

Study 1: Intro and Hebrews 1:1-2:1

First century Christians were in danger of giving up due to the drastic amounts of persecution. Jewish Christians especially had it hard as they were breaking free from Jewish legalities into the fullness of the gospel. How do you encourage people in hard times to hold strong? This is the context of the letter to the Hebrews.

✚ Context

In any Bible study, the most important element is to keep the context in front of the group at all times. It's easy to look at the passages through our own context and that will change the meaning of the passage all together. Also, a rule of thumb I always keep is: "Turn to what you DO know to answer what you DON'T know."

So, let's get to know the context of this letter.

At the top, I've given you the circumstances. As in any hard situation, it's easy to begin to turn to other things, anything to make life easier. For many Christians, they began to add onto "Jesus" to make sense of their hardship. Jesus plus angels, Jesus plus Moses, Jesus plus anything=religion. When you add things to Jesus you get man's effort to get to God; better known as "religion". But the author of Hebrews makes it clear that the "word spoken" is God's word alone acting through Christ alone. He warns his reader to "pay much closer attention" and not to add other things, even in hardship.

✚ Author/Date/Audience

It is unknown who the author of Hebrews is. The most popular belief is Paul but there is much debate and uncertainty on this. Other thoughts of authorship range from Barnabas or Luke to Clement of Rome or Apollos. Basically, no where in the letter is the authors name given. Neither is clear data telling us the year in which it was written. General thought is that it was written in the second half of the first century but it is unclear as to if it happened before or after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. What is clear is that it was written in a time of great persecution. While it's not agreed upon that the letter was written to a Jewish Christian audience, that is the most popular belief. Interestingly, in the midst of so much mystery about authorship, date and audience, the author turns to what we know for sure—God's word and God's work!

✚ Outline

The letter to the Hebrews can be broken down in simplicity by the following outline:

- Chapters 1-5: Jesus is greater than all others
- Chapter 6-9: Jesus is the fulfillment of everything in the OT
- Chapter 10-13: Faith that is stronger and real

✚ Activity:

- ✦ Take out a piece of paper and write out everything you know about Jesus. Write anything that comes to mind. No particular order-just write.
- ◆ Share as a group some of the things you wrote on your paper. Have someone in the group keep a "group list" of things spoken.
- ◆ After sharing your thoughts, go through and see how many of the things you shared as a group you can quickly give biblical reference to. Don't look at your Bibles; just see if you can give biblical proof.

When you hit hard times, hard questions, or have hard relationships, you want to turn to the things that you know are true. Turning to the things you know are true about God and Jesus are most comforting. Yet it's very easy to lose sight of those things. You can even begin to question if some of the things you "thought" were true really are true. This is the situation in which we find this letter being written.

The core of the Christian faith is to live in responsive obedience to the Word of God and the Work of God. Jesus is the revelation of all that God has done, is doing, and will do! We must not add any of man's work to this. We must know what is true of Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews helps us in this.

Keep your list with your study throughout the length of the study. Throughout the study of Hebrews, you will find Biblical references for many of the things that you have listed. Put the verse reference beside your notes when you find one.

Read Hebrews 1:1-14

- ✦ One of the greatest questions when you are in a difficult situation is, “Is God there? If so, why won’t he tell me what to do?” We wonder why God doesn’t speak. What is clear in verse 1 and 2?
- ✦ The author tells us that God spoke many times, in many portions, in many ways in the days before Jesus. Why doesn’t God speak as much today—or does He?
- ✦ This section is filled with information about Jesus. What are all the things we learn about Jesus in this section? Give verse references.
- ✦ Let’s unpack some of these things. What does it mean that the world was made through Jesus? (vs 2, 10)
- ✦ We know from these verses that Jesus was before the creation of the universe. But it sounds like Jesus has not always been around. The author uses words like “appointed”; “begotten”; “today”. Was Jesus created by God?
- ✦ Why is this important? What difference does it make?
- ✦ Many people will ask what the big deal is about Jesus; why do Christians find it so important to talk about Jesus? How would these verses answer that question?
- ✦ The author makes a big deal about proclaiming that Jesus is better than angels in this chapter. What do you think might have been going for him to make such a big deal of this?
- ✦ In 2:1, the author transitions by saying, “For this reason”. What is the reason he is referring and what does he tell his reader to do?
- ✦ In our busy culture, it’s very hard to “pay attention” to Jesus. The best way to pay attention to Jesus is by paying attention to the word of God. This week, take 10 minutes each morning to simply read this first chapter. As the day goes on, make notes on ways you recognize Jesus, who He is, what He has done, and other things people rely on besides Him.

Study 2: Hebrews 2:2-13

We ended last week with the call to “pay more careful attention”. You were given the assignment to spend 10 minutes each day in last week’s passage. Were there any new insights into this passage after paying more attention?

✚ Activity

Our world is “not as it’s supposed to be.” That is something everyone can agree upon.

In the movie, “Grand Canyon”, an attorney rushes out of a traffic jam by taking an alternate route. In his very nice car, his route takes him down a very unpleasant area. As you would have it, the car breaks down in an area in which young teenagers are looking for adventure. The attorney calls for a tow truck and while waiting, five street lords surround him and threaten him. Just then, the tow truck driver arrives, slowly goes about doing his job, and the leader of the street group protest because he is interrupting their “income”. The tow truck driver pulls him aside and says, *“Man, the world ain’t supposed to work like this. Maybe you don’t know that, but this ain’t the way it’s supposed to be. I’m supposed to be able to do my job without askin’ you if I can. And that dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you rippin’ him off. Everything’s supposed to be different than what it is here.”*

What a great theological sermon! To begin tonight, list the ways you can think of that you, us, our culture, or our world is not the way it’s supposed to be.

