

LEADERS NOTES 1

Jesus: God's Final Word - Pay Attention!

Hebrews 1:1-2:4

Discussion Question If you had a Christian friend who was falling away or drifting away, how would you handle the situation? What would you say? How would you say it?

Read the passage. What's it about?

[What's the point of comparing Jesus to angels? The Hebrews believed that angels delivered the OT Law to Moses. The writer of Hebrews is claiming that the revelation brought by Jesus is superior to the OT Law.]

1. How is history divided up according to these verses?

What do the two periods have in common?

How do they differ?

When did this second period begin? What brought it about? How long will it last?

Where do we fit in? Any surprises here?

Are we better off now than in the past?

2. What are some of the particular claims made about Christ? (create a list; especially v3)

What's 'purification for sins' about?

How did it take place?

Why did he sit down afterwards?

If you died today, would you be 100% certain of going to heaven?

3. What's it mean to say that God has spoken to us 'by his Son'?

How does this take place? [gospel, Bible]

Should we expect God to say anything new today?

What's the danger of expecting God to say new things? [It implies that Jesus wasn't enough, and more needs to be said!]

How should we evaluate the assertion of others who claim to speak a different word from God?

4. How does the writer defend his claim that God's word to us centres on 'his Son'?

What's the rest of the chapter about?

Why does the writer tell us these things? [showing the supremacy of Christ, God's revelation is seen fully in Jesus!]

What do we learn about the Bible in general, and the OT in particular, from these quotes? [It focuses on Christ *right through!* It is God's *present* word to us today!] (remember 1Peter 1:10-12)

Does this change the way you think about the Bible? If so, how?

5. How does the warning of 2:1-4 relate to chapter 1?

What's the danger?

What do you lose if you give up on Jesus?

6. What pressures tempt you to drift away?

7. What are things that help you stick to Jesus?

8. What are things you can do to help others stick with Jesus?

Pray that God would help us persevere.

The main point of this passage is that Jesus is the climax and highpoint of God's revelation to humanity. So to wait for a new word from God, or a different word, or to view the Bible as outdated, is to actually misunderstanding the full significance of Jesus. Jesus is God's final word - pay careful attention so that you don't drift away!

Jesus: God's Final Word - Pay Attention!

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The main point of this passage is ...

LEADERS NOTES 2

Study 2 Jesus: Our Human Helper

Hebrews 2:5-18

Discussion Question Do you fear death? Are you ready to die?

Read the passage. What's it about?

1. What picture of humanity does Psalm 8 paint?

humanity crowned with honor & ruling the world

2. What is the problem that the author of Hebrews has noticed?

It's not happening. Humanity is failing. (v8)

3. There a time when Christ was less exalted than angels. (v9) When did this happen?

Why?

Is it appropriate for God to allow Jesus to go through this? Why? [v.10 - it was fitting so that Jesus would be perfect]

How did Jesus' suffering and death make him perfect? [It made him the perfect saviour, it completed God's saving work!]

Why is Christ now *more* exalted than angels? What's the connection between his death and exaltation? [v.9- he is crowned with glory because he suffered death]

4. What did the death of Jesus accomplish?

In what sense did he 'taste death' for others? [substitution] (v.9)

How does his death make us holy? [cleanses us so that we can belong to God/be set apart for God] (v.11)

How does his death destroy the devil? v14-15 [delivers us from guilt & punishment; the devil can no longer accuse or condemn us before God]

Why *should* it free us from the 'fear of death'? v14-15

Anything else? [brings us to glory (v.10), we become brothers and sisters of Jesus (v.11-13), atonement for our sins (v.17)]

5. Why is the humanity of Jesus important?

[so he can be our priest, so he can endure our punishment] (v. 11, 14, 17)

How similar was Jesus to you and me? ['in every way', verse 17]

Do you think he might have struggled with the same temptations?

In what way was he different? [he didn't sin!]

How does Jesus help us when we are tempted? [sympathy as to the hardship, strength to endure, forgiveness when we fail]

6. Does this stuff help us in practical terms? What real difference does it make to you?

7. In what ways are you relying on Jesus help/ strength?

8. Has anything changed for you, having examined this passage?

Thank God that He sent Jesus into the world, to become our human helper

The main point of this passage is that God's saving work through Jesus centres around him becoming human and dying. As a result, we have a helper in life and death who removes the fear of death, and strengthens us to resist temptation.

