Interestingly, every high priest was weak and inadequate for the job and needed to seek forgiveness for his sins before he could ask for the forgiveness of the sins of the nation (vs.2-3). No priest was perfect or chosen for the job because he was somehow super spiritual. The honor of the high priest, including Aaron (the first Levitical priest), was not earned, but given by God (v.4).

Jesus was also given the title of high priest (v.5). Unlike other priests, He obeyed God in all things and was sent to earth to be the sacrifice for sin (vs.5, 7-8). A sacrifice that was once and for all. Jesus is unique among high priests in that he did not need to atone for his own sins because he is sinless (v.9). This makes Jesus the greater high priest.

*What was the job of the priest? How was this a compassionate job?*

*How did the priest prepare for his job? Why did he need to deal with his own weakness?*

*How is Jesus more compassionate and prepared for the job?*

*How does Jesus’ suffering and sympathy help you to have confidence in God?*

*How does Jesus’ example encourage you to show compassion to another sinner?*

**Dig Deeper:** Who was Melchizedek?[^1] (Gen. 14:17-20; Ps. 110:4) What does it mean that Jesus is in the order of Melchizedek? What does the relationship between Jesus and Melchizedek tell you about God’s orchestration of history?

[^1]: Scholars don’t know much about Melchizedek. He is a symbolic picture of Jesus Christ. Long before Moses, Melchizedek was a Canaanite priest-king in a city that centuries later became Jerusalem and he was the head of an order of Jerusalem priests older than Moses’ brother Aaron.

HEBREWS :: JESUS IS GREATER
Jesus is the Greater Hope (5:11-6:8)

Before 1849 California was declared a waste land and said to have the least resources of any place on the North American continent. That was until the gold rush. Thousands of people left family and home in the hope of striking it rich. Some did, but most didn’t. The gold rush left many more impoverished and hopeless than before. For many California was indeed a waste.

Everyone is in search of hope. Yet we live in a world of pain, disappointment, doubt, and hardship. God may even seem distant and uninvolved. Hope in this world seems fleeting and lost. Where is lasting hope to be found?

Everyone places hope in people. We put our hope in parents, spouses, children, friends, teachers and leaders. We are in constant search for vibrant life-giving teaching that will wow our socks off and stir our affections. While that teaching can be found, its content must never compromise the truth (5:11-12a).

In this, the third warning in the book of Hebrews, we are to beware of false and flashy teaching that sweeps in and takes the place of true teaching. Our ears often are drawn to the newest self-help fad or smooth-talker. The author of Hebrews calls dull ears to listen and become wowed again by the basic teaching of God, discern what is true, then move on from those teachings to other doctrines (6:1-8).

When one starts primary school he will learn the ABC’s so that he might read words, sentences, books—in fact, anything in literature. The challenge is to renew a passion for basics of faith, which are the building blocks to a deeper hunger to know the wonders of God and be wowed again by him (vs.12b-14).

The greatest and lasting hope in this world is indeed found in a person—The Word who became flesh (John 1:14). Hope is found in Jesus. His teachings are richer than gold for the soul. Dig into his words and the deeper you go the more hope you will find.

What are the basics of faith?

How are the basics important to understanding the more complex issues of faith?

Where does our culture turn for help to grow wiser, stronger, and more mature?
What is the danger of becoming too familiar with the basic principles of God?

What is the opposite of dull hearing? How can you cultivate vibrant hearing? What illustrations in the passage help you understand the difference?

What wows you about God? What do you want to know more about him?

How can you stir others towards a greater hope in Jesus?

Jesus is the Greater Hope to the End (6:9-12)

With the advent of the TV, computers, spectator sports, desk jobs and early retirement, we’re sitting down more than ever before in history. Researchers calculate the average person sits 9.3 hours a day, which is more time than the average person spends sleeping (7.7 hours). So that means 17 hours a day we are on our backs or behinds.

Laziness is one of those undiscussed sins. However, the author of Hebrews unashamedly discusses it. He particularly warns against spiritual laziness. Laziness is a form of pride that says, “I don’t care what others (including God) want me to do I am going to do what I want and sit right here.” Laziness is a regression of faith.

A church or community of faith becomes lazy when we allow erroneous teaching to infiltrate the church and do nothing about it. While the church may have started strong, it slowly slipped into passiveness and procrastination. Spiritual laziness is not caring about the wonderful promises we have now and later through our salvation and not protecting or promoting it to the next generation.

The best way to progress in your faith and prevent spiritual regression is to serve one another. Help one another to stand, exercise your minds, and fight for truth. That
takes effort, but in the long run it will guard you and the community from spiritual lethargy. Serving one another is a sure remedy, but not the sole remedy.

The author of Hebrews has no intention to scare his brothers and sisters into changing, but to assure them of the greater hope that is to come. Better things are to come. Better things for those who wait and hope in God’s promises from now until the end of time.

Jesus is a greater hope than my hope in leisure, ease, or unmet desires. Jesus not only redeems our souls from the pit, he also redeems all aspects of our lives—our time, our attitude, and our work ethic. Look to Christ and invite him to redeem your life and to redeem your time.

*What are some ways Christians have become faith-lazy today? What are some examples of spiritual regression you’ve witnessed in the church?*

*What are the marks of spiritual “progression?”*

*What can lead one to lack patience or lose assurance of hope until the end?*

*What “better things” or promises we will inherit in the end?*

*Who are some biblical examples worth imitating and that encourage you to have faith and patience to the end?*

*How does serving one another often remedy spiritual laziness?*
Jesus is the Greater Promise Given to Abraham (6:13-20)

When I make a promise I often swear to keep that promised based on something like “my good name” or on “my mother’s grave” (v.16). If I do not keep the promise then my name is tarnished or trust diminished.

God is a promise keeper. When God makes a promise he swears by his own name because he himself is trustworthy and reliable (v.13, 17). He is the only one qualified to make an oath by himself because there is nothing greater to swear by than himself. He has never failed to keep a promise because he never lies or fails (v.18).

One of his most well known promises in Scripture was to given Abraham. God promised to bless Abraham’s lineage and multiply it (v.14). Abraham trusted God’s promise by doing what God asked even though the information Abraham had on hand was limited (v.15).

The promise given to Abraham finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus who was a high priest in the order of Melchizedek—a priest during Abraham’s day. Jesus is the sure and steadfast anchor for the soul (v.19). We can hope in Jesus because God has promised him to be our high priest. He has gone before us and sits at the right hand of God on high (v.20).

May you anchor your soul into the Rock called Jesus. Even in the stormy seas that batter you with doubts and despair, his promises are sure to the end. Remember, how he has been with you and has been faithful. As G. Campbell Morgan said, “I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity on them.”

What makes a promise valuable?

What promises did God make to Abraham?22

---

20 cf. 3:1; 5:6, 10; 7:17, 21
21 cf. 4:14; 8:1; 9:24
What are some promises from God that we have that Abraham didn’t?

What makes God and his promises so “sure and steadfast”? 

How does the author of Hebrews describe the certainty of God’s promise— the anchor?

What are some of the anchors other than Jesus that people chain themselves to?

How can you encourage one another “to hold fast to the hope set before us”?

Jesus is a Priest in Order of Melchizedek (7:1-10)

Have you ever met someone you’ve never met before, but you swear you know them from somewhere? There is a mystery to them. There is an example of this in the Bible when Abraham met the king priest named Melchizedek (Gen.14:17ff). They had never met, but they did have in common a fear of God.