✚ Read Hebrews 2:1-5

✚ We learn a lot in this verse. Again, why does the author tell the reader to “pay more careful attention”?

✚ So, what does this mean is possible for the person that is following Christ?

✚ Verse 1 tells us one reason to pay attention. Verse 2-3 go on to stress the importance in another way. What is the point the author is making in these verses?

✚ How did the “message of salvation” come on the scene? How is it different from the previous message?

✚ Read Hebrews 2:6-8

✚ At the beginning, we listed a lot of ways we recognize that the world is “not the way it’s supposed to be.” In these verses, we see some of the ways that it is “not the way it’s supposed to be”. What are some of those ways?

✚ Here, we also get insight into some of the ways that the world “should” be. What are those ways?

✚ Looking back at the list you made at the beginning of this study, if the world was “as it is supposed to be” how would those things be different?

 **Read Hebrews 2:9-13**

-  The author has given us the word “but”. That means something opposite of what we just read is coming. The good news of Jesus! What are all the ways the author tells us Jesus was made like man?

-  What made all of this possible?

-  Psalm 8 says, “what is man that you remember him? Or the son of man that you are concerned about him?” It should also say, “why are you not ashamed of him?” Why is Christ not ashamed to call us “brethren”?

-  Many times we believe our brothers and/or sisters give us good reason to be “ashamed” of them. For some in this group, you might even wonder why God cares about you or why the group wouldn’t be ashamed of you. Many stay out of the church because they believe everyone should be ashamed of them and are ashamed of themselves. How does this passage encourage us to love those that have “fallen” and/or encourage those who have “fallen”?

-  Last weeks assignment was to pay attention by spending 10 minutes each day in last week’s passage. I want to encourage you to do that again this week but looking at this weeks passage. At the same time, at least 2 days of this week, spend a few minutes “confessing” to God the things in your life that are ‘not the way they are supposed to be’. Be honest with yourself. Confession is a powerful reminder that we need the good news of Jesus. It’s a great way to pay more careful attention to the salvation message. After confessing, read Psalm 32 one day and Psalm 51 the other.

Study 3: Hebrews 2:14-3:19

✚ Activity

Being a dad has been a lot of fun. One thing that has been surprisingly fun is how my children help me to remember my own childhood. They bring back lots of memories that I forgot as I've walked with them through their childhood. This helps me to relate to what they are going through and to encourage them in those things. I'm able to remember what I was thinking at that age and this helps me to identify with them.

- ✚ What are things your own children or others children have brought back to mind about your childhood and can you think of a situation in which that helped you in the way you encouraged them?

- ✚ What are things (skills, knowledge, etc...) that you have learned from having someone that has gone before you walk you through? Things in your job, marriage, parenting, faith?

✚ Read Hebrews 2:14-18

- ✚ How does the author tell us Jesus became like "the children"?

- ✚ What are all the reasons given as to why Jesus became like "the children"?

- ✚ What is the relationship between Jesus and "the children" shown here?

- ✚ What difference does it make to you that you are called "brethren" and that Jesus was made like you in every way?

- ✚ Why didn't God just do away with sin? Why did Jesus have to become like man: tempted, suffer, die?

- ✚ Jehovah's Witnesses focus on the humanity of Jesus and ignore His divinity. Christian Scientist do the opposite and stress the divinity of Jesus and deny His humanity. What is the danger in both?

✚ Read 3:1-6

- ✚ Again the author uses the word "therefore" meaning what he is about to say is tied to what he just finished saying. What other language does he use in vs 1 to tie it back to what he just said? Hint: What does he call his readers?

- ✚ In the first chapter we saw that Jesus was greater than the angels. Here we see that he is greater than Moses. Why is this important to the reader and in what ways is he greater than Moses?

- ☀ The last part of verse 6 is a call to the reader to “hold fast and firm” until the end. What has the author just said stood out about Moses and Jesus and how does that enforce our call in this?

✚ **Read 3:7-19**

- ☀ Once again we see therefore. But this section hits on the reverse side-what happens if we don't remain faithful to what Christ has done. What are things the author tells us will happen?

- ☀ Looking at the questions in verse 16-18, there is a progression that tells the story. What is the story being told and what is true about the people in the beginning and in the end? Where was God the entire time?

- ☀ There is clear warning in this section to the reader. When reading Scripture, you need to notice when something is mentioned over and over. What is the warning and what is key to them holding on to it?

- ☀ In this section, the author uses Psalm 95 which references Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20. It's the story of the Israelites being led out of slavery. Over and over they consider going back into the slavery of the Egyptians and think of it as better. For each of us, God has made a way for us to come out of the slavery that the devil has us under. Daily we have to remain faithful to what he has done. What are ways that you are tempted to enter back into the things that God has freed you from?

- ☀ The key to clinging daily to Christ is having others around you that can encourage you. Who are people that you have or want around you to do this? What steps will you take this week to make sure that is in place? What can you as a group do to better encourage one another daily? Be specific and put these steps into action.

Study 4: Hebrews 4:1-13

The next section is intimately tied to the example of the Israelites not moving into the land of Canaan. Twelve spies were sent into the Promised Land and 10 came back saying they should not take the land and 2 said that they should because God has given them this land. Read out loud the following passages to get the picture:

Numbers 13:1-2, 17-20, 26-33.