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Prayer

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LEADERS NOTES 3

Encourage One Another or, Harden Your Hearts

Hebrews 3:1-4:11

Discussion Question What is the Sabbath? Why did God give it? Is it relevant to us as Christians? In what way?

So far, the book of Hebrews looks like this:

1:1-14 Jesus is greater than angels.

2:1-4 A warning to pay attention to Jesus.

2:5-18 Jesus becomes our brother to represent and rescue us.

Read the passage. What's it about?

1. Why is Jesus greater than Moses?

Why would the author make this comparison? (cf. Deuteronomy 34:5, 10-12)

How can we fix our thoughts on Jesus?

2. How would you summarise the message of Psalm 95?

Why introduce it here? (v.7)

What events is the psalmist referring to? [see Numbers 14:1-25]

What did it mean for the Israelites to test and try God? (Ps.95:9)

What did it mean for them to harden their hearts?

What was the result of their behaviour?

3. What do we learn about the nature of sin here?

What is the root of sin? [unbelief]

How does sin deceive us? [It makes us doubt God and his goodness, in favour of the attractions of sin!]

How does sin harden us? [Sin is habitual, and habits are hard to break!]

How do we fight sin? How should we encourage each other?

4. What do we learn about true faith here? [it endures!]

5. Did anyone in the Old Testament *really* enjoy God's promised rest?

What is this rest exactly? [salvation, heaven]

How do you enter this rest? How do you miss it?

When does it start?

6. What is the meaning of the Sabbath for Christians?

Don't harden your heart!

In what ways do you think your heart is hard or hardening?
How can it be softened?

Encourage one another!

How does Hebrews 3-4 affect the way we should practice encouragement?

How can we engage in Hebrews 3 type encouragement?

In what ways does GWAC culture need to change to aid this? How can we help?

In what ways do you need to change?

The main point of this passage is to warn the readers against the danger of missing God's promised salvation/rest, by failing to continue to trust in Christ. Encouragement is vital for our perseverance.

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In what ways do you need to change?

The main point of this passage is ...

LEADERS NOTES 4

Jesus the Great High Priest

Hebrews 4:12-5:10

Discussion Question Thinking back to your childhood, can you remember a time when you were caught doing something wrong? What were the consequences and how did you respond?

Read Hebrews 4:12-5:10 What's it about?

1. How is the word of God described in 4:12-13?

Alive and active, sharp, it cuts deeply, it judges what is hidden, everything is laid bare, uncovered and exposed before God. It lays open the heart and accurately discerns spiritual health.

What is the significance of describing the word as 'alive and active'? Current, relevant, constantly exposing us before God.

What role does the word of God have in our lives? it judges our hidden motives

On the basis of these verses what right does God have to judge you? He sees all, so he has all the information to judge correctly.

2. What problem does this highlight to us?

How do you feel about your life being uncovered and laid bare before God?

3. What is the solution to the problem?

We have a *great* high priest, who serves in God's presence, Jesus the Son of God.

What is the role of a priest? 5:1, 3

How does Jesus meet our need? v15 able to empathise with our weaknesses, tempted in every way; did not sin.

4. How is Jesus priestly ministry similar/different to other priests?

similarities

5:1,5 appointed to represent people, v4 called by God

5:1 appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices

differences

4:14 Jesus has ascended into heaven into God's presence

5:3 other priests must make offerings for their own sin

4:14 he serves in heaven

5:6 his priestly ministry endures forever

5. What is the consequence of Jesus' priestly ministry? 4:16, 5:9

How did Jesus need to be made perfect? 5:8 Jesus learned what it is like to live out obedience to God as a human being in this world. He experienced first-hand how costly this obedience is, and this obedience enabled him to relate to us and represent us as our perfect high priest.

Application

How do you respond to the uncomfortable work of God's word inside you, convicting and judging you?

How do we hold firmly to the faith we profess? (4:14)

When tempted, how can Jesus help you? cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

What do you expect it will be like to stand before Jesus at the final judgement?