Melchizedek has been a mystery man throughout the centuries. Even Bible scholars are stumped because there isn’t a lot said about him. Some scholars say he was either an angel-man, Christophany, or simply a human.
While no one is really sure who Melchizedek was we can conclude that he was a type. A type is an Old Testament person (or practice) that had a counterpart in the New Testament in Jesus Christ. Often times a type showed what the their counterpart would be like. Melchizedek is the OT example of what the NT Jesus would look like and he does “resemble the Son of God.” (v.3)

What is clear from Hebrews 7 is that while Jesus comes from the order of the priest-king Melchizedek, he is far superior. Below are a few ways Jesus is superior (vs.1-3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Melchizedek</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>king of Salem</td>
<td>King of kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>king of righteousness, king of peace (Ps. 76:2)</td>
<td>King of righteousness, King of peace (Rom. 5:1; Is. 9:6–7; Heb. 1:8–9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priest of the Most High God</td>
<td>High Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superior to Abram (Nu. 18:21–32)</td>
<td>Superior to Abram and Melchizedek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministers to Abram (Gen. 14:17-20)</td>
<td>ministers to all-believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blesses Abram (Heb. 6:13–14)</td>
<td>blesses all believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no father or mother or genealogy</td>
<td>earthy mother, Heavenly Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no beginning or end</td>
<td>Alpha and Omega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no genealogy</td>
<td>earthly genealogy, Eternal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priest forever</td>
<td>Priest Forever (Heb. 1:8–9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line of Messiah (Psalm 110:4)</td>
<td>Messiah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that the author of Hebrews doesn’t interpret the story of Melchizedek, but simply shows how Jesus is a priest in his order and that he is a far superior priest to any before him or after him. Through Melchizedek and the OT there is a shadow cast that Jesus brings light to. The entire OT points to Jesus.

Who was Melchizedek?

How are Jesus and Melchizedek similar? How are they different?

Note other types in the Bible: 1) serpent (Num. 21:8-9; John 3:14), 2) lamb (Ex. 12:1-7, 12-13; John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5:6-8)
How is Jesus superior to Melchizedek?

Why is Melchizedek an important Bible character? Why is he important to understanding Jesus?

What do you learn about Jesus’ uniqueness and his unique role from this biblical text?

**Jesus is Greater than Melchizedek (7:11-28)**

In God’s providence he chose the nation of Israel carry out his purposes and plans. Part of that plan was giving Israel the law and to help carry out the law God chose the tribe of Levi to be the priests. The Levite priests taught the people the law and were responsible to offer sacrifices on behalf of the entire nation. Even though the Levite priests would offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, not one of the priests was without sin (v.11).

Melchizedek and Jesus show that their is the possibility of another priesthood. Jesus changes things and is a different priest than the former Levite priest of Israel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Levitical Priests</th>
<th>Jesus the High Priest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Tribe of Levi</td>
<td>Tribe of Judah (vs.12-14; cf. cf. Isa. 11:1; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 1:3; Luke 3:33; Rom. 1:16; Rev. 5:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legality</td>
<td>Through the Law of Moses</td>
<td>Through the Law of God (vs.15-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>Permanent, Forever (vs.17,23-24; 5:6-10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jesus is unique and his priesthood is forever. He stepped into the office of the priesthood though another way. When law was weak and made nothing perfect not even its priests, Jesus offers a better way of drawing near to God. Jesus is the greater hope. Jesus fulfills both the perfect priesthood and perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus saves us forever, intercedes for us always, and offers complete salvation. This makes Jesus the Greater High Priest.

What was the job description of a Levite priest?

How was Jesus a priest? How is he a greater priest?

What is a covenant? How does Jesus fulfill all previous covenants?

How was Jesus a different priest than the Levite priest?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oath</th>
<th>Sworn in by man</th>
<th>Sworn in by God (vs.20-21; 5:4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guarantor</td>
<td>of the Mosaic Covenant</td>
<td>of the better covenant, the New Covenant (v. 22, 8:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Many priests</td>
<td>Only one priest (vs.23-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>partial, from year-to-year</td>
<td>complete, for all time, to the uttermost (v.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercessor</td>
<td>only the priest in the most holy place</td>
<td>all believers any place at anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Sacrificed daily</td>
<td>Sacrificed once for all (v.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Sinful sinners</td>
<td>Holy, innocent, unstained (vs.26-27; 6:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Offered sacrifices for themselves</td>
<td>Offered sacrifice only for others (vs.26-27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Offered sacrificial animals</td>
<td>Offered up Himself (v.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment</td>
<td>The Law</td>
<td>God the Father (v.28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oath</th>
<th>Sworn in by man</th>
<th>Sworn in by God (vs.20-21; 5:4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guarantor</td>
<td>of the Mosaic Covenant</td>
<td>of the better covenant, the New Covenant (v. 22, 8:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Many priests</td>
<td>Only one priest (vs.23-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>partial, from year-to-year</td>
<td>complete, for all time, to the uttermost (v.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercessor</td>
<td>only the priest in the most holy place</td>
<td>all believers any place at anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Sacrificed daily</td>
<td>Sacrificed once for all (v.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Sinful sinners</td>
<td>Holy, innocent, unstained (vs.26-27; 6:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Offered sacrifices for themselves</td>
<td>Offered sacrifice only for others (vs.26-27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Offered sacrificial animals</td>
<td>Offered up Himself (v.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment</td>
<td>The Law</td>
<td>God the Father (v.28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why is it important that Jesus is a priest forever? What does that mean for you today?

Why do you need a high priest? How does Jesus minister to you as priest?
HEBREWS 8:1-10:18
JESUS IS A GREATER PRIEST

Jesus is the Greater Mediator of a Greater Covenant (8:1-13)

When God gives a gift, He gives his best. One one can out do or out give God. He tops the cake. He gives the greatest gift.

What gift could God give that would wow the world? The gift was himself.

The big idea of Hebrews from the beginning until now is that Jesus is the greatest. Above Jesus none is greater! In chapter 8, this idea continues, but focuses moves towards Jesus as the Great High Priest (v.1).

Think about it, at this very moment, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He is ministering in the true Holy of holies that the earthly tabernacle where priests ministered only represented (vs.2-5). Jesus stepped into the role of High Priest and sacrifice. A role only needed once for all.

Jesus ministers a greater covenant on greater promises (vs.6-7). Not only did Jesus minister the covenant, but he was its author, fulfiller, and mediator. The New Covenant that Jeremiah prophesied about was actualized with Jesus’ life and ministry (vs.8-12, cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Jesus makes the first covenant obsolete and the second one complete.

Through Jesus there is no need for another priest or covenant ever (v.13). For millennia God’s people had to access God through a middleman like a patriarch, prophet or priest. Jesus became that middleman and now we have forever access to God. What greater gift could God have given us than this?

What are some examples of things you’ve experienced that are “less than the best”?

What is a covenant? What covenant have you made? (i.e. family, work, society, etc)

---

24 cf. Mark 16:19; Eph. 1: 20–23; Phil. 2: 5–11

25 cf. Ex.33:7; 25:40

26 cf. 9:12-14; 10:9-12; Eph. 5:2

27 cf. 10:16; Rom. 11:27; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6-11; Ex. 20:18-21
What is the Bible’s understanding of a covenant?

Why is the first covenant obsolete? What does this mean for Israel?

What makes the New Covenant greater?

What do you learn about the New Covenant? (vs.8-12) What about the covenant is hard to understand?

Where is Jesus now? Why is that so important?

What is a mediator? How is Jesus a mediator?

Jesus is God’s Great High Priest, but is there anything that can minimize his greatness?
Jesus is the Greater Sacrifice of a Greater Covenant (9:1-28)

Everywhere you look there are symbols and icons. They point us to something recognizable. For example when a person hungry and driving through town they will look for their favorite icon that represents fast food. The icon may look like a girl in red pig tails, a bell, or even golden arches. Or when someone is needing medical attention they look for an “H” or red “+” which says a hospital is nearby. A person who wears a ring on their left hand shows they are married.

The tabernacle and sacrificial system that began with Moses (vs.1-8) and the children of Israel were also symbols. They pointed to a greater sacrifice that was to come (v.9a). Israel knew that no human agent or animal sacrifice could really pardon their sins completely (vs.9b-10). It was the system God had originated to give light to something greater yet to come.

When Jesus came to earth he embodied the symbol of the greater thing that was to come. He did what no man could do—live a perfect, sinless life. He sacrificed his life in the place of an animal. He pardoned mans sin once and for all (vs.11-14).28

Jesus Himself mediated a new covenant, signed by his blood and sealed by his death (vs.15-23). He was both the mediator and guarantor of the New Covenant. His blood both covered and cleansed man’s sin. Also, his Covenant fulfills and superseded the old covenant Moses carried on tablet down the mount Sinai.

