



σήμερον

"Today

ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε,

if you hear his voice,

μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.

do not harden your hearts"

He is worth it...

8 studies on Hebrews 1 to 6...

before you begin...

Read the introduction pages at the start of your first study together. That way we will all be on the same page! Then do *the study*. Ensure there is enough time to dig into the *interact* section of the study. If people in your group prepare it will make light work of these parts. Make sure there's still plenty of time to *pray* at the end! Sounds like a lot of work... don't worry—it's a great thing to be spending our time on!

Here are a few tips to help your small group grow together:

Pray... prayer is the place to start for our groups and we should do it even when we are not meeting together. We should pray that under God's strength our group would grow in its love for God and each other. Pray for the relationships within the group and the witness of the group to the church family and to those outside the church.

Participate... it's so great when people feel comfortable discussing their faith with other believers. Don't feel like you don't know enough to say something - all input is great for group life and the group is a great place to get your questions answered. Likewise, make sure you allow space for other people to participate in the group, especially quieter members! Sometimes silence feels painful and we feel like we need to fill it—but maybe if the more talkative among us wait—somebody might fill that silence for us.

Prioritize... it's really important to meet together with other Christians regularly, listening to God's word, praying together and sharing our lives. Not only is it the sort of thing we want to prioritize to ensure we're standing firm in our faith—but turning up each week is a huge encouragement to others too.

Prepare... this will make the study a more fruitful experience for everyone. You'll know the questions you need answered and you might be able to share some new insight you've had with the group. It doesn't take long—but it can make a big difference to the life of the group.



He is worth it...

The book of Hebrews gives one very clear message: Jesus Christ is worth persevering with. However much we might be tempted to let go of Him or turn our backs on what we have heard, it will never be worth it. Hanging on to Christ however... that is different. He is worth it.

Hebrews employs a series of warnings and encouragements in getting this message across. The warning passages (2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25-29) have been controversial and unsettling for Christians throughout the ages since they seem to contradict assurances and promises elsewhere that believers can ‘fall away’ from Christ. Hopefully as we discuss them, more than controversy, we will be convicted that He is worth persevering for.

The consensus of most scholars is that no-one can be sure who wrote Hebrews. It seems clear that it was not Paul. This is encouraging because it means Hebrews represents yet another voice consistently testifying to the supremacy of Christ .

It is difficult to assess the original situation of the recipients. Hebrews was written to be read aloud to a congregation; how many congregations or which ones, we cannot be sure of. The book is definitely written to urge Christians to maintain their confession (3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23). It is most likely the book was written to Jewish converts thinking of reverting to Judaism. But this does not mean the book is of no relevance to twenty first century believers. In his commentary on Hebrews Peter O’Brien lists three threats the community may have faced. Firstly, passive dangers, i.e. the tendency to just drift away and not bother with the hard Christian road anymore. Secondly, active dangers, i.e. more assertively deciding to rebel against the gospel that was heard. And thirdly, external pressures, i.e. persecution and suffering. As much as these were threats to first century Christians, they have been threats to Christian perseverance through the ages. And so these words have much value to us today as we seek to hold on to Christ.

It is possible Hebrews was written before A.D. 70, and highly likely it was written between A.D. 60 and 90. From very early on it was treated as God’s word and part of the canon of Christian scripture. By God’s grace it has been preserved and translated for us to read, listen to and learn from today. As we read it together it is my prayer that God might reinforce our conviction that no matter the threat, He is worth it.