The main point of this passage is to show that Jesus is our great high priest whose ministry allows us to confidently approach God today to receive grace and mercy and help in temptation and sin. Jesus is the key to confident Christian living.

Prayer

Pray that you would live today as someone who may stand before God tomorrow giving an account.

Pray for God's help now, whatever you are facing.

Jesus the Great High Priest

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1. How is the word of God described in 4:12-13?
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3. What is the solution to the problem?
4. How is Jesus priestly ministry similar/different to other priests?
5. What is the consequence of Jesus' priestly ministry? 4:16, 5:9

Application

How do you respond to the uncomfortable work of God's word inside you, convicting and judging you?

How do we hold firmly to the faith we profess? (4:14)

When tempted, how can Jesus help you? cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

What do you expect it will be like to stand before Jesus at the final judgement?

The main point of this passage is ...

Prayer

Pray that you would live today as someone who may stand before God tomorrow giving an account.

Pray for God's help now, whatever you are facing.

Thank God for Jesus, our great high priest.

LEADERS NOTES 5

It's Time to Grow Up!

Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Discussion Question How do you tell if someone is a Christian? What's the difference between an immature and mature Christian?

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:12 What's it about?

1. What are some of the things we learn about the readers here?
Why is the writer so frustrated with them?
What is the evidence of their immaturity? [still unclear about the basics]
2. How do you become mature?
[v13-14 By understanding righteousness and by consistently practicing the basic principles of the faith (habits), thereby training oneself to recognise right from wrong.]
How is the example of Christ relevant? [see 5:7-9: he learned obedience through suffering]
3. What does it mean to move forward to maturity according to 6:1-2?
What is the danger of not moving on to maturity? [you go back to your former way of life]
How is rejection of Christ described here? [v6 fallen away, publicly disgracing Christ, crucifying Son of God]
4. Can you be a Christian for a while, then stop, then start again? Why not?
[v4 it's impossible, true faith doesn't work like that. If you are enlightened, have tasted the heavenly gift, share in the HS and tasted the goodness of God's word and the powers of the coming age, you will endure]
[see 3:6, 3:14 - true faith endures!]
5. What is God's response those who fall away from Christ? [v8 burned up]
Is it possible to be saved apart from Christ? [No. Forgiveness only comes through trusting in Christ crucified]
What does this mean for Muslim faithfulness, Jewish religious observance, Buddhist devotion?
[There is no salvation apart from Christ crucified]
6. What's the the point of the warning? (v11-12)

Application

How can you tell if someone is a Christian?

What are some of the signs you might look for?

Is there such a thing as an unfruitful Christian?

[v7-8 apparently not, either you're producing a crop or producing weeds]

Does good fruit come naturally? Can you just sit back and wait? [No, diligence is required!]

What practical advice would you give someone else about how to be fruitful?

Develop habits; find mentors to copy

Would it be obvious to others that you are a Christian?

The main point of this passage is that it is *impossible* to find any salvation apart from Jesus. Either you move forward to maturity or fall away from Jesus.

It's Time to Grow Up!

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Application

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LEADERS NOTES 6

Jesus: The Key To Confident Christian Living

Hebrews 6:13-7:28

An Outline

1. AFTER THE WARNINGS, HOW CAN WE HAVE CONFIDENCE OF BEING SAVED?

The big idea in this passage is that in Christ we have a firm anchor for our soul (6:19). This is seen in God's 2 oaths.

1.1 OATH 1 (6:13-18)

God promised to give Abraham lots of descendants and make them His treasured possession. He also added an oath to make it doubly sure. What makes our hope certain is that God has promised & vowed to form a people for Himself.

1.2 OATH 2 (6:19-7:28)

God also made an oath that Jesus will be a priest forever (7:20-22), so he's an eternal non-retiring priest - somewhat like Melchizedek (6:20) - superior to the Levitical priesthood. In fact:

- Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood because it lasts forever. Jesus' priesthood is like Melchizedek's (7:23).
- Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of his possessions, showing Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham and His descendants (7:4-6, 8-10).
- In fact, Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek and not visa versa (7:6-7).
- Psalm 110 would not promise another priest like Melchizedek if the Levitical priesthood was all that was needed (7:11).
- So, the summary is that Jesus makes the best possible high priest. and provides a firm anchor for our soul.