See how Jesus of the new covenant compares to Moses and the old covenant (vs. 24-28):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Covenant</th>
<th>New Covenant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses (ultimately God)</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 Isa. 53:12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18
In all aspects, Jesus is greater. Jesus is not a symbol or icon. He is the real deal. The old covenant did its job and pointed to Jesus—the great sacrifice for sin.

*How does Exodus 25-26 and Leviticus 16 give definition to Hebrews 9:1-5?*

*How was the old covenant given to Moses ultimately from God?*

*What was the tabernacle, sacrificial system, and atonement meant to symbolize?*

*How do God already have both covenants in mind from before time and creation?*

*Why isn’t the blood of a goat or bull sufficient atonement for the blood of man?*
Why wasn’t the high priest’s annual atonement sufficient enough for full atonement?

How intricate and beautiful is the symbol of Jesus New Covenant?

How does Hebrews 9 show two worlds colliding (heaven and earth)?

How do we walk in both worlds?

What “manmade things” do people often trust in more than God-made things?

What sacrifice are you making to try and earn salvation with God or to cover your sins?

How will you step boldly and confidently into the sanctuary of God today?
Jesus is the Eternal Sacrifice of a Greater Covenant (10:1-18)

Have you ever made shadow puppets on the wall? The shadows on the wall takes the shape of your hands. My children like to do this by making shapes of a bird, camel, turtle or rabbit. They can do it for hours.

In a similar fashion, the law of God that was given to Moses was but a shadow (v.1).29 It represented something greater, particularly something that was to come.

Today there is no longer a need for animal sacrifices. Animal sacrifices were never met to be a permanent solution for man’s sin problem (v.11). The people knew that an animal sacrifice couldn’t be an equal substitute for another persons sin (vs.2-4) Thus Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life and became the adequate substitute and sacrifice for sin. His sacrifice does away with once and for all the sacrificial system of the law (vs. 5-10, 12-14). He is the eternal sacrifice.

The mind-blowing truth is that Jesus forgives sins completely (v.12), perfectly (v.14), and eternally (v.18). Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is the reason there is no longer a need for daily or yearly sacrifices made by human priests. Jesus makes true and lasting forgiveness possible. And he writes the law on the hearts and minds of men (vs. 15-16).30

What kind of sacrifices were offered under the law?

Why was a greater sacrifice needed than was provided under the law?

How can we discern when old ways are superior and when they are inferior? What are some good criteria for evaluating new versus old?

29 cf. 8:5; Col. 2:17

30 cf. 8:10; Rom. 11:27; Jer. 31:33
The Jews saw human sacrifice as a pagan abomination. How might this attitude have affected their response to the idea of Jesus as the sacrifice for their sins?

In our culture animal sacrifice is abhorrent, and human sacrifice even worse. How do you think that affects a modern person who reads Hebrews to understand what Jesus did?

How does Jesus’ complete sacrifice on the cross affect the way you live your life daily?

How might your life be different if the old covenant and the old way of sacrifice were still in effect today?

How does the phrase “I will remember their sin no more”\(^{31}\) give you encouragement to walk in freedom from sin today?

\(^{31}\) cf. Jeremiah 31:34
Jesus Calls You to a Life of Faith (10:19-39)

An arrogant Christian is an oxymoron. A Christian has no room to boast in himself rather that is reserved for Jesus. There is little difference between arrogance and confidence. The difference is the attitude. An arrogant person boasts in his ability while a confident person simply acts.

A Christian can be confident because of Christ. The root of our confidence as a Christian is that we have unlimited and unhindered access to the Most Holy Place where Jesus reigns as a Great High Priest (vs.19-21).

This should encourage us to look both upward and outward as we approach God. Upward with a sincere heart and full of faith and holding unswervingly to the hope we profess.

Outward considering how best to stir one another towards love and good deeds (vs.22-25).

We have power to forgive others because God has forgiven us of so much. If we go on sinning we continue rebelling against God, stomping on the sacrifice of Christ, and insulting the Spirit of grace. Ultimately, if we go that route we reject the sole means for salvation through Jesus and what remains is fear of judgement without hope (vs.26-31).

The writer of Hebrews takes note of his readers confident faith in God even in their present difficulties. They knew that Jesus made it possible for them to inherit greater and lasting possessions and this gave them hope through their present circumstances (vs.32-38).

This hope multiplies our hope too. Through Jesus we have the means to keep on persevering, even in the face of temptations and persecutions. By enduring through public insults, humiliation and suffering, with others, we grow a full faith (v.39).

What is the difference between arrogance and confidence? How do verses 19-25 define confidence we have in Jesus?
What are some arrogant attitudes Christians can have towards God? What arrogant attitudes do you often exhibit?

Which of the three “let us” commands do you have a struggle walking in? (vs. 22-24)

How does one drift from their faith, waver in hope, or neglect loving others? What is the remedy for this according to the text?

What access do you have to God through the Most Holy Place and the Great High Priest? What is the benefit of this unlimited and unhindered access? Why are we prone to timidity rather than boldness?

How does faith go hand in hand with meeting together with other believers?
Why are you grateful we don’t have to endure this life and faith alone? Who do you have around you that you are meeting with that stir you to love and good works? Why is it difficult to stir others from a distance? Who are you stirring?

How do hard times draw us together and comfort often draws us apart? How do you see in verses 32-39 the power of remembering past hardships to bolster present faith? Do you have a similar remembrance?

*Before Jesus Others had Great Faith (11:1-40)*

Recalling the faith of others bolsters our own faith. To know that someone else has gone through it and survived gives us courage to have faith too.

**What is Faith (11:1-3)**

Would you rather see the future or see what is invisible? There is a measure of faith that comes with both because we can see neither. One often think that seeing is believing or if one sees he will have greater faith. However, Jesus says, greater is one’s faith who believes and doesn’t have to see (John 20:29). That’s where faith is born.

Faith is defined as confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. In other word, faith confidently trusts and obeys God no matter the circumstances or consequences. We don’t live or define our life by the circumstances or consequences but by confident trust and obedience to what God has already said about himself and his plans.

Faith gives you the ability to see the future as the present because you know God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Also faith gives you the ability to see the invisible as seen because you can see what God has said and done in Scripture and that gives you proof enough that he is trustworthy and worth following. (See Appendix D)

---

37 See Barnabas at work in Acts (4:36–7; 9:26–9; 11:22–6; 15:36–40). How can we be like him in our church situations?
The example in verse three is that by faith we understand that God created the universe by the spoken word. We weren’t there, but we read about it in Genesis chapter one. We cannot see God, but we can see what God has made and this proves that God exists. We can have faith in God because we can see the evidences of what he said by what he has done.

*How does the author of Hebrews define faith? How would you define faith in your own words?*

*How do the words “assurance,” “conviction,” and “commendation” help you to understand the meaning of faith?*

*What are things that you hope for? What are the invisible things you’d like to see?*

*What is something invisible that is easy for you to have faith in? What is something invisible that is difficult for you to have faith in?*

*Without looking ahead (even if you may know), who were ancient men and who in Scripture who were commended for their faith? What makes their faith so great?*
What do others say about your faith? Would they commend it?

Other than creation, what other evidence of God do we have that God exists or keeps his promises? How do we see God at work even though we cannot see God Himself?

How do you see God in Jesus (e.g. Hebrews 1-10)? How does he encourage your faith?

What Faith Looks Like (11:4-7)

A few years ago, I went to the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame. It is an interesting and educational shrine to one of football's most storied sports teams. One of the most fascinating aspects was learning about the team's early days and what the sport first looked like. A hundred years ago the sport was raw and tough. The founders and initial inductees to the Hall didn't have much to look back on. They were creating the records that would be broken. They were paving the way for future players by creating the benchmarks and examples to follow.

The first three examples in the Faith Hall of Fame are the founding fathers of faith after the creation of the world: Abel, Enoch and Noah. There isn't a lot we know about these men between Chapters 4-9 of Genesis. These three men show us that human history is a history of living “by faith” and the kind of life God expects (vs.4,5,7).