Numbers 14:1-10; 20-25.

Activity:

Imagine you are one of the Israelites. Have one person in the group represent each of the following:

- 1) One of the spies that says "don't go in"
- 2) Caleb
- 3) Moses
- 4) One of the people in the community having heard the report

Have each person answer the following questions according to the person they represent:

-  According to verses 13:1-2, 17-20 what am I looking to hear and see?
-  According to verses 13:26-33, what am I seeing and hearing? What thoughts are going through my head?
-  What are you feeling after the events of 14:1-10?

Read Hebrews 4:1-5

-  In Hebrews 2:15, we see that the devil held people in slavery through fear of death. What does the author tell us here is the only thing we should fear? How does this tie into what we just saw last week in chapter 13?
-  What was the good news preached to the Israelites and what is the good news preached to us? What is the "same" about each of them?
-  Verse 3, the author tells us, "As true as it is that the Israelites would not enter rest, it is equally true that those who believe God will enter rest." What do we learn about God's rest and God's work in these verses?

Read Hebrews 4:6-10

-  What do we learn about God's rest in these verses?
-  If Canaan was not the "rest" of God, then what was the point of Canaan? What truly was the "rest" of God when God was calling the Israelites to enter Canaan?
-  We learn that those that enter into the rest of God cease from their own work. What ways has man worked its way to God? What are the works of man? What were the works of the Israelites?

My 12 year old daughter sat with me in our upstairs room one night just hanging out. I had just made her a great snack that she needed to go down to our kitchen to eat. Yet she was very comfortable where she was. At the same time, she really, really wanted that snack. So, I sat watching the tension, the frustration, the tears, the begging for me to please go get her snack and let her eat it there with us. A meltdown! Ever heard of a 12 year old girl having a meltdown? So, there on our kitchen counter sat an amazing snack that she wanted with a simple command that she had to go down and get it.

- ☀️ There is a Sabbath still available for those that believe God's promise of Jesus. What does the author say is the only thing required? Why, like my daughter getting her snack, is this so hard for many people? The Israelites?

✚ Read Hebrews 4:11-13

- ☀️ What is the task of the believer when it comes to the rest of God? How does this give definition to 4:1 and how is this similar to the Israelites and Canaan?
- ☀️ How is entering the rest of God different from working our way to God?
- ☀️ What do these verses tell us about God's word? Do these words bring you comfort or fear? Why?
- ☀️ What ways do you find yourself still working? What ways do you long to still be at "rest" in the work that God has done? Another way to ask this is, "What things still cause fear, anxiousness, worry, stress?" Ask God to allow his word to dig deep into your fears, anxiousness, worry, stress and speak "rest".
- ☀️ One way to be "diligent" (vs 11) is to simply speak a truth of God over and over all week long and ask him to let you know this as truth. This week, instead of reading the entire chapter each morning, simply read Hebrews 4:10 five times each morning. As the day goes on, when this verse comes back to mind, note the things that God shows you that you are still 'working' at instead of resting in His promises.

Study 5: Hebrews 4:14-5:14

Eugene Peterson's (Author of "The Message" and numerous books) writings have mentored me for years. I've read and sat in most of his books. I've always wanted to meet him and in July of 2009, the opportunity arose. There he was, 100 yards in front of me, just finished the opening talk at the conference and there was nothing between us to keep me from introducing myself. My palms were sweaty and my mind doubted, "I can't just go up and say hello. This is Eugene Peterson! This dude wrote the Bible! (or a translation of it at least)."

I had to find another opening statement. Something that would give me an "in". What would instantly give us something to connect on other than the romantic, "Hey, I'm Mitch and I've dreamed of this moment all my life." Then my mind remembered Tom. Tom Moore had taken two classes under Eugene in seminary and I worked with Tom for a few years. I know I hadn't seen Tom in years, but that didn't matter-he was our connecting point.

So, I went up to Eugene, "Hi, I'm Mitch, (I've dreamed of this moment all my life). I'm good friends with Tom Moore and I wanted to introduce myself." "Great, how is Tom?" Mr. Peterson asked. Wow! He was brilliant! He saw right through my disguise-he knew I had not seen Tom in a few years. I guess when you write the Bible you can see every thought of every man.

But I didn't want to talk about Tom, so I quickly responded, "I think he's good." And I did think that he was good, so not really a lie. "It's great to meet you Mr. Peterson. I've sat under your writings for years and want to thank you for the influence they've had in my life." And then we talked for hours... (ok, only 5 minutes but it was hours to me.)

As I walked away, I thanked God for Tom-our connecting point. And I wondered also how Tom really was doing...

Activity

- ☀ As a group, talk about times you have met famous people, how you felt, what connected you.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

- ☀ Another "therefore" starts this section. What has the author said just before this that ties into this section?
- ☀ What do we learn in this section about our "high priest" Jesus?
- ☀ Like Tom in the story above, he gave me a connecting point with Eugene. What does our High Priest give to us as we approach God?
- ☀ What is your understanding of mercy? Grace? Why do we need each?
- ☀ Knowing that all things are laid open before God, if we chose to not approach His throne with confidence, what are other things we could choose?

Read Hebrews 5:1-4

- ☀ What are the requirements of being a High Priest?
- ☀ Why is a High Priest no longer needed on earth? Why do we still have priest and pastors then?

- ✨ How was a High Priest like my friend Tom?