1.3 ASSURANCE

For all the somewhat unusual reasoning, this section holds great comfort. You can be sure of being saved. Just stick with the great high priest!

2. HOW CAN JESUS BE A PRIEST WHEN HE'S NOT A LEVITE?

He's a priest, not of the Levitical order, but in and of the order of Melchizedek

Discussion Question Does the Old Testament law still apply to us? Why, why not?

Read Hebrews 6:13-7:28 What's it about?

1. Who is Melchizedek? What do you know about him?
 - What is the background story? [see Genesis 14]
 - What was unusual about Melchizedek? [He was *both* king and priest! Not a Jew, but priest of God!]
 - What do you make of verse 3? Do you think Melchizedek lived for ever? [Probably not, but he *might* have, that is the significant point!]

2. Why does the author tell us about Melchizedek? What's his relevance to his argument?
 - [Jesus' priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood, and is patterned after Melchizedek.]
 - Why is the priesthood of Melchizedek superior to the Levitical priesthood? [blessing and tithing]
 - Any significance in the meaning of his name and city?
 - How is Jesus a king of righteousness and peace?

3. How would you compare Old Testament priests with the priesthood of Christ?
 - What makes Jesus a better priest? [perfect and eternal!]
 - Can Christians be 100% certain of going to heaven? Why? [Jesus saves *completely!*]
 - What happens to our sins after conversion? Do we need a *new* sacrifice to cover them?
 - Do we still need priests today in our churches?

4. What was the problem with the Old Testament law? [weak and useless!]
 - Why couldn't it make anyone perfect? [imperfect sacrifices and priesthood!]
 - Are we still under the Old Testament law? Why not? [A change of priesthood entails a change of law!]
 - Can you have Jesus as a priest, and still follow Old Testament laws? Why not?
 - What has the Old Testament law been replaced with for the Christian? [a better hope!]
 - Why is the Christian better off than the Jew? [We can *truly* draw near to God!]

5. Knowing Jesus has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek, what can that do for your soul? [6:19-20]
 - Personally, how confident are you that your sins are forgiven and you are saved?
 - In what regard is Jesus your forerunner?

The main point of this passage is to show the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood of Judaism. Because Jesus is sinless and eternal, our salvation is complete! This section holds great comfort. You can be sure of being saved. Just stick with the great high priest! One of the consequences of this new priesthood, is that the Old Testament law is relegated to a bygone age.

Jesus: The Key To Confident Christian Living

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LEADERS NOTES 7

Jesus: Greater Than The Old Covenant

Hebrews 8:1-13

Discussion Question What is a covenant? How did the old covenant work? On what basis? How about the new covenant? Is it the same or different?

Read Hebrews 8:1-13 What's it about?

1. Looking back, how would you summarise the message of chapter 7?
 - How does the writer summarise its message in 8:1?
 - How is this a summary of the previous chapter?
 - Why does *this* high priest sit down? [his work as priest is complete!]
2. What is a tabernacle? What is a sanctuary?
 - Under the old covenant, who had access to the sanctuary? How often? [high priest & once a year]
 - What did the high priest *do* in there? [he splattered blood around - see Lev.16]
 - Where is this *true* sanctuary or tabernacle where Jesus is serving? [heaven, God's presence]
 - What sort of access does Jesus have there? [ongoing, not just a visitor!]
 - What sort of service is Jesus performing there? [a sacrifice for sins, once for all - 7:27]
3. According to the writer, what are the differences between the two covenants?
 - Who is better off, the Jew or the Christian? Which is the better covenant?
 - What was wrong with the old covenant? Why did it fail? [people's sin]
 - How is the new covenant any better? [internal not external, based on complete forgiveness i.e. God makes it work, not us!]
4. In what sense do Christians have God's law in their minds or hearts? [See Romans 8]
 - What's the point of verse 11? [There are *no* second class Christians! *All* Christians experience God first-hand!]
 - What would you say was the most important part of this new covenant that God has established with us? [Forgiveness of sins (v.12) is the foundation of it all!]
 - Can the new covenant be broken? Can it fail? [No, it is unconditional! Otherwise it would be *no better* than the old covenant!]