Abel's faith was not in the substance of his sacrifice, but in the heart behind his sacrifice.38 To Abel to give his first and best fruits was an act of faith and worship (Genesis 4). Abel was later martyred by his own brother, but Abel’s faith still speaks to us today.

Enoch's faith takes hold of what God offers. In Genesis 5:24, there is a genealogy filled with men who live to be more than 900 years old, yet following each name reads the cold

---

38 cf. Proverbs 15:8
words, “and then he died.” Except for Enoch. Enoch walked with God and he was no more because God took him away. Death had no hold on Enoch.\textsuperscript{39}

Noah’s faith obeyed. Obedience to God amidst of an unclear future and chaotic circumstances is key to faith. Noah built a boat despite never seeing rain, hundreds of years of ridicule, and limited information. Noah takes God at his word and gets to work.\textsuperscript{40} His actions show his faith as he stands obedient among a wicked generation (Genesis 6:9).

The common thread between these three ancients was their faith. They believed God existed, they feared him, and they believed God rewards those who seek him.\textsuperscript{41}

*How do these ancient examples of faith still speak to us today?*

*How does faith involve aspects of sacrifice (Abel), hope (Enoch), and obedience (Noah)? Which person can you relate with the most and why? Which aspect of faith do you struggle with the most and why?*

*What are the different things people mean when they talk about ‘faith’? How does real, biblical faith differ from the popular idea of ‘faith’?*

\textsuperscript{39} Through Enoch we have an example of resurrection hope. cf. 1 Corinthians 15

\textsuperscript{40} The ark became a prototype of salvation through Christ alone (Luke 17:26–27; 1 Peter 3:20–21; 2 Peter 2:5).

\textsuperscript{41} cf. 4:16; 7:25; 10:22; 12:22
Have you experienced times when your faith in God has been tested? What have you learned from such experiences? How have these lessons helped you in times of difficulty?

Why is it impossible to please God without faith? On the contrary, how does faith please God?

What is the reward of faith? (cf. 1 Chr. 28:9; Jer. 29:12-14; John 4:24)

What Enduring Faith Looks Like and Looks Forward Towards (11:8-22)

Life isn’t a calm breeze. Sometimes the winds gust and the storms batter from within and without. Life can be a grueling journey of endurance and faith is necessary.

We need examples. We need people we can look to and say, “If they did it, so can I.” When it comes to big time examples of faith, Abraham is a name that often comes to mind. Abraham was called by God to go to an unknown place. He journeyed even though he didn’t know exactly where God was taking him or what the journey would look like (vs.8-9). It was a true journey and test of faith (Gen. 15:6).

Faith acts by moving forward. Abraham and Sarah never fully reached the Promised Land during their lifetime, but it was realized through the purchase of a small burial plot where Abraham would bury Sarah. The duration of their lives was lived as strangers in a strange land, yet they looked forward to a better country, a heavenly one that God was preparing for them (v.10; cf. 13:14). Their faith looked forward beyond the grave (vs. 13-16).
Faith acts on what seems impossible. A at 90 years old, God said he would open the womb of Abraham’s wife making it possible for her to bear a son (vs.11-12). Although, at first she laughed (ha!), God made the impossible possible (ah!). It was God’s starting point for fulfilling a promise to Abraham making his descendants as numerous as the stars.

Faith acts on what it knows about God. Abraham’s biggest test of faith was when God would ask him to sacrifice that son—his one and only promised heir (vs.17-19). Abraham acted in faith. He had faith that God would raise his son from the dead.

Faith acts on what God has already done. Abraham’s descendants Isaac, Jacob and Joseph continued on, but not without their own enduring challenges and faith struggles (vs.20-21). Joseph, was sold as a slave to Egypt by his brothers. His brothers would later come to Egypt bowing before Joseph demanding food amidst a famine. This fulfilled Joseph’s dream and he responded by embracing and providing for his brothers. Interestingly, after his death his bones were brought back to the Promised Land (v.22).

God’s plans aren’t always immediate. Sometimes they span generations. God has an enduring love for his people and the working out of his plans. God will do as he says even amidst the wind and storms of life. We too must have enduring faith in what God is doing and will do because of what he has already done.

What is endurance? How is endurance linked to faith? Why is endurance often difficult?

What do you learn about endurance from the life of Abraham, Abraham’s children, and Abraham’s children’s children (e.g. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph)? How does their faith speak to you?

What do you learn about enduring faith through the life and death of Jesus? What was the reward he was looking forward to and the city he is preparing for us? (cf. Hebrews 13:12-14) How does the dramatic story in Genesis 22 anticipate the central work of Christ?

---

42 see Genesis 17:19; 18:11-14; 21:2

43 see Genesis 15:5; 22:17; 32:12

HEBREWS :: JESUS IS GREATER
How do you hand down these stories to the next generation? Are there new stories of faith you can hand down? What are they?

In what areas of your faith and life is God calling you to endure?

What Faith in Action Looks Like (11:23-31)

Faith is a crucial piece of our relationship with God. We don’t always understand God or what he is doing. Sometimes we may feel like we are up against a wall or we feel like we are being run down by a fierce army and God is nowhere to be seen.

Moses’ story is amazing from start to finish. As an act of faith his parents sent him down the Nile River in a basket (v.23). By faith he gave up the luxuries of Egypt to help let his people go free (vs.25-26). By faith Moses listened to God and obeyed his commands (vs.27-28). What God prepared Moses for was an amazing journey of faith marked by miracle after miracle.

Faith acts. With Pharaoh and his army charging after the slaves they just let go the people had a choice: freak out or have faith. By faith the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea on dry ground (v.29). No doubt Moses’ faith and leadership inspired their faith. Their faith preserved their lives from the bitter Egyptian army who drowned after the last Hebrew reached the other side of the Red Sea.

The city of Jericho was a towering menace and it was a barrier between the Hebrews and the land God promised. God’s plan seemed a little whacky: March around the city seven time and blow trumps and the walls would come down. No weapons. Only instruments and obedience. By faith the Israelites did as God said and God did as he

---

44 cf. Exodus 2
45 cs. Acts 7:20-44
46 cf. Exodus 12:21–28
47 cf. Exodus 14
48 Joshua 6

HEBREWS :: JESUS IS GREATER
said (v.30). And the people of Israel did the impossible were able to walk into the Promised Land.

Rahab the prostitute was saved when Jericho was destroyed because of her faith and kindness in helping the Hebrews spies escape (v.31; cf. Joshua 2:10-21; 6:25). Not only that Rahab became a part of the nation of Israel. She married Salmon and gave birth to Boaz who was an ancestor of King David (Matthew 1: 4–6).

When faith acts God honors it. Faith shows we trust God at his word. The moment we act in faith is never easy. That is why it is called faith.

How does faith need great courage for difficult decisions?

How do you see faith in action in the life of Moses?

What does it mean that Moses “considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward”? What might Moses have known about Christ? In what sense can we say that Moses suffered for the sake of Christ or how did Moses give an image of Christ? (see 1 Corinthians 10:4)

How is Jesus never far away from any Scripture, even Old Testament Scriptures? How do all examples of faith ultimately lead to Jesus? What are the promises offered by the world which seek to pull us away from following Christ?

49 cf. James 2:15

50 cf. 13:13; Ps. 89:50-51; Isa. 63:9; Phil. 3:7, 8; 1 Pet. 4:14
How can you encourage others around you to be bold in faith and to persevere, rather than yielding to the temptations of the world?

For all that Moses did for the Hebrews, he still didn’t get to enter the Promised Land. What does this teach us about God’s rewards for the faithful? What are some other examples of rewarded faith that seem unexpected or maybe even unsatisfying at least according to the world’s understanding of “reward”?

What is so unique about having Rahab listed as a heroine of faith? What does she show you about the unique plan of God and the kind of people God uses? What do Rahab’s actions teach us about the relationship between obedience and faith?

How might God use you to act in faith to further his kingdom purposes?

What the Reward for Faith Looks Like (11:32-40)

When I was in elementary school I was in a community swim league. Other than the Speedo and practices, I liked swimming. I was super strong in the backstroke. All those tedious practices paid off with my first blue ribbon. After all these years, I still have it.