✚ **Read Hebrews 5:5-10**

- ✨ How does Christ meet the requirements of a High Priest?
- ✨ What does it mean that Christ was made perfect?
- ✨ Here we see that Jesus is the source of eternal salvation. In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." How does vs 9 put this passage in perspective?
- ✨ Over and over we have seen the author of Hebrews make the call to "stand firm", "hold fast", "be diligent", words of persevering. He makes them with the language of "if we" do these things we will enter his rest or not fall short. How does this picture of Jesus' being faithful give new insight into the authors call to "hold fast"?
- ✨ Thinking about your own life and situations, what does it mean for you to "hold fast"?

✚ **Read Hebrews 5: 11-14**

Our introduction to Melchizedek comes from Genesis 14:17-20. We don't learn much about him. In fact, the book of Hebrews says way more about him. Read Gen 14:17-20 to know what the Hebrew author is referring.

- ✨ Here, the Hebrew author wants to talk a lot more about Melchizedek and eventually will. But he stops here because we learn about his reader. What do we learn about the reader?
- ✨ What does this verse focus on as keys to maturing in our faith? What is your reflection on your own spiritual life in response to these keys?
- ✨ Attached to these questions is one way the leadership at Lake Forest is being intentional about maturing. It's our leadership Trellis. This week, spend time looking at each area and ask yourself how you are doing. Remember, being intentional is not "works" for salvation; its "holding fast", "standing firm" to the work that Christ has done.

LFC Leadership Rule of Life (Trellis)

August 2009

Why have an LFC Leadership Rule of Life?

God calls us all to become like Jesus. Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* We experience this abundance of life – here and now – as our passions, character, understanding, and relationships are increasingly aligned with those of Christ. This lifelong transformation within and among us is the continual gift of God's Spirit. We are called to be renewed into the likeness of Jesus – but we do not always fully embrace this calling. Sometimes we seem content to be known as "Christians" without intentionally engaging with this work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Other times we desperately long for a new way of life, wanting to grow in our walk with Jesus, but needing help and encouragement. We, therefore, commit to pursue passionately and to receive joyfully God's grace to be more fully transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

Renewal into the image of Christ is not a human attainment; it is a gift of grace. God mercifully uses all our experiences, including our suffering and trials, to teach and transform us. Even so, transformation requires our involvement and effort. We need to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit's work in all our life experiences, particularly through intentional engagement with historical Christian disciplines, including Word and sacrament. These practices open us to the presence and grace of God. As a result, we become, through time and experience, the kind of persons who naturally express love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Taken from "A Call to Spiritual Formation", Renovare

In the New Testament, two Greek words are translated "rule" in the English: "kanon", which means 'a standard, a straight rod'; and "arche" which means 'a beginning'. Though these two words are translated "rule" in the English, the combination of the two meanings gives us the Greek word for "trellis", which is actually where we get the English word "rule". A trellis is a tool that enables a grapevine to get off the ground (begin) and grow upward, becoming more fruitful and productive. In the same way, a rule of life is a trellis that helps us abide in Christ and become more fruitful spiritually, keeping God at the center of everything we do.

As we begin a new decade together, we consider this year a turning point in our life together as we move our leadership to a "rule: that has the power to serve as a "trellis" for all of us. We are aware the word rule has negative connotations for many people; implying legalism, restrictions, and severity. But in actuality, a rule of life is a framework for freedom, not a set of restrictions that deny life. It provides perspective and clarity regarding the way of life to which God has called us.

The purpose of our rule is to define a common rhythm for our spiritual growth. That growth is for the purpose of keeping us faithful to our uniqueness as a church community and to unite around it. It says this is 'who we are, this is our story' and reminds us of those things God has put on our heart:

Our Mission: **To make more and better disciples of Jesus Christ.**

Our Unique Vision: **Serving people who've given up on church, but haven't given up on God.**

This rule expresses the roots and calling of our particular local church and calls us to be in the Father's hand to vigorously accomplish the purpose of Lake Forest Church together.

At the same time, it is meant to keep us moving upward into all that God has called us to be. As a leadership, it is a call to all of those at Lake Forest that this is who God has made us and this is who he is calling us to be. A good rule should challenge us and not be so easy that we are not stretched. At the same time, it can't be so demanding that it overwhelms us. Otherwise, it produces discouragement and defeats its purpose. Our hope is that this rule will provide boundaries while leaving plenty of room for flexibility and individuality.

Your Pastors in the Journey,

Mike and Mitch

LFC Leadership Specific “Trellis”

The following “Rule of Life” is our ‘trellis’. We will cling to it as one way to keep God at the center of everything we do — to love our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. This “trellis” provides grips for the kind of leadership we aim to embody, as well as a foundation for the relational culture we want to build and function within. In simplicity: *“We long to **Know** Jesus and worship Him, **Grow** in our love for Him, **Show** His grace to one another and **Go** to our community and to the world to tell them about their Savior.”*

To Know Jesus and Worship Him

Scripture — Our lives are built on the Word of God. It is our food and primary means of revelation from him. We commit to spend time each day in Scripture, seeking God’s face, dwelling in his presence and praying out of his Word.

Stillness—expressed in **Silence, Solitude and Sabbath** — Along with building silence and solitude into our daily routines, we will also attempt to grow in our Sabbath by practicing an extended period of time regularly during the year.

Prayer — We will pause to be and speak with and hear God two to three times a day to remember Him, spending time in communion with Him, preferably with Scripture, silence, meditation and prayer.

