



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.

1 He has spoken to us (1:1-4)



In the past God's people had bits and pieces, but God has revealed himself finally and perfectly to us in his Son. The Son makes sense of all these bits and pieces and he's now all we need.



Can you think of times when you have been told something very clearly and then proceeded to ask questions as though you had not been told?

warm-up



study

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

1. Discuss the idea that God speaks.
2. Verse 1 can be more accurately translated: '...through the prophets in many parts (i.e. in a fragmented /piecemeal manner) and in many ways'. What is this saying about the way God spoke to people in the Old Testament?

How might the fathers have interpreted these words God spoke in the past:

Gen 3:15

Gen 14:17-24

Leviticus 16:1-5

Deut 5:22-27

2 Samuel 7:10-16

Psalms 110

3. What/who is the difference between the way God spoke to the fathers and the way he speaks to us in these last days (for *last days* see Isaiah 2:2; Dan 10:14; Mic 4:1)?
4. There are seven huge statements in verses 2 to 4 outlining the attributes and work of the Son. List them and discuss them.
5. According to verse 3, why is Jesus uniquely qualified to be the revealer of God?
6. What is the significance of Jesus sitting down?
7. What role did the angels play in the past (see Acts 7:38-39)? This passage is another way of saying Christ is the supreme revealer of God to us. The author finishes his opening exhortation by reminding us that this makes complete sense, as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. What does verse 5 tell us the name he has inherited is?



8. As we experience different things in our world and in our life today so many questions come up that we would like to ask God. How has does God's Son answer these questions for us?

9. Quite often Christians say things like, 'I'm waiting for a word from the Lord'. According to this passage what does God have left to say to us? And why might we not be satisfied with what we have heard?



What can we pray in response to what we have learned?

What can we pray for each other?

What can we pray for our community?

What can we pray for our world?

2 How shall we escape? (1:5-2:4)



The angels have testified to the supremacy of the Son and we have heard his message of salvation. We must pay careful attention to it so that we do not drift away.



What's something you regret not taking more seriously?



Read Hebrews 1:5 –2:4

1. What do verses 5 to 13 tell us about Jesus?
2. What is the relationship between the angels and Jesus?
3. Christ has already been described as the inheritor of all things and the one served by angels (v 2, 6 & 7). Who else does verse 14 say the angels serve? How do they do this?

God spoke to the forefathers through the angels. They pointed to the supremacy of Christ as the King who would save in the OT. The writer to the Hebrews now reminds us God has spoken to us through no less than his Son. The rest of this section warns us of the folly of ignoring such a great salvation.

4. Why do we need to pay more careful attention to what we have heard? What does this mean?
5. What was the just punishment for disobeying the law that verse 2 speaks about (See Deut 30:19)? How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?
6. What reasons does the writer give for believing the validity of this message of salvation?



7. Do you notice your self drifting away?

interact

8. What does it look like for you when you ignore this great salvation?

9. How can we pay more careful attention to what we have heard?



prayer

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3

But we see... Jesus (2:5-18)



God has glory in mind for his people. They haven't achieved the heights he had in mind. But Jesus has, and he leads many with him through suffering to glory with God.



How would you describe the dignity of humanity in today's world?

warm-up



Read Hebrews 2:5-18

1. Read Psalm 8 and Genesis 1:26. Who has God *subjected the world to come to*? (Which *man* did the psalmist have in mind)?
2. What do we *not* see according to v 8 and what do we see instead, according to verse 9?
3. For what reason was Jesus crowned with glory and honor? For what purpose did he suffer death?

Verses 10 to 18 should bring to mind images of God bringing his Old Testament people Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness into the promised land. The author of salvation could also be translated 'pioneer' or 'leader'. Moses partly fulfilled that role for Israel in the Old Testament. But the pioneer here is far greater than Moses and he is bringing many sons and daughters to a far greater place.

4. How was Jesus made the perfect author of salvation through suffering (verse 9 is helpful in answering this)?
5. The glory *many sons and daughters* are brought to here is far greater than the promised land. Explain the glory Jesus leads *many sons and daughters* to in verses 11 to 15. How is this a fulfillment of God's intention for *man* that we read in psalm 8?
6. We learnt last week that angels serve Jesus. Who does Jesus serve? How does this explain his lowly earthly appearance?
7. How is Jesus able to help those who are being tempted from their path to glory?



8. Where do you see human dignity in its most glorious state?

interact

9. How can you help humanity regain its dignity?

10. When you are tempted to aspire to a life less dignified, how does looking to Jesus help you?



prayer

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4 Fix your thoughts on... (3:1-6)



Moses was good, God's Son is better. Ultimately Moses points us to God's Son, his king. We need to turn to the Son and hold on to him to make it to our heavenly home.