At the end of a race there is a trophy or ribbon. At the completion of a test there is a grade or a diploma. At the close of a performance there is an applause or a pat on the back. Yet what is the reward for faith?
You don’t often see the authors of the Scripture making public apologies. However, the author of Hebrews gives an apology for listing the final heroes of faith in rapid order (v. 32). He said there are simply too many names to list and too little time to talk about them. Thankfully their stories are recorded in canon of Scripture (vs.33-34). This is your reminder to go an read about them

Although each person listed had their failures, yet the common thread between each judge, king and prophet was faith being their victory over death (v. 35). A hero or heroine often does not get to see the reward of his work in his lifetime (v. 39). Sometimes he dies in battle before the victory. Sometimes he is marginalized or even martyred (vs. 36-38). The images of persecution and imprisonment pile up to convince us along with the first readers of this letter that the experiences of these men and women are no different than ours (cf. 10:32–34). Their names are here to encourage you to persevere in faith for the reward of faith is greater than what one can achieve in this lifetime (v. 40).

It was said “the world was not worthy of” these people of great faith (v. 38), but they had the assurance that they were moving toward a greater goal. Again we enter the realm of “something greater,” and with that we have much to rejoice in, to live for and fight for. The reward for faith is God. What better reward is there?

Hebrews 11 is here for you on look backward on the faith of yesterday in order to press forward in faith today. Press on! The greatest reward is yet to come!

What might the writer of Hebrews have said about these men if there had been more time?

Why do you think God chose to work through these people (e.g. Gideon, Samson, David) despite their faults and failures? What does this tell you about God?

How does faith enable you to seek only God’s approval rather than the world’s approval? How could God be more glorified by not delivering you from suffering than from delivering you from it? Does this give you more or less confidence in God?

---

51 One can include Daniel and Isaiah in this list since they are mentioned, but not by name.
What do Christians have to look forward to? How can you take the knowledge of your inheritance to come and use it to help you to be courageous and faithful in times of trial?

If you knew that you wouldn’t receive any earthly rewards for your faith, how would that affect the way you live? Knowing that you will ultimately receive a promised blessing, does that make faith easier or more difficult when challenges arise?

In what ways does the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11 encourage you? Challenge you? Intimidate you? If you were to add your own name to this list based on the way in which you’ve shown great faith, how would that entry read?

*Jesus Calls You to a Live by Faith (12:1-29)*

Faith is the mark of a Jesus follower. Not only is Jesus the object of our faith, he is the motivation and giver of faith. Throughout history, even biblical history faith is manifest in patriarchs and everyday people like you and me.

Jesus is the Great Object of Our Faith (12:1-2)

Steve and I would ride our bikes for miles. We’d push each other faster and longer. After the ride we would wobble onto the road and run. Steve was more than 20 years older than me, but he could lap me on the run. That is embarrassing for a young guy, but exhilarating for an old guy. He knew running was my weakest event and he would remind me, “Justin, this is your cross to bear. Fix your eyes on the cross and run.” It did help to endure the middle of the run when I was tempted to walk or even quit.

I was a sprinter on my middle school track team. I ran the 100m and 400m. Running long distances was not my thing. Likewise, in life I would much rather endure a sprint than a marathon. However, this life resembles an Iron Man more than a quick jaunt.

We have just walked through the Hall of Fame. Hebrews 11 is a gallery of examples that help you to know what faith looks like and what God can do through a human vessel.
Each name is an example for your benefit. That you too would exercise faith, endure through the trials and resist temptations in this life (Hebrews 12:1a).

Now it is time to run (v.1b). The author of Hebrews describes life like a race. The course is not flat or oval like a track. It has high mountains and low valleys. There is pain and heartache. There are injuries and insecurities. In this life there are innumerable “weights” that taunt, trap, or trip us up.

Often our eyes are fixed on the weights and we worry what will come next or what will come of us. Yet those who have gone before us have given some valuable advice: keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (v.2).

That might sound nebulous. How do I fix my eyes on Jesus when I can’t see him? Or what exactly am I to fix my eyes on? The key is keeping your eyes fixed on how Jesus endured the cross and shame. Do you remember Jesus final days? Do you remember the trial, the rejection, the flogging, the walk through the streets of Jerusalem, the blood, the tears, the prayers, the cries? Do you see how he endured? Remember this.

Ultimately, Jesus is our example. He shows us what faith looks like. He is the founder and perfecter of our faith. He shows us what endurance looks like. He endured with joy and obedience. He shows us we are not alone. He is seated at the right hand of God as our intercessor.

Like my friend Steve, we need running buddies. One who will encourage you from time to time and say, “This is your cross to bear. Fix your eyes on the cross and run.”

Why do you think the author focuses on endurance after exploring the role of faith?

Read Philippians 3: 12–14. How does this passage compare to the message in Hebrews 12? How is the example of a race so helpful?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27. To what does Paul liken the Christian faith? How does he say we should live this life of faith? What does this mean practically for us as individuals and churches?

52 cf. Philippians 3:12-14
What are the weights Christians should remove so they can run the race? What are some of the things that believers cling to that hinder their faith?

How is faith at times a grueling race? What sorts of “hardship” will believers endure as they grow their faith?

How can one have joy and endure at the same time? What can you learn from Jesus about melding of joy and endurance?

What are ways today’s church looks backward instead of forward? How can you follow the example of the heroes of faith and look ahead to the joy that awaits you? What role does faith play in the ability to look ahead?

**God’s Work in Faith (12:3-11)**

To melt gold a goldsmith needs to stoke the furnace to over 1,000 F. However, in order to remove all the impurities and to make 24k gold the heat of the furnace is doubled to nearly 2,000 F. The hotter the purer and more valuable.

God is like a goldsmith. He takes his creation made of dust, full of impurities and puts it into the fire to make it pure and beautiful. Nobody likes being in a furnace, but everyone
like the result. It is in the fire that God does his greatest work. It is in the furnace that our faith grows.

Pain and suffering are unavoidable, but is it fruitful or beneficial? There is no doubt they get our attention. In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis says, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain, it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

In the midst of suffering it is helpful to remember that Jesus is our example. See how he suffered and faced pain. He was not immune to it. As horrific as Jesus’ sufferings were they are for our benefit (v.3). It was his pain for our gain. His sufferings are far greater than any suffering we will ever face (v.4, cf. John 18-21). Take heart!

We must understand that suffering can come from the hand of God. That might mess with your theology, but it is true. Now, God doesn’t inflict pain and suffering for fun like a mean ogre or an abusive father, but God is likened to a father and God will discipline his children. The difference between God and earthly fathers is that God always discipies out of infinite love (vs. 5-6; cf. Proverbs 3:11-12). It is his parental prerogative (vs. 7-9). If God didn’t discipline us and allowed us to get away with every evil thing we wouldn’t have any respect for him nor would we say that he is truly loving. God’s discipline stems from love because he desires to see his children learn from the heat of the furnace rather than to get away with sin and suffer even greater in hell. The discipline he gives lasts only a short time but the effects can last a lifetime (vs.10-11).

Just like nobody likes to be in the furnace, no child likes to be discipled and no parent likes to discipline their children, but it is a necessary practice to help children grow up. God always has the right discipline to produce the right character within our heart, particularly a pure heart full of faith. A faith rich and valuable.

*How does God have a plan for our suffering and trials? Why is our fight against sin much lesser than Jesus’*?

*How does “considering” the sufferings of Jesus encourage you not to grow weary or lose heart in similar sufferings? What does it mean to share in Christ’s sufferings?*
How does God discipline from genuine love? How is discipline a hard but good thing? How does discipline grow our respect and confidence in God?

How is an earthly father a picture of our heavenly Father? What are the limitations of this picture?

What is the holiness of God? How does God’s discipline produce holiness? How are you sharing in God’s holiness now?

The Church’s Work in Faith (12:12-17)

I once heard a church member say, “The church would be a lot more peaceful if there weren’t any people in it.” As true as that statement may sound, what would the church be without people? No church at all.