Community—We will commit to being in relationship with others that are committed to spurring us on in our walks with Christ. As we lead others, we will have others that will lead us. These relationships will be a community group, a men’s or women’s group, mentor, counselor or mature friend depending on each person’s unique needs and season in Christ. We are also committed to faithfully gathering weekly with the rest of the body of LFC in communal worship of our God.

To Grow in our Love for Jesus

Heart: Confession—Ephesians 4 tells us not only to put on the new self but also to put off the old self. This includes practicing the discipline of confession. Regularly, we will confess the areas of our lives in which God’s grace has yet to penetrate and remove that are sinful to him. We confess them realizing they are displeasing to Him but assured that his grace is sufficient until they are gone.

Mind: Study— We are constantly growing and taking steps to keep learning about Jesus, as well as learning about our unique values and particular area of calling. We commit to remaining teachable and in the attitude of not “having it all figured out.”

Soul and Strength — We are committed to a spiritual formation model that embraces our whole person, including the emotional and physical components of who we are as image bearers of God. We understand the stewardship of our emotional and physical bodies is also part of our discipleship and modeling. We seek to regularly care for our physical temples through healthy eating habits, consistent exercise, and sufficient amounts of sleep, respecting our God-given limits. We also commit to playing and practicing recreation. We humbly commit to seeking help when we emotionally or physically are in areas that are unhealthy.

To Show Jesus to One Another

Salt-- We embrace the skills and behaviors that put feet on our theology and follow the guidance of Paul in Colossians 3: putting to death things like “sexual immorality, drunkenness, lust, evil desires and greed; ridding ourselves of anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language.” Instead we will clothe ourselves with “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience—forgiving as our Lord has forgiven us.” This is the way we commit to engaging one another and relating in all of our relationships.

Servants—We have each one been equipped with unique gifts to build and serve his church. Serving is a response to the love and grace we have been given through Jesus and not about “getting busy”. We commit to using our gifts sacrificially, participating in the attitude Christ displayed in Philippians 2-being broken and poured out.

Stewards — We model percentage giving (using the tithe as a minimal guideline) in giving to God’s work. We commit to managing our material resources in a manner that honors God and avoids the traps and enticements of Western culture. We commit to simplicity in our lives that God might use all resources He has given us for His kingdom purposes.

To Go into our Culture and the World

Interruptible: We will remain aware and available for participation in mission of various kinds according to the calling and initiatives of the Spirit. By keeping our lives slower, we will be available for interruption and see it as being in the *Missio Dei*.

Praying and Participating: We commit not only to praying “for” but also being involved “in” the work God is doing in our community and in the world. We commit to calling those that we lead into this as well.

Healthy Family: We live in a culture of broken families and busy lives. Our greatest ministry is a commitment to do all that is necessary to keep our own families and relationships healthy. This includes realizing our ministry at home is as important as and in partnership with our ministry at LFC.

Study 6: Hebrews 5:11-6:20

✚ Activity

- ✨ In just a couple of minutes, tell the group highlights about when you first decided to follow Christ. When you first chose to follow Christ, what questions were you most curious to know?
- ✨ What about now? What questions do you find yourself asking today?

✚ Read Hebrews 5: 11-14

Our introduction to Melchizedek comes from Genesis 14:17-20. We don't learn much about him. In fact, the book of Hebrews says way more about him. Read Gen 14:17-20 to know what the Hebrew author is referring.

- ✨ Here, the Hebrew author wants to talk a lot more about Melchizedek and eventually will. But he stops here because we learn something about his reader. What do we learn?
- ✨ What do these verses focus on as keys to maturing in our faith? Reflect on your own spiritual life in response to these keys. How would you evaluate your growth?

✚ Read Hebrews 6: 1-3

- ✨ The author is charging the people to move on from elementary teaching. What elementary teachings does he highlight?
- ✨ Elementary teachings does not mean, "everyone should know these!". The author is simply saying these guys should know these and stop continuing to argue over these again and again and move on to bigger things. But these are things all believers need to know. Looking at each of these elementary teachings, do you know what the Bible would say about each? Which ones do you need to research and learn? As a group, which ones do we need to investigate?

✚ Read Hebrews 6: 4-8

- ✨ The author brings out a pretty tough issue in these verses. A rule of thumb when studying scripture and tough issues is to always turn to what you DO know to answer what you DON'T know. What is the issue? Tell in detail the issue at hand.
- ✨ What questions stir in your mind from reading this issue?
- ✨ Turn to what we know:
 - ◆ Is this passage talking about a person struggling with sin?
 - ◆ Is it talking about a person that is struggling in their faith and not growing?
 - ◆ Does it say this person has lost their salvation?
 - ◆ What does it say is impossible?
 - ◆ Does it say this is a hypothetical situation?

- ✨ As we started the Hebrews study, we said that one of the most important things is to keep the verses in context. So, keeping this passage in context, the author is writing a predominantly Jewish culture that became Christians but are being persecuted and tempted to go back to Jewish tradition. To go back is described as “again crucifying to themselves the Son of God and putting him to shame” meaning they are joining the group that shouted “crucify him” on Good Friday.
- ✨ Knowing this, what do you believe is the main reason the author makes this point?
- ✨ Another principle of good Bible study is to know that one verse does not teach all of the Scriptures. In other words, this verse is a fragment of the whole message of the Scriptures. To study the Bible well, you have to know that the Scriptures “never” contradict themselves and you have to put a single verse in the context of the whole teaching. With that in mind, what other Scripture would you put beside this passage?
- ✨ How does the analogy the author gives after this issue help to make sense of what he is talking about?
- ✨ After reading this passage, are there people that come to mind that you worry about? Who are they and what is their situation? As a group, put their situation in this context and discuss what you think this passage says and doesn't say.