The main point of this passage is to show that the heavenly priesthood of Jesus is superior to *any* earthly priesthood, and so as a result, the new covenant is superior to the old covenant.

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LEADERS NOTES 8

Jesus: Greater Than The Old Covenant

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How would you summarise the message of chapter 7?

How does the writer summarise its message in verse 1?

How is this a summary of the previous chapter?

Why does this high priest sit down? [his work as priest is complete!]

What is a tabernacle? a sanctuary?

Under the old covenant, who had access to the sanctuary? How often? [high priest & once a year]

What did the high priest do in there? [he splattered blood around - see Lev.16]

Where is this true sanctuary or tabernacle where Jesus is serving? [heaven, God's presence]

What sort of access does Jesus have there? [ongoing, not just a visitor!]

What sort of service is Jesus performing there? [a sacrifice for sins, once for all - 7:27]

According to the writer, what are the differences between the two covenants?

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In what sense do Christians have God's law in their minds or hearts? [See Romans 8]

Is it wrong for Christians to have Bible teachers? What's the point of verse 11? [There are no second class Christians! All Christians experience God first-hand!]

What would you say was the most important part of this new covenant that God has established with us? [Forgiveness of sins (v.12) is the foundation of it all!]

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LEADERS NOTES 9

Old Verses New

Hebrews 9:1-10:18

Discussion Question If you lived under the old covenant, how close to God do you think you would have felt?

Who can remember what the tabernacle was?

What's the difference between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place?

What is an altar? [A barbecue!]

What was the ark of the covenant? [special box which symbolised God's presence!]

Why was the lid of the box called 'the atonement cover'? [Blood was splattered there on the Day of Atonement!]

What does this tell us about God? Holy and unapproachable

What does this tell us about people? Sinful 9:7, 9

What did the Old Testament sacrifices achieve? [external, ceremonial cleansing - 9:10]

What did they fail to achieve? [real forgiveness, clearing of consciences, internal cleansing]

How do we know the sacrifices failed in this way? [see 10:1b-2]

What's your impression of what an Old Testament 'worship service' was like?

Would you compare the tabernacle with a modern-day cathedral? [No, more like an abattoir!]

Why was there so much blood everywhere? What was the lesson that God was teaching? [Sin and guilt are serious problems! Without these being paid for, no one can be in relationship with God!]

Under the old system, did anyone have real access to God? Why not?

Why did God make it so hard for people to get access to him? [see 9:9-10]

Who had real access to God under the old covenant? [see 9:8 - the way in was still closed]

What is the true tabernacle or sanctuary? [heaven itself]

What is the sacrifice that Jesus offers there? How many times does he offer it?

What does this sacrifice achieve? [real forgiveness, clear conscience, internal cleansing]

How adequately has the problem of sin been dealt with? [Completely! - 9:26b, 10:18]

Will there be any OT Jews in heaven? On what basis? [9:15]

Does God ever get angry with Christians? [No, sin has been done away with. I'm not sure that the New Testament ever speaks of God being angry with his people.]

The main point of this passage is that the sacrifice of Jesus is far superior to any sacrifice under the old covenant. While the old sacrifices could deal with ceremonial issues, they couldn't really provide forgiveness or cleansing. The sacrifice of Jesus, on the contrary, offers full and complete forgiveness, as is shown by the fact that it is one sacrifice for all time!

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What did the Old Testament sacrifices achieve? [external, ceremonial cleansing - 9:10]

Under the old system, did anyone have real access to God? Why not?

What is the true tabernacle or sanctuary? [heaven itself]

How adequately has the problem of sin been dealt with? [Completely! - 9:26b, 10:18]

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LEADERS NOTES 10

Drawing near to God

Hebrews 10:19-39

What is the writer's summary of our current situation? (v19-21)

What are the five calls to respond to our situation? (v22-25)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What do they mean?

How can we do these let-us-es

Personally?	At GWAC?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

What let-us do you especially need to work on?

What will be the outcome of deliberate, continual, habitual sin? (v26-31)

How do you get to be like 10:26-29?