What things do you find most distracting?

warm-up



study

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

1. The writer to the Hebrews spent the last chapter talking about Jesus bringing many sons to glory. Based on the start of this chapter how does he want his readers to see themselves?
2. What is it about Jesus that we are to fix our thoughts on (see verses 1 and 2)? Where can we see this?
3. What is being said about Jesus in verses 3 and 4?
4. How does this passage depict Moses (consider 1:1-2 and 1:6-7, 14)?
5. What is verse 5 telling us about Christ (see 1:5 and 2 Samuel 7:12-16)?
6. How can we be part of God's house (see also Hos 8:1; Heb 8:8, 1 Tim 3:15)?



7. What do you think of Jesus' faithfulness?

interact

8. What will fixing your thoughts on Jesus mean doing more of for you? What will it mean doing less of?



prayer

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5

Today if you hear... (3:7-19)



God speaks to us and there are consequences for not listening. As long as it is called 'today' we need to encourage each other to listen and to believe.



Why do you expect people to listen when you speak?

warm-up



study

Read Hebrews 3:7-19

1. Verse 7 is an example of the way the writer is never too specific about the exact location of his Bible quotes (see also 2:6). What could this tell us about his view of the authority of the Bible?
2. According to verses 7 to 14, what was Israel's attitude and what was the consequence of their attitude (See Numbers 14 for more info)?
3. The writer repeatedly uses the word *today* in this passage. What does *today* mean for us (see 1:2)?
4. How should we be different to Israel *today*? What will be the consequences if we are different (or are not!)?
5. Discuss how we hear his voice *today* and how we can encourage one another *Today* (remember 1:2).
6. Why do you think the writer to the Hebrews is so emphatic about belief (for example in verses 7, 15 and 4:7)?
7. Verses 16 to 19 tell us that those who Moses lead out of slavery were not brought into God's rest. What reason does the writer give for them falling short? Why has he put this in here?



8. How do you see the deceitfulness of sin at work hardening you *Today*?

interact

9. How can we encourage one another to keep believing as long as it is called *Today*?



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prayer

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6

Enter God's rest (4:1-13)



God wants us to enter an eternal and perfect relationship with him, but the only way we can do that is by listening to his voice and believing it. There is no other way.



What would your ultimate rest be?

warm-up



Read Hebrews 4:1-13

1. What incentive do verses 1 and 2 give for continuing to listen to and believe in the gospel?
2. How do we enter God's rest *today* (see verses 3-5)?
3. What is this rest (see Deut 12:10; Heb 12:22-24 and here in verses 5, 6 & 8)?
4. Has this rest ever been fully reached by God's people?
5. What rest is verses 9 to 11 urging us to enter (and how did God rest from his own work according to verse 3)?
6. According to verses 12 and 13 is there any way we can enter God's rest if we do not listen and believe? To whom then should we turn?



7. How can we remind each other of the good God has in store for us?

8. God's word is the vital sustenance we need so that we will not fall. Discuss how we can make it a more intrinsic part of our day to day life.

9. How could we ever help anyone to enter God's rest?



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7 Our great high priest (4:14-5:10)



We can come before God with confidence now and forever because we have a perfect and eternal source of salvation in our great high priest Jesus.



warm-up

Have you ever been in the presence of someone famous? How did you feel?



study

Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10

1. Why should having a *great high priest who has gone through the heavens* be a reason for us to hold firmly to the faith we profess?
2. What is the throne of grace (See Lev 16:2)? Why should our great high priest give us confidence?
3. What qualifies someone to be a high priest?
4. What qualifies Jesus to be our great high priest?
5. How is Jesus the source of eternal salvation for all who *obey* him? What does *obey* mean?
6. What does it mean that he is 'in the order of Melchizedek'?



7. How would you feel if you had to stand before God's throne today? Why?

8. What place is there for priests in the church today?

9. How can we help others to benefit from such a great high priest?



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8

Do not fall away (5:11-6:20)



Holding on to Christ means getting on with living for him . There is no room for giving up and there is no reason to doubt the certainty of God's promises for those who hang in there.



When have you been a quitter?



Read Hebrews 5:11-6:20

1. What is the 'this' that the writer has much to say about?
2. Why is he critical of his readers?
3. What does he mean in 6:1 when he says *let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ* and go on to maturity?
4. What does it mean to 'be brought back to repentance'? Who cannot be brought back to repentance? Why is it impossible for God to bring them back?
5. Why has the writer to the Hebrews put this in here?
6. Why is the writer confident of better things in the case of his readers?
7. What confidence does verses 13 to 20 give us that it is worth holding on to God's promises?



8. What will it look like for you/our church to go on to maturity (to build on the foundations)?

interact

9. Have you ever been tempted to give up on Christ for a while, thinking you'll come back to him later in life? Why is this such a wrong way to think?

10. Remind each other why it is worth persevering with Jesus.



prayer

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