✚ **Read Hebrews 6: 9-12**

- ✨ The author has just laid out hard sayings and warnings. But what does he do after these warnings? What does this tell you about why he brought out the issue?
- ✨ Verse 11 and 12 bring back a theme that we see throughout this book. How does the author speak this theme again?
- ✨ There are always times in which each of us wonder if we have fallen off the path of pursuing God. We wonder many times if God still loves us and if we might be out of reach of God's hand. How do the verses we've spent time in today encourage or discourage you?

Study 7: Hebrews 6:13-7:22

✚ Activity

- ✨ I'll make the assumption that those reading this study are in believers in Christ or at least very interested in him. Take time as a group to list all the reasons you can think of that would be tempting to boot the faith and return to a life without following Jesus.
- ✨ Now, list all the reasons you can think of for not booting the faith but standing strong.

Up to this point, Hebrews has used language over and over to stand strong, to mature, to grow stronger. In Chapter 6, numerous reasons are given for holding on, persevering and maturing.

- ◆ Leave elementary things and press onto maturity.
- ◆ God permits it
- ◆ You will destroy any possibility of good fruit being produced in others lives

✚ Read Hebrews 6:13-20

- ✨ In this section, we are given 3 other reasons to stand strong. They are given by telling us about 3 things that we can always depend on about God. What three things are dependable about God?
 - ◆ Verse 13-16: God's.... (
 - ◆ Verse 18: God's (
 - ◆ Verse 20: God's (
- ✨ What are the two unchangeable things that it's impossible for God to lie about that the author speaks of in 17-18?
- ✨ What language does the author use in 18-20 to describe the readers interaction with hope?
- ✨ In what ways do these words encourage you to hold strong to the faith?

✚ Our introduction to Melchizedek comes from Genesis 14:17-20. We don't learn much about him. In fact, the book of Hebrews says way more about him. Read Gen 14:17-20 to know what the Hebrew author is referring.

✚ Read Hebrews 7:1-3

- ✨ List all the things we learn in this section about Melchizedek

✚ Read Hebrews 7:4-22

This can be a very confusing passage but the main thing to keep in mind throughout this passage is that the author is using it to show the superiority of Jesus even over Aaron's priesthood. He is also using it once again to show that the Old Testament is Christ-centered.

- ✨ Looking at 4-5, what is the case that is being introduced?
- ✨ In verse 6, you see a "but". This shows the tension in the argument. What is the tension in 6-10 and the point being made?
- ✨ Verse 11 keeps the linear thinking going by bringing up the issue being challenged. What is the issue being challenged?

- ✨ Verses 12-22 bring it all together. In these verses Jesus is shown as bringing in many new things. What are the new things that he has brought into play?

- ✨ On what basis did these new things come?

- ✨ In what ways does this section give us even more confidence in God's word?

- ✨ Sometimes we hit hard places and begin to wonder if God really will keep his word, really will come through. In what ways does this section give you hope in your current circumstances?

Study 8: Hebrews 7:23-8:13

Activity

My son bought his first car, a 1994 Honda Accord with 210,000 miles on it. He loved it. When we brought it home, we worked for hours to clean it and make it look the best it could. Because he had never waxed a car before, I decided to show him how to wax his car. He didn't understand the entire process so we began by washing the car and then applying the wax to it. After applying the wax, he was a little saddened because the car started to look worse. He thought that all there was to it was applying the wax. He didn't know about part 2, the removal of the wax. He thought we ruined his car. So, I introduced him to part 2: the removal. As we began to buff out the car, he grinned from ear to ear because his car now looked sharp! He saw the entire process and the beauty it brought out.

-  Talk about a time when you or someone you know stopped short in a 2 process event and thought it was done.

As we saw at the end of last week, Melchizedek is used as an analogy for Jesus. Jesus is part 2 of plan A. To summarize verses 11-22, what were the new elements in part 2 that Jesus ushered in?

Read Hebrews 7:23-28

-  What else do we learn is different about Jesus than other priest in this section?

Chapter 8 begins with the word "now". You can find very natural breaks and points in the authors thinking by noticing the places he says "now". We will read Chapter 8 according to these sections.

Read Hebrews 8:1-3

-  The author summarizes all of chapter 7 in these few verses. Though chapter 7 can be confusing, what is the point of chapter 7?

Read Hebrews 8:4-5

-  In these verses, what do we learn that is important to keep in mind as you read the Old Testament?

Read Hebrews 8:6-12

-  What is a covenant? How is it different than a promise?
-  In what ways is the new covenant different than the old?
-  In what way was the first covenant not faultless?
-  When you see language about 2 covenants it's easy to wonder if God had a plan A and a plan B. It's easy to think that plan A failed and so plan B had to be put in place. Do you think God had a plan A that failed or is He still bringing to fruition plan A? How would Chapter 8 support your belief? Other parts of Hebrews?

Read Hebrews 8:13

-  In what ways is verse 13 good news to you?
-  Realizing that the old covenant is obsolete; to end your time today, what do you believe this no longer requires followers of Christ to do or not do?

Study 9: Hebrews 9:1-28

Activity

I remember the first concert I went to: The Cars! Never been to a concert before then so didn't know what to expect. I was on the 3rd row and really excited. An opening band came out (sorry, can't remember who it was) and I thought, "man, this is awesome! These guys are amazing! It can't get any better than this!" Oh, but that was just act 1. I'll never forget when Ric Okasik came out and they launched right into "Good Times Roll". All of a sudden, the opening act just wasn't as good as I thought-nor was it meant to be.