How can we avoid falling into this trap?

How does the writer encourage Christians in v32-39?

How does this passage encourage you?

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What are the five calls to respond to our situation? (v22-25)

- 1.
- 2.
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What do they mean?

How can we do these let-us-es

Personally?	At GWAC?
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2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

What let-us do you especially need to work on?

What will be the outcome of deliberate, continual, habitual sin? (v26-31)

How do you get to be like 10:26-29?

How can we avoid falling into this trap?

How does the writer encourage Christians in v32-39?

How does this passage encourage you?

LEADERS NOTES 11

(Keep) Living by Faith

Hebrews 11:1-40

Examples

Have you ever noticed how watching a great live performance, or the tennis or the grand final makes you want to play music, or play tennis or footy? It's the persuasive power of example. That's what is happening in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 10 contrasts those who shirk back and are destroyed with those who persevere and are saved. Now the author piles up good examples of perseverance to motivate us to persevere in faith.

Living by Faith (Hebrews 11:1-12:1)

One of the things we learn from Hebrews 11 is that living by faith means looking beyond present circumstances. Faith looks to the future, trusting in what God will achieve in the future. This hopeful view changes our perspective on life here and now. True faith like this leads to action of faithfulness, as we see throughout Hebrews 11.

Jesus: THE greatest Example of Living by Faith (Hebrews 12:2-3)

In the long list of those who lived by faith, there is one who is the greatest example of all. One whose faith is so inspirational and so crucial for our salvation, that Hebrews talks in terms of him being the author and perfecter of faith. Jesus Christ.

Living by Faith?

Are you looking beyond the here and now to the new heaven and new earth that God says is coming? Are your actions, decisions, conversations, spending patterns, pastimes and priorities reflecting a genuine life of faith? Or are you focused on the here and now, about to give up for a more comfortable life?

The Positives of Pain (Hebrews 12:4-11)

a) evidence of sonship (5-9) God is our loving parent who disciplines us so that we grow up to be the best person He wants us to be. Even though we may think that it's all right to have spiritual junk food all the time because it tastes good, God our Father's in His greater wisdom, disciplines us to have a balanced diet. It's in this way that God gives us difficulties in our life, out of love.

b) a constructive experience (v10-11) Not only does enduring hardship as discipline enable us to see problems as a sign of God's love. It also allows us to see problems as the opportunity for a constructive experience rather than a destructive experience.

Endure Hardship as Discipline (12:7)

"Discipline" here is meant to be taken in the sense of training, rather than punishment. Hard times in are like a training experience. We are to view our difficulties as God given opportunities to grow in maturity of faith. This is a very radical way to look at life because it assumes that the most important thing in this life is not to be happy or comfortable or fulfilled. The most important thing in this life is to know God. Future hope is more important than happiness now.

(Keep) Living by Faith

Hebrews 11:1-40

Discussion questions

How would the average person define faith?

How does Paul in the book of Romans? (Romans 3:21-26)

How do you define faith?

Is faith leap in the dark?

Read Hebrews 11:1-12-13

How does Hebrews define faith? Why are we talking about faith anyway? (10:35-39)

What do we learn about what faith is like from the huge list in Hebrews 11?

Does any of it surprise you?

How does this chapter challenge the way you act, think, speak and feel?

What's your take away?

Pray

LEADERS NOTES 12

God's discipline

Hebrews 12:1-13

Discussion Question Does God want us to go through tough times? Why, why not?

What's it mean to be surrounded by 'a great cloud of witnesses'?

What are these witnesses? [see chapter 11]

Are they watching us, or are we supposed to watch them? [We're supposed to watch them and learn from their faith!]

What is the lesson that we are supposed to draw from their example? [to persevere in faith, to get rid of anything that prevents us from persevering in faith]

How can you make sure you will persevere in your faith? What steps can you take?

What advice does the writer give us? [to fix our eyes on Jesus]

How does this advice help us to persevere? [Jesus has been there, done that. He has persevered in faith, despite sinful opposition. He knows what it's like!]

Why were they tempted *not* to persevere? [the 'opposition of sinful men', v.3]

In verses 4-13, how does the writer encourage us to persevere in faith?

Why does God allow us to go through hardship? [discipline!]