A church is a community of imperfect people striving for peace together (v.14). This is no easy task. Often it is exhausting, discouraging, heartbreaking and wrought with conflict. However, relationships, especially difficult ones take work, but the rewards of these relationships are rich and healthy to your faith (vs.12-13).

What is the goal of the church? A church can have many goals, but the author of Hebrews cues us into a common goal—to aim for peace with all and live holy before Christ (v.14). This is the pathway to growing a great church.

The church that received the letter to of Hebrews was experiencing persecution from outside the church and conflict from inside the church too (v.15). How discouraging would that be? Who would want to visit that church? Yet this is what church is like for many around the world. Living in a fallen world with broken and imperfect people, the church often reflect the world. That is okay. It is no reason to dog the church. Church and relationships are messy. Yet the church working together in grace is light and
example to the world of what grace looks like between imperfect people who love the
Perfect Christ.

Work in the church begins with confession. There is great power and freedom in
classing our sins to one another and encouraging one another (James 5:16). The
power in confession is that we admit we cannot fight alone. We need one another. We
are weak, but together in Christ we are strong. A force hell cannot reckon with.

The example of Esau is a serious warning for the church (vs.16-17). In the story of Esau,
he turned his back on grace. He sold his birthright for fast-food (see Gen. 25:29ff). He
did not fight for holiness rather he was driven to bitterness. When Esau wanted to inherit
the blessing from his father, he was rejected—it was too late to be reversed. He became
a memorable example of someone who failed to appropriate God's grace by wasting the
opportunity. Likewise turning from Christ and failing to be one's brothers keeper will lead
to ruin and sorrow in the church.

Church relationships take work. It is a two-way street. Like a family, those within the
church often know intimate things about one another. A church that loves Jesus and
strives for peace and holiness will grow even more intimate together because they see
that the grace of Jesus can fully heal brokenness and hurt caused by sin within the Body.
May we be more like Jesus with one another.

*How does this passage encourage you? How is it meant to encourage you to strive for
peace in the community of faith?*

*How do we reach the goal of peace with all people and live holy before the Lord,
especially in the church? What happens when the community doesn’t aim for this goal
with one another? How does this text help churches before of during conflict?*

*What makes relationships within the church difficult? Why is it worth the work to strive for
peace and holiness? How have you benefited in your faith with the church? What would be the
detriment to your faith if your were without the church?*
What responsibility do we have to one another in the church? What is your role and responsibility to help your brothers and sisters? How will you strive for peace and holiness together with them?

The Future’s Work in Faith (12:18-29)

When you consider your future it will have an impact on how you live now. In other words, eyes that are fixed on a future hope will inevitable impact where the feet tread today. When it comes to faith it is no different. Hope of the future has its work in faith.

God is sovereign and powerful. He shook creation and history with his presence. The image of Exodus 19-20 was not a small pyrotechnics show at Mount Sinai. God appeared in blazing fire, ear-piercing noise, and trembling earth. God said that if anyone but Moses touched the mountain they would be scorched on the spot. The people of Israel freaked out, Moses himself was afraid, and the people begged Moses not to experience God like this again (vs.18-21). Who would blame them?

You are invited to another mountain—Zion. The image of Zion is greater and more epic than Sinai. Countless angels will be there. Throngs of heaven will be there. Saints from all ages will be there. God as Judge will be there. Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant will be there. The city of God is a holy and awe-filled sight (vs.22-24).

No one will be able to run, hide or ignore the fact that God exists. On that day in the near and not so distant future you will appear before him who is utterly inescapable. He who shook the earth will shake the heavens. When he shakes it this time it will be a sifting. Above all the kingdom of God will stand and for this God will be praised because is worthy of all worship, reverence, fear, and awe. He is God and holy is his name—a consuming fire (vs. 25-29).

The future image of Zion is wowing. Even now, it’s quite the stimulus package for the imagination. That you are given a sneak peak at what is to come is meant to inflict you with great excitement and trepidation. It is meant to shake your faith and affection towards the God who is unshakeable.

Read Exodus 19-20. What do you learn about God? What do you learn about the people of Israel? How would you respond if you were present that day? How is God a consuming fire?
Now read Revelation 20-21. What do you learn about God, Jesus and heaven? What awes you about these verses? What assurance do you have that these verses are true? How must these verses about the future impact your now?

How can we ensure that we are frequently remembering our eternal inheritance in heaven? What difference should the knowledge of this glorious future make to the way we live our lives now?
Walking with Others (13:1-3)

In our first year of marriage, my wife and I took a hiking trip together in the Rockies. We got new packs and packed light. We planned our trip well. When the day came to walk the 6 miles up the mountain we knew it would be a difficult climb. It was a good thing that we were together because it would have been much more difficult to walk alone. We were able to encourage each other steps and help carry ones pack when tired.

Walking with others in the church is both beautiful and arduous. Those two characteristics cannot be separated. As we struggle to do life with one another the old adage is true—it’s hard to live with them but we can’t live without them. The way we walk with one another demonstrates the beauty of Christ and the hard work of striving to make him famous.

There are three encouragements the author of Hebrews gives for walking with others. First, love like a brother. Brotherly love is a family-like intimacy (v.1). A family member shares blood and dirt. You know things about one another that most do not. In the community of faith, we have the blood of Jesus in common, we are adopted into the family of God, and we share a level of intimacy that is otherworldly. It is a relationship we will share into eternity. This is good reason to get along in the here and now.

Second, show hospitality. Typically hospitality provides room and board to strangers, but it also demonstrates a willingness to place someones needs above your own. Jesus is our example of what hospitality looks like. He came to serve not to be served. Like Jesus we are all strangers in this world. Showing hospitality can surprise those we serve with a bountiful meal inside out and in the process we might even entertain angels (v.2).

Third, remember the persecuted (v.3). You may know brothers and sisters who are suffering for the Name of Jesus. By ministering to those who are mistreated you are pouring on them encouragement and strength (cf. 11:25,37). We will all suffer for the sake of Christ. That is a promise from the mouth of Jesus himself. It is our badge, but we’re in this together. It is a mutual blessing to carry your brothers burden, especially when he is facing mistreatment for the Name as he will likely carry yours one day too.

Walking with others is hard because walking with Jesus is hard. Yet walking through the fire together produces a beautiful Body that you are a member.

What makes people hard to love? What makes you hard to love sometimes? Who is someone that is hard for you to love? How can you demonstrate brotherly love to them?
How does Jesus demonstrate brotherly love? Who are some hard to love people he loved well? What do you learn from him about how to love well?

What do you think of the you think of hospitality? Does hospitality natural or unnatural for you? When is it hard for you to show hospitality? What is the battle to serve and be served like within you? Can you think of a time you were shown hospitality? How did that bless you inside out?

Do you know someone suffering right now for Christ? How are they being mistreated? How can you minister to them? We are a Body, so as they suffer how are you suffering with them?

As you walk with others this week, which of these characteristics do you want to grow in most? Why?

**Walking Purely (13:4-9)**

I remember like it yesterday. The doors in the back of the church swung open wide and there walked in my bride. She was bright eyed and blazing in her white gown. It was, is and will be one of the most beautiful and purest images in my mind. There is no wonder God refers to the church as his bride.
Purity in the Church—the Bride of Christ—is just as important as purity for the individual. Continuing in the thread of Hebrews 13:1-3 the authors shares four rapid-fire characteristics for believers and the church to walk purely.

First, **honor your marriage** (Hebrews 13:4). Today less than 50% of couples get married and the majority of couples are cohabiting rather than marrying. It is more common to test-driving marriage than to actually marry. This has led to a lower level of relational commitment and a greater distancing from moral purity. Yet this is just one aspect of purity. As purity is not just an idea before marriage but within marriage too. God expects the marriage bed to be pure from any form of casual or illicit immorality. In the mind of God, marriage pictures something big—Jesus’ love for the church. When marriages disintegrate so does the testimony of the church, but when marriages fight hard for purity so flourishes the church.

Second, **love not money** (v.5a). The only sure way to keep your heart pure from a love of money is by being content with what you have, especially in seasons of uncertainty (v.6). Why? Attached to this call for contentment is a mammoth promise—God will never abandon you (v.5b). Allow that truth penetrate your soul deeply. If you divorce yourself from this truth it lead to a lust for money, possessions, and discontentment. Ultimately everything, including money, career, health, security, comes from God.