- ✨ Talk about a time when you got a taste/experience of something (a concert, a book, a restaurant, a movie sequel) first and then the follow up made that first taste/experience dim.

Read Hebrews 9:1-7

- ✨ Though the author ended the last chapter recognizing that the old covenant is becoming obsolete, they do not dismiss the value and importance of the old covenant. What language does the author use to describe the earthly tabernacle?
- ✨ What is the role of the priest and high priest?
- ✨ Why does the author choose to not speak in detail about things he listed? In leaving these things unspoken about, where does it leave you as the reader?

Read Hebrews 9:8-10

- ✨ What do we learn was the role of the earthly tabernacle and who set that up?
- ✨ What does this tell us that the earthly tabernacle symbolizes about our relationship with God?
- ✨ What was the purpose of gifts and sacrifices in the earthly tabernacle?
- ✨ Reading this may provoke the question, "why wasn't Jesus sent much earlier than he was to earth?" What are your thoughts on this question?

Read Hebrews 9:11-14

- ✨ Compare and contrast these verses with the ones we have read so far today. What are the differences noted?
- ✨ What does this tell you about man's greater cleansing need?

Read Hebrews 9:15

- ✨ How does this verse shape your understanding of Jesus' statement, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me." (John 14:6)?

- ✨ How does this verse also state again that Jesus is fully God?

✚ **Read Hebrews 9:16-17**

- ✨ This passage can be confusing because of our understanding of the word “covenant”. The Greek can be translated as well with the word “testament” (like a last will or testament). Using this interpretation instead, how does that make this section make sense?

✚ **Read Hebrews 9:18-23**

- ✨ What word is mentioned over and over in this section and what do we learn about it?
- ✨ Why was it necessary for the tabernacle and the vessels in the tabernacle to be sprinkled with blood?
- ✨ Why blood? What does blood symbolize?

✚ **Read Hebrews 9:24-28**

- ✨ What are all the ways the author states again that Jesus is greater than the old order?
- ✨ The last 2 verses talk about what happens when a man dies. How is the death of Christ different from the death of man? How does verse 28 define “judgment” for “those who eagerly await Him”?

Study 10: Hebrews 10:1-39

Activity

There are many things in our lives that you don't know the conclusion to until a long period of time is over. Things that we want to be able to do one thing or a couple of things and then just sit back, relax and know the outcome. Here's an example: Football! I'm a huge football fan and I really, really love a great game. But as I've gotten older, I'm desiring the quick win for teams that I pull for rather than a good game. Why? Because I hate getting all the way to the end, leading the whole way, and then watching my team fall apart and lose it in the final minute. It seems to make the last 4 hours feel extremely wasteful! If we are going to lose, then just lose early or if we are going to win, just win early so I can get onto yard work. I hate the wait. But I didn't always. I used to love the game even if I hated the outcome.

Marriages are the same way. I watch many people fight the journey for years and years only to come close to the end of the game and just give up. The point in the relationship that the hardest fighting needs to happen, one party or both parties just throw in the towel-too tired to move on.

Relationships with children- the teenage years especially. These are the years that you have to fight the hardest simply to hold onto the relationship if nothing else. Yet, it's the part of the game that many parents throw their hands up in the air and give up. The years when the game isn't going as well as we hoped and so we get tired and quit.

I spent 5 years studying Mechanical Engineering only to graduate and go into College Ministry. I can't tell you how many times I've looked back and wondered, "God if you'd just told me I would go into college ministry I could have majored in something WAY easier and saved some emotional and physical energy. Thanks for 5 wasted years!

The life of following Christ can be the same way. Our spiritual journeys all hit places in which sometimes it just gets too exhausting. Didn't we show enough faith the last time, weren't we obedient enough just before this, didn't I read my Bible enough? Why am I being asked to "hold on" again? I'm not sure I can. I'm not sure it's worth it. So, we throw in the towel. And if we do, all the years before feel wasted.

Perseverance is a critical element in our spiritual walks with Jesus. Seeing it all the way to the end—no quick wins in the Christian life. You got to play it all the way to the end.

What are things in your life, places in your life that you are tempted to give up on or know you gave up too early on? What would it take or would have taken to keep going?

Read Hebrews 10:1-10 and note the number and places the author uses the word "sacrifices":

-  How many times does the author use the word sacrifice in this section and what is his point about them? In other words, what is the point he is trying to get his reader to understand by saying it over and over?
-  What does the author tell us that the law does and what it doesn't do?
-  According to this section, why has Jesus come and what is the outcome?

Read Hebrews 10:11-18

-  What all has the "one offering" of Jesus accomplished according to this section?

- ✦ Verse 18 is great, great news! When I read this verse it makes me think of ways I still act to “gain” forgiveness instead of trusting the act of Christ on the cross. What things do you find yourself tempted to do to make yourself feel like you are forgiven?

✦ **Read Hebrews 10:19-25**

- ✦ The author tells us more of what happened because of forgiveness. What are those things?
- ✦ The author gives us better direction and steps to take in light of the fact that our sins are forgiven. What all does he tell his reader to do?
- ✦ How often do you approach your walk with Christ in this manner? Which of these is hardest for you to grasp?

