



HEBREWS: Week 2

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HEBREWS

WEEK 2: Spiritual Growth

BOTTOM LINE: God's hope is an anchor for your soul.

SUMMARY OF WEEK 1

Last week, we covered the first three chapters of the Book of Hebrews.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on both the deity and humanity of Jesus.

Only Jesus could be both.

We learned that Jesus is supreme over everything—including death—and that means that He has the power to save us.

Then, Chapter 3 taught us about faithfulness and how it is a byproduct of faith.

In other words, we can't be faithFUL unless we have FAITH in God.

These foundational truths help us to understand what pleases the heart of God.

Discussion questions:

1. In Hebrews 1, where can we find evidence that Jesus is God?

What scriptures pointed to His full deity? *(Students can take some time to review Hebrews 1. One possible answer is in verse 6, where God says the angels would worship Jesus. Another is verse 10, where God says Jesus laid the foundation of the earth.)*

2. Over the past week, have you had any opportunities to put your faith into action?

If so, what did you do with those opportunities?

3. What is significant about the Greek word "pistis"?

LESSON

Read Hebrews 4

1 God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. **2** For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did

them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. 3 For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said,

"In my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest,'"

even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. 4 We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: "On the seventh day God rested from all his work." 5 But in the other passage God said, "They will never enter my place of rest."

6 So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. 7 So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted:

"Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts."

8 Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. 9 So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. 10 For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. 11 So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.

12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. 15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Let's look back at the beginning of Chapter 4.

This discussion of entering God's rest is carried over from the previous chapter, where we were reminded that lack of faith (or unbelief) is what kept some of the Israelites from entering Canaan.

That's why the author in **Hebrews 3**, warns so much about unbelief and emphasizes how important it is to have faith.

That same idea, resting in God by faith, is discussed again in Chapter 4.

Like the Israelites, we have heard the Word of God.

The fact that you're here listening to this lesson points strongly to the fact that you've heard the Gospel.

But, like the Israelites, have you ignored it?

Can you say that you'll be able to enter God's rest?

Or will you be denied entrance into His rest because of your unbelief, just as the Israelites were with Canaan?

The author's mention of Joshua and his entrance into the Promised Land in verse 8 is there to remind us that there is an even greater rest in God for His people!

Whereas Joshua's rest in the Promised Land was physical and literal, the rest that we look forward to is spiritual.

We will rest in God if we have faith in Him.

In verse 11, we learn that we must enter that rest ourselves.

God will not force us.

Discussion questions:

1. What feelings or images come to mind when you think of "rest"?
How is rest in God similar or different?
2. How does God show His love for us in not forcing His rest upon us?
3. What was your first response to hearing the Gospel?
Did you respond with faith or unbelief?

Read Hebrews 5.

1 Every high priest is a man chosen to represent other people in their dealings with God. He presents their gifts to God and offers sacrifices for their sins. 2 And he is able to deal gently with ignorant and wayward people because he himself is subject to the same weaknesses. 3 That is why he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as theirs.

4 And no one can become a high priest simply because he wants such an honor. He must be called by God for this work, just as Aaron was. 5 That is why Christ did not honor himself by assuming he could become High Priest. No, he was chosen by God, who said to him,

"You are my Son. Today I have become your Father."

6 *And in another passage God said to him, “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”*

7 *While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God. **8** Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. **9** In this way, God qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. **10** And God designated him to be a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

11 *There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don’t seem to listen. **12** You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. **13** For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn’t know how to do what is right. **14** Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.*

These words are tough.

But even though tough words are difficult to hear, we must ask ourselves if we are growing spiritually.

And if we’re not, what are the obstacles?

Have we diligently sought out the Word of God for our own personal growth?

In Chapter 5, we are reminded that Jesus is our High Priest, meaning that He made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of all of us.

And yet, this good news doesn’t motivate us to teach others, to seek God, and to eventually mature in Christ.

This is a problem!

If everyone who hears the Gospel message never manages to make it past square one—the “milk” phase—how can we be of use to God?

Of course, our learning and growing in Christ don’t save us.

Instead, it’s an effect, the cause of which is salvation.

BUT our learning and growing in Christ could lead to the *salvation of others*, and isn't that just as important?

Discussion questions:

1. What are the obstacles to your spiritual growth?

Are *you* your greatest obstacle?

2. In what ways can a believer's laziness negatively affect others who don't know the Lord?
3. What are some practical steps you could take to seek growth in Christ?

Read Hebrews 6.

1 So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. 2 You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

4 For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come— 6 and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame.

7 When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. 8 But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.

9 Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. 10 For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do. 11 Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. 12 Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance.

13 For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying:

14 *“I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number.”*

15 *Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised.*

16 *Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding. **17** God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. **18** So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. **19** This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary. **20** Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

One thing we can be sure of is that God cannot lie.

And God does not change.

Over 2,000 years ago, God sent His Son Jesus to the earth to make good on a promise He made: to provide a Savior.

And when you put your faith in His Son, you are given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of the promise of Heaven.

He dwells in you and secures you for eternity.

Let’s look back at verses 18-20.

These verses are a beautiful reminder that the work has been finished by our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Yes, the wages of sin is death, but Jesus has paid that price for us.

And we can walk in that promise by faith.

Abraham did it; we can do it too.

He wasn’t perfect, but he believed and waited patiently, and he wasn’t disappointed.

We can be assured of the same.

Our hope is in Christ, and that is an anchor for our souls.

It keeps us grounded and reminds us that we live for eternity with God...

And that's the greatest promise ever.

Discussion questions:

1. What things does the culture around us place hope in?

2. Have you ever had to take an oath?

If so, were you able to keep it?

3. Think of a time when you had to lean heavily on the anchor of hope. What was it like?

What did you learn from this difficult time?