Third, **remember your spiritual leaders** (v.7; cf. vs.17, 24). Leaders are to live pure and exemplary lives, and we are to imitate their faith and study their way of life. An issue can arises when we put too much faith in a spiritual leader to meet our spiritual needs. When a spiritual leader has failure or falls we can become disappointed and disillusioned. A good leader will point people to Jesus who never fails and will forever remain (v.8).

Fourth, **guard your heart from strange teachings** (v.9). Our hearts are easily distracted towards teachings what tickle our ears or stroke our ego. In the process we can commit adultery of the mind as we align ourselves with unbiblical teachings. It is important to weight all teachings against the Word and walk away from teachings contrary to it. If we build on this sturdy and stable ground we will walk purely.

Purity may seem old fashion, yet modern people would not think twice about drinking pure water, eating pure foods, or breathing pure air. When purity in marriage, money, spiritual leadership, or biblical teachings are abandoned the results are as grave on the soul as breathing smog, drinking poison and eating toxins. While purity is a gift from God that we cannot get back once given, it can be forgiven and made anew again.

Are you committed to walking purely? Then “Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” (Ephesians 5:9-10) No matter where you are start today by walking in the light.

---

What is the biblical picture of marriage? How does the word tarnish and diminish this image? How does Jesus and the church redeem the image? How can we help one another keep marriage pure?

---

53 cf. Gen 28:15; Deut 31:6, 8; Josh 1:5.
What is something that you don't have that you wish you did have? Are you content without it? What makes us want what we want when we want it? How is money a huge culprit to a lack of contentment?

How does God's never abandoning promise encourage you? How is God your Helper? What are things we want God to help us with that he doesn’t promise to help with?

Who is a spiritual leader you look up to? How do they mimic Christ? How can you follow their lead?

What kind of teachings tickle peoples ears and stroke their egos? Why is it good to weigh all words you hear in church against the Word of God? How can you do this without being extremely critical of teachers and pastors?

Is there an area of impurity in marriage, finances, leadership or teaching that you need to ask God’s forgiveness? Which area of purity is your greatest struggle? How will you allow the church to help or encourage you?
Walking with God (13:10-16)

Have you heard of the song by the band The Proclaimers with the chorus, “But I would walk 500 miles, and I would walk 500 more, just to be the man who walked a thousand miles, to fall down at your door”? Well, one man’s girlfriend took those song lyrics and said, “If you walk 1,000 miles, I’ll walk up the aisle to you!” He didn’t know she was joking, but he did it anyway.

As strange as that story may sound God’s story is stranger. God created the world and made man from the dust of the God. God walked in the garden with the first couple. When given a choice the couple rejected God. Later generations made images of gods after their own liking. While this broke God’s heart, he loved mankind so much that he came into the world as a man and walked in our shoes. He carried the cross and sacrificed himself so that man could walk right with God once again.

To sacrifice is to give up something important or valued for the sake of something regarded as more important or worthy. We will readily sacrifice time and treasures for others who have a need. We will sacrifice reputation for something we believe in. We will sacrifice our life for someone we care about who’s in danger.

The biblical idea of sacrifice—slaughtering an animal and sprinkling its blood on the altar—may seem archaic or barbaric. The idea of sacrifice according to the Jewish law was to shed the blood of an animal to forgive the sins of a man. However, no blood of an animal could legitimately forgive the sins of a man. The people knew this. God knew this. It had to be a man sacrificed for a man. A human sacrifice. A man without blemish—no sin in him. Jesus was that man and his blood was sufficient to cover all sin.

Hebrews beautifully shows how all the Old Testament, particularly the practices and symbols, point to Jesus. For example, the tabernacle and temple had an altar on which daily sacrifices were made. The author connects this altar with Jesus’ death and sacrifice (v.10). Sacrifices for sin were to be burned outside the camp. Likewise, Jesus suffered outside the camp on a criminals cross (vs.11-12).

Just as Jesus had to suffer and endure much, so will Jesus’ followers. As Jesus sacrificed himself for all (7:27; 9:12) so believers are called to offer ongoing praise from their lips and lives to God (vs.15-16; cf. Romans 12:1). He is pleased with these sacrifices.

Walking with God is a sacrifice. However, when walking with God, he does the walking. He went the distance for his Bride. He made the greatest sacrifice. God longs and loves to walk with you. The reward of walking with God is a place in the everlasting city (v.14). And that’s no joke.
How did the tabernacle and the articles within point to Jesus? How did the sacrificial system ultimately culminate with Jesus’ sacrifice?

How did Jesus suffer outside the camp? How do believers suffer “outside the camp” like Jesus? Why would this mean great enduring for the believer?

What does it look like to praise God with your lips and life? How are you a living sacrifice? What sacrifices do Christians make for the name of Christ?

How is the promise of an everlasting city a satisfying reward? What is to look forward to in that city?

Walking in Obedience (13:17-19)

What emotions stir up within you when you hear the words obedience, submission, and leadership? For many these words conger up anger, skepticism, disappointment, even rebellion. We live in a culture that bucks against authority, challenges leadership, and grumbles against submission.

Yet can you imagine a world without leadership? Homes without parents leading their children. Businesses without managers overseeing production. Nations without government protecting people. Churches without pastors caring for their flock. It may be delightful for a moment, but in the end it would be chaos.
On the flip-side, leadership can be a lonely responsibility because you have to do hard things, deal with difficult people, and lead by example. A leader has a great responsibility. Leadership is not a position with special perks and privileges. In the words of Scripture, a leader “watches over your soul.” (v.17a)

The shepherd terminology in this text is crucial to understanding leadership. The Bible often calls Christians sheep. Sheep are prone to wander. Jesus was known as the Great Shepherd knows all his sheep by name and brings them to himself (John 10:1-18). Jesus even cares to bring the one lost sheep home (Luke 15:1-7).

Pastors and leaders are essentially under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd. They, like Jesus, have the job of watching and protecting their flocks from harm. It is a job they will give an account to God (v.17b). So leaders submit to Jesus as Jesus submits to his Father. By obeying our leaders and submitting to them we are helping them to do their job with joy (v.17c). For a joyful follower makes a joyful leader.

The author of Hebrews gets personal. As a leader himself he asks prayer for a clear mind and honorable life (v.18). He feels the weight of his responsibility. He knows his weaknesses. He is is okay being vulnerable. He wishes he could be on the other end of the letter with the recipients, which shows his shepherd-heartedness (v.19).

It is wonderful when leaders seek the prayer of people they lead. Prayer is a huge ministry to leaders—entrusting them to God. This is the first step of walking in obedience.

Why are leaders often under a lot of scrutiny and criticism? Why is our culture so anti-authority or submission? What is your response to leadership?

Why are leaders necessary for the church? How can you encourage the spiritual leaders in your life? How can you pray for your leaders?

How is the term shepherd a fitting term for a leader? How is the term flock a fitting term for the church? How do shepherds watch over your soul?
Climbing up Mount Everest for a fit team can take almost two months from base to summit. Most climbers upon reaching the summit will stay for only 15 minutes before making their way back down. Why such a brief stay on such a big climb? One would say that they had been admiring the beauty of their surroundings during the entire climb from the base to the top. Getting to the top was a great accomplishment, but the climb was greater.

Reading the book of Hebrews could be a lot like climbing Mount Everest. All along the way we behold the beauty of Jesus. With each step we see his greatest. Once at the summit there is not much more to say, but there is a lot to celebrate.

As we reach the end of the climb, the author of the letter of Hebrews wraps up his letter by saying, “I have written to you briefly.” (v.22) Surely he is being sarcastic, right? By today’s standards, if this letter was an email it would take about an hour to read aloud. It’s the kind of email many would skim through or file for another day when there was more time to read it.

Hebrews is a big letter that makes a big difference. It desperately needs to be read and understood by Christians today. It is a letter that teaches and changes lives. So how does the author close such a letter?