✦ **Read Hebrews 10:26-31**

- ✦ There is warning to the one that just keeps themselves in sin and refuses to repent—sinning willfully. Even the Old Law had great punishment and was based on 2 or 3 witnesses seeing someone willfully sin. Why is willfully sinning after knowing the truth even worse?
- ✦ Some can read this section and say, “well, that doesn’t feel very much like grace.” That question reveals a misunderstanding of grace. How would that question define grace and what is false about it?

✦ **Read Hebrews 10:32-39**

- ✦ The author reminds the reader of how they played the “football” game in the first half. He is coaching the team. What does he remind them about their first half of play?
- ✦ How does he coach them to finish the game? What is at risk?
- ✦ After reading this section, in what ways can you identify with the readers? How are you encouraged to keep fighting?

Study 11: Hebrews 11:1-40

Activity

- ☀ Every family has stories, stories that are told every thanksgiving and every Christmas and seem to never get old. As a group, share stories that are told every holiday that seem to never get old.

Read Hebrews 11:1-3

- ☀ What is the definition given by the author of faith?
- ☀ What are the things that our culture, world have faith in? Do any of those go against the definition of faith?
- ☀ Faith is not usually the thing that fails. It's usually what we put our faith in that fails. What are things, people that you put your faith in that you watched fail?

Read Hebrews 11:4-12 and as you read, note what each person put their faith in:

- ☀ Who are the people given as examples in this section and what did each put their faith in?
- ☀ From these examples, which one stands out to you personally and why? How does their faith challenge you?

Read Hebrews 11:13-16

- ☀ How does dying in faith without receiving what you are promised in line with the definition of faith?
- ☀ What things in their lives revealed their faith?

Read Hebrews 11:17-34 and as you read, note what each person put their faith in:

- ☀ Who are the people given as examples in this section and what did each put their faith in?
- ☀ From these examples, which one stands out to you personally and why? How does their faith challenge you?

Read Hebrews 11:35-40

- ☀ Many times we hope to have good outcomes to our faith. What examples are given here that show that is not always promised? Does this encourage or discourage you?
- ☀ Go back through chapter 11. Look at each of the names that were given and their story. Each name reveals something true about God that they believed and had faith in. List all the characteristics of God that their faith describes.

Stories of our past help us to persevere into the future. Take time to record stories you've heard today that you need to hold onto in order to persevere in the faith. Spend time thanking God for those before us and their stories.

Study 12: Hebrews 12:1-29

✚ Activity

- ✨ I have to admit that I really don't like discipline. I don't like to discipline my body especially. I have a friend that's trying to get me to commit to running a 10K with him in a few months and nothing in me wants to commit to this. Don't get me wrong-I'd love to be able to say I ran a 10K and I'd love to have my body in shape to do this, but I despise the thought of putting my body through what it will have to go through to get there. Why can't I have the reward without the grueling training? We all know the answer to that. So, since he asked me one week before I chapter 12 of Hebrews, maybe God is using this as an opportunity to bring chapter 12 more to life. Ask me in a few months if I obeyed God's leading. 😊
- ✨ As a group, talk about how you view discipline. How was disciplined handled growing up? How do you discipline your children? When is a time that you trained and disciplined your body in something?

✚ Read Hebrews 12:1-3

- ✨ The whole point of Chapter 11 is given in verse 1. It is there to encourage the reader. Because of these great stories, what does the author tell the reader to now do?
- ✨ The last question revealed the work we are to do. What is the work that we cannot do-the work that only Jesus can do?
- ✨ What are the hindrances and things that easily entangle you in your faith?

✚ Read Hebrews 12:4-11

- ✨ Discipline can come from different sources. What is the relationship that is highlighted in this section and why is that such a critical understanding for the reader of that time? Why is this critical to understand today?
- ✨ What are all the fruits of discipline that are shown here?

✚ Read Hebrews 12:12-17

- ✨ In light of what he has just told the reader, the author gives action steps in the training.
- ✨ What spiritual disciplines have you put in place that "strengthens the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble?"

✚ Read Hebrews 12:18-24

- ✨ In 18-21, you are given illustration of the relationship between God and those of the Old Covenant. In your own words, how would you describe that relationship?
- ✨ In 22-24, the relationship under the New Covenant is described. In your own words, how would you describe this relationship?
- ✨ How does this section encourage you to run the race, to persevere, to endure?

 **Read Hebrews 12:25-29**

-  While our relationship with God is one of father and child, God is more than just father. While he is a loving father, what other characteristics are described in this section about our daddy?

-  Knowing these things about our father, does it give you an attitude of “fear and trembling” (verse 21) or a different attitude toward Him? Describe.

-  The author ends this chapter with the call to “show gratitude”. End your time by expressing gratitude to God for who He is and the things that are expressed in this chapter.

Study 13: Hebrews 13:1-25

Activity

-  To bring closure to the study, walk through each chapter of Hebrews and give a quick summary of each chapter. Allow the review to draw each chapter together and see how the letter flows all the way through.

Read Hebrews 13:1-9

-  The author is wrapping up his letter and is giving general instruction to the church. List all the things he says in this section:

-  What things creep into your life that keep you from doing these things?

-  What is the instruction that allows a person to not be in love with money? How does this help you in your own relationship with money?

Read Hebrews 13:10-25

-  Once again, the author thinks of another illustration of the OT that describes our Jesus. What emphasis does this illustration bring out at this time in the letter?

-  In the verses 15-25, there are several things the believer is able to do and called to do. At the same time the only way for that to happen is because of what God does. What is the work of the believer but what is God doing that allows that to happen?

-  The letter of Hebrews started with an emphasis on Jesus. How does it end with that same emphasis?