Why do our parents discipline us? [see verse 9-10]

Why does God discipline us? [Good for us! To produce holiness!]

Why is holiness so important? [see verse 14]

Are God's discipline and forgiveness compatible?

How does discipline work? How are we trained by it? [reflection on past behaviour, formation of future behaviour]

How should we respond to God's discipline? [repentance and preparation]

Are we supposed to enjoy discipline? [see verse 11]

Should we be grateful for discipline? [Yes, it's a word of encouragement, it's for our good!]

Do all Christians experience God's discipline, or just some? [All! Otherwise you're a bastard, not a Christian!]

How do we know that we're experiencing discipline? [All hardship, hardship *without* qualification!]

Do you normally view your hardships as God's discipline?

What are some examples of God's discipline that you have experienced?

The main point of this passage is to encourage us to persevere in faith despite hardship and opposition. Picking up on the previous chapter, the author reminds us of the example of Old Testament believers before going on to the example of Christ. Then the writer reminds us that our hardship is itself an experience of God's goodness and love, as God's discipline.

God's discipline

Hebrews 12:1-13

Discussion Question Does God want us to go through tough times? Why, why not?

What's it mean to be surrounded by 'a great cloud of witnesses'?

How can you make sure you will persevere in your faith? What steps can you take?

In verses 4-13, how does the writer encourage us to persevere in faith?

How does discipline work? How are we trained by it?

Do all Christians experience God's discipline, or just some?

The main point of this passage is ...

LEADERS NOTES 13

Taking God seriously

Hebrews 12:14-29

Why does the writer start talking about Esau?

In what way were the readers of this letter at risk of becoming like Esau? [By despising the blessings which God had offered them!]

What was the blessing which Esau gave up? For what?

What is the blessing which the readers were considering giving up? For what?

Will you give up on Jesus, in order to avoid persecution?

What happens to those who reject Jesus?

What are verses 18-21 talking about?

Which mountain is this?

When is this?

Why was there fire, darkness, gloom, storm, trumpet and a scary voice?

What does this tell us about God?

How would you describe the people's experience? [fear, terror]

What does this tell us about the old covenant?

What are verses 22-24 talking about?

Where is this talking about? [heaven]

When does this happen? [in the past, we 'have come']

In what sense have we already come to this place? [By coming to Jesus, we have come to God and his temple and city.]

How would you contrast the experiences of coming to these mountains?

What does this tell you about the new covenant?

Who makes up the church of the firstborn? [believers]

Why are we called 'the firstborn'? [The firstborn are privileged, the receivers of special blessing!]

As 'the firstborn', how are we similar to Esau? how are we different? [We must avoid making the same mistake, but at the same time our salvation is secure!]

What's the significance of having our names written in heaven? What does that tell us about our salvation?

In what sense does Jesus' blood speak a better word than Abel's blood?

What word did Abel's blood speak? [judgement, vindication]

What word did Jesus' blood speak? [complete forgiveness]

What does it mean to 'worship acceptably'? [serve, obey]

What's it mean to serve God 'with reverence and awe'? [take God's judgement seriously!]

Why is it appropriate for us to serve God in this way? [Judgement is a reality for those who reject Jesus!]

The main point of this passage is to continue to urge us to persevere in faith. Yet again, the writer outlines the serious consequences of failing to do so, and yet again, he reminds of the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant.

Taking God seriously

Hebrews 12:14-29

Why does the writer start talking about Esau?

What are verses 18-21 talking about?

What are verses 22-24 talking about?

Who makes up the church of the firstborn?

In what sense does Jesus' blood speak a better word than Abel's blood?

What does it mean to 'worship acceptably'?

The main point of this passage is ...

Living to please Him

Hebrews 13:1-25

The writer of Hebrews concludes his letter with a series of twelve exhortations, simple enough to understand but difficult to put into practise.

List the exhortations. As you go discuss how these may be put into practise in your life and the life of our church.

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Verse 3:

Verse 4:

Verses 5-6:

Verses 7-8:

Verses 9-14:

Verse 15:

Verse 16:

Verse 17:

Verse 18:

What's your take away?

Pray for each other according to the final blessing in verses 20-21.