First, he closes with a blessing in Jesus name (vs.20-21). It is a fitting conclusion to the letter in which Jesus was the big idea from beginning to end. There is no greater document in the New Testament that explains the correlation of the Old Testament to the work of Christ, than Hebrews. Even the last few verses are jam-packed with Christology and the practical out-working of that theology. In other words, the out-working of Christ’s work has a continual in-working within Christ’s followers.

Second, he closes with a charge and good wishes (vs.22-25). Ink could not tell all he wanted to say, but it will have to do for now. In the same breath, he wishes to visit his readers soon with Timothy who was just released from prison. This in a roundabout way connects the author to Paul’s ministry, possibly in Italy. We may never know who the author was, but he certainly wrote a stellar thesis on the life and ministry of Jesus.

Hebrews may be a difficult letter to digest in one sitting. It is like a dinner of thirteen courses with each chapter being a meal of its own. Each meal filling and satisfying the soul. Each meal giving us a greater and greater taste for Jesus, the undoubted big idea of Hebrews. The author masterfully shows how there is no equal nor rival. Jesus is above all. He is not only great, he is the greatest of all.

What are your overall thoughts, impressions, and take-aways from the letter to the Hebrews?
What did you learn about Jesus from this letter? How did you love for Jesus grow? If you were the author of Hebrews what more would you want to say about Jesus?

How is Jesus the big idea of the letter? How does the letter show that Jesus is the greatest of all?

How does a theology of Jesus impact practice? In other words, how does knowing about Jesus’ life and work affect the way you live?

What would you like to go back and discover more about within the letter?

Write a short prayer of adoration or appreciation:
APPENDIX A: WHO WROTE HEBREWS?

Ultimately the author of Hebrews is God. He inspired all of Scripture. However, the human conduit we do not know. There are many guesses as to who wrote Hebrews, but no scholar knows for sure.

What is certain is who the author wrote to. First, he wrote to Christians. Those Christians were discouraged and had grown apathetic. He wrote to encourage them. Second, he wrote to non-Christians who knew about Jesus, but didn’t truly repent and commit to Christ. He wrote to warn them and to show them how Jesus was greater than any man. He was God’s man. And ultimately, he was God himself.

APPENDIX B: 12 REASONS WHY JESUS IS GREATER?

1. Jesus is the Greater Messenger than angels (1:2-14)
2. Jesus has the Greater Message than angels (2:1-4)
3. Jesus is Greater Prophet than Moses (3:1-6)
4. Jesus is Greater High Priest than Aaron (4:14-5:5)
5. Jesus is Greater priesthood than Melchizedek (5:6-10)
6. Jesus has the Greater ministry than the Levites (7:9-28)
7. Jesus is the Greater Servant (8:1-6; 9:1-5)
8. Jesus is the Greater Mediator (8:7-13; 9:6-10)
9. Jesus is the Greater Blood Sacrifice (9:11-28)
10. Jesus is the Greater Bodily Sacrifice (10:1-18)
11. Jesus is Greater Example of Faith (11:1-12:3)
12. Jesus has the Greater Origin (12:18-24)
APPENDIX C: HOW THE NEW COVENANT FULFILLS THE OLD COVENANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THE OLD COVENANT</strong></th>
<th><strong>THE NEW COVENANT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>premise = shadow</td>
<td>fulfillment = reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angels: God's messengers</td>
<td>Jesus the Son is superior to the angels (Heb. 2:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the message of angels</td>
<td>Jesus' sacrifice is superior to the message of angels (Heb. 9:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses = servant in God's house</td>
<td>Jesus the Son is superior to Moses (Heb. 3:1-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron = Levitical High Priest</td>
<td>Jesus the High Priest is superior to Aaron (Heb. 5:4-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melchizedek = Last Priest</td>
<td>Jesus the High Priest is superior to the priesthood of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levitical priests = a flimsy, imperfect, weak, must offer sacrifices on the altar before offering for themselves</td>
<td>Jesus' sacerdotal priesthood is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 8:1-6, 9:3-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levitical priests = inanimate objects, unspiritual, stupid &amp; senseless</td>
<td>Jesus' sacerdotal priesthood is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 9:7-13, 10:6-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levitical priests = could not enter the Holy Place</td>
<td>Jesus' sacrificial blood is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 9:11-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levitical priests = bodies of animals, only fulfilled, unable to take away sins</td>
<td>Jesus' sacrificial body is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 10:11-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Old Covenant people = a company of faith</td>
<td>Jesus is superior to the people of God (Heb. 11:1-12:31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai = earthly mountain, terror &amp; fear toward God, laws &amp; promises</td>
<td>Jesus' New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant as symbolized by Sinai &amp; Zion (Heb. 12:18-24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Used by permission of Mark Barry. Please do not republish without permission, but feel free to copy for personal use.
APPENDIX D: 33 EYES OF FAITH

One of the themes that rings repeatedly in our ears is the fact that biblical faith is *fueled by the forward look*. That is, inherent in true faith is a conscious choice to look beyond what is seen in the here and now to what is unseen, yet promised. As I reviewed this great chapter of Scripture this morning, 33 “eyes” of faith became clear.

1. Faith looks to “things hoped for” with/for assurance (v. 1).
2. Faith is the assurance/conviction of things not [yet] seen (v. 2).
3. Faith sees the invisible, or does not require the seeing of that which is visible to compel it to believe (v. 3).
4. Faith offers acceptable sacrifices to God (v. 4; Rom 12:1).
5. Faith is the manner in which righteousness is received by God, which pleases Him (vv. 5-6; 7b).
6. Faith believes that God is the one, true reality—He is (v. 6b).
7. Faith seeks God and is rewarded (v. 6c).
8. Faith trusts God’s Word/warnings enough to act in obedience (v. 7).
9. Faith follows the Lord’s leading, though we don’t know the specifics of where we are going (v. 8).
10. Faith ‘claims’ one’s future inheritance before it is experiential reality (v. 8).
11. Faith values one’s future inheritance above what may be gained in the here and now; faith sinks shallow roots into what is seen (v. 9).
12. Faith looks to God’s city, not man’s (v. 10).
13. Faith considers the impossible as reality if/when it is what God has promised (vv. 11-12).
14. Faith ‘welcomes’ the promises of God, having ‘seen’ them from a distance; faith considers them to already by so (v. 13a).
15. Faith fuels a true confession of God’s promises, which results in contentment to live as “strangers” in this seen world (v. 13b).
16. Faith seeks the promise as if it already belongs to us—these sought “a country of their own,” though it was not their own yet (in experience). If they would have sought what was now their own (the here and now, the seen) they would have been tempted to return to the comfort of what is seen (vv. 14-15).
17. Faith pursues the heavenly, not the earthly (v. 16).
18. Faith acts in obedience to God’s commands, though the means of fulfillment cannot be humanly understood (v. 17).
19. Faith clings to the raw promises of God (v. 18).
20. Faith considers the impossible as already done (v. 19).
21. Faith confidently spreads blessings yet to come (vv. 20-21).
22. Faith instructs based upon the recognition that what God has promised He also will do (v. 22).
23. Faith rests in God’s protection, rather than fearing man and acting on the basis of that fear (v. 23).
24. Faith chooses to identify with the Lord and His promises, rather than with sin and its pleasures (vv. 24-25).
25. Faith considers identification with Christ and His reproach as “greater riches” than anything this world offers as an idolatrous replacement (v. 26).
26. Faith looks to the eternal reward (v. 26b).
27. Faith sees “the unseen” King as greater—and more worthy of allegiance—than earthly rulers (v. 27).
28. Faith obeys unprecedented commands from God (v. 28).
29. Faith steps out into great risk (v. 29).
30. Faith obeys God, though common sense would direct otherwise or even laugh (vv. 30-31).
31. Faith performs acts of heroism, which end up bringing glory to God (vv. 32-35a).
32. Faith suffers with assurance of God’s approval (vv. 35b-39).
33. Faith considers the unseen promises of God as “better” (v. 40).

May the Lord grant to us that childlike faith that truly believes He is the God of the impossible to the extent that it radically impacts our values, choices, and risks we are willing to take for His glory!

From Paul Tautges of Counsel One Another