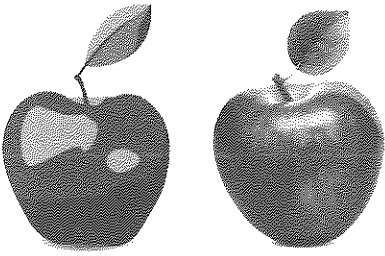


# Christ Intercedes



## Topic

Christ's high priestly ministry

## Theme

Christ, our great high priest, intercedes for us at God's right hand.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will avail himself of Christ's interceding ministry by boldly approaching the throne of grace.

## Materials

- Resources 1 and 6
- Play-Doh

## Scripture Focus

Luke 22:39–44; Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14–16; 7:3–28; 12:1–3; James 4:6–10

## Summary

Christ's redemption on earth led to His sitting down at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. There He intercedes for us and allows us to have bold access to the throne of grace.

## Outline

### I. Our Great High Priest Is Able to Help Us

- A. He is merciful (Luke 22:39–44; Heb. 2:17, 18)
- B. He is faithful (Heb. 2:17)

### II. Our Great High Priest Provides Access to the Father

- A. He passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14, 15)
- B. He invites us to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16; James 4:6–10)

### III. Our Great High Priest Intercedes Continually for Us

- A. His priestly ministry has no end (Heb. 7:3–25)
- B. He has been perfected forever (Heb. 7:26–28)

### IV. Our Great High Priest Is Our Example

- A. He ran His course with endurance (Heb. 12:1, 2)
- B. He looked at the joy before Him (Heb. 12:2, 3)

## Memory Verses

*"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15, 16).*

## GETTING STARTED

### The Ultimate Tool

Distribute a standard-sized can of Play-Doh to each pair of learners. Each pair uses the Play-Doh to create a model of a fictional tool. The tool should be portable and useful for solving a daily problem. For example, the tool could turn red lights green or turn any food into a donut. Learners display their tools and explain them.

**ASK:** Which of these tools would you most want?

**ASK:** How much money would you be willing to pay for it?

Unfortunately, most of our tools will never exist. But there is Someone Who is alive and well and is always ready to assist us at a moment's notice. Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, is seated in Heaven and is working on our behalf. This lesson will help us to understand His position and the assistance He offers us.

### Just One Number

**ASK:** If you could transport one person to your side to help you instantly just by calling his or her phone number, whose phone number would you want? Why? (Q1)

**ASK:** Who might want to call you for your instant help? (Q2)

Not even calling 911 provides *instant* help. But there is Someone Who is always ready to assist us at a moment's notice. Jesus Christ, our great high priest, is seated in Heaven and is working on our behalf. This lesson will help us to understand His position and the instant assistance He offers us.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The previous lesson presented the reality of sin and redemption. Christ paid the price for our salvation that we might have His righteousness credited to our account. Christ's work on the cross is complete. There is no further work that needs to be completed in order to secure our salvation. But the cross was just the beginning of Christ's work on our behalf. He is our great high priest seated in Heaven interceding for us before the Father.

Some believers are unaware of Christ's work as their great high priest. Consequently, their spiritual lives are deficient and weak. The book of Hebrews expounds on the high priestly ministry of Jesus. It is the Scripture focus for this lesson.

### I. Our Great High Priest Is Able to Help Us

#### A. He is merciful (Luke 22:39–44; Heb. 2:17, 18)

Hebrews 5:1 gives the requirement that priests be taken from among men. So Jesus needed to become a human in order to serve as the great high priest for humanity.

Jesus is indeed made "in all things . . . like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17). He is

lacking nothing that would make Him less than human. The placement of “in all things” at the beginning of the sentence gives the phrase emphasis in the original language, underscoring the completeness of Jesus’ humanity. Jesus’ humanity, then, allows Him to be a “merciful . . . high priest” (2:17).

As a merciful priest, Jesus understands humans fully. He experienced the full range of temptation and suffering that humans experience, though His experience was far more intense than any other person’s experience. The temptation and suffering He faced as He approached the cross could never be equaled.

**READ:** Luke 22:39–44. **ASK:** Describe the intense temptation Jesus endured as He faced the cross. (Q3) *An angel came to minister to Him and strengthen Him as He prayed. His sweat was mingled with blood, a sign of extreme emotional and physical taxing.*

Because of His personal identification with suffering and temptation, Jesus responds compassionately to believers who ask for help. He “is able to succour them that are tempted” (2:18). “Succour” is a rich word in the original language. It comes from two root words meaning “a cry” and “to run.” So it conveys the idea of running to aid at the sound of a cry. A parent dropping everything to run to his child at the sound of the child’s cry is the picture.

**ASK:** How does the illustration of a parent running to the aid of a child help you understand the mercy with which Jesus intercedes for you? (Q4)

The work of removing our sin by Christ’s work on the cross (2:17) gives us access to the Father in the first place. So Christ removed our sin and now stands as our tender, merciful intercessor before the Father.

## **B. He is faithful (Heb. 2:17)**

While “merciful” describes Jesus’ intercession on our behalf, “faithful” (2:17) describes His work in relation to the Father. Jesus was faithful in His obedience to the Father in atoning for our sins. As a result, He is able to be faithful in His mercifulness toward us. He will never stop being merciful. “Faithful” is the key word to describe God in the Old Testament, as we saw in lessons 2 and 3. And it is the appropriate word to describe God the Son’s intercessory ministry today.

**ASK:** What does it mean to you to know that Jesus will always be faithful in His intercessory ministry on your behalf? (Q5)

## **II. Our Great High Priest Provides Access to the Father**

### **A. He passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14, 15)**

The writer of Hebrews picks up the great high priest theme again in chapter 4. His message builds on what he had already written in chapter 2.

The original Jewish readers of Hebrews were most likely in the final years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Being a Jewish believer was especially difficult during that time. Both the non-believing Jews and the Romans did not want them around. So persecution was on the rise. Staying true to the Lord grew harder and

Romans 8:15 presents our adoption as children of God. We have the privilege of calling out “Abba, Father,” a term of endearment such as a child would use when calling out to his father.

harder. The Jewish believers were tempted to revert back to the Judaism God had saved them from.

The message from the writer is clear. Don't give up! "Hold fast" your "profession" of faith because Jesus passed through the Heavens (4:14). This is a reference to Jesus' death on behalf of humanity. He provided the final, once-for-all atonement for sin. The Jews needed to reject the notion of returning to a religion that relied on priestly service and sacrifices. Jesus made the need for additional atonement for sin unnecessary when He passed through the heavens and gave every believer access to God.

The writer continued with his words of instruction and encouragement by describing Jesus as the sympathetic high priest (4:15). Jesus understood what the Jewish believers were going through. He had successfully faced tremendous temptation.

**READ:** Hebrews 4:15. **EVALUATE:** Successfully resisting temptation allowed Jesus to fully experience how powerful temptation is. (Q6) *Satan pushed the intensity of Jesus' temptation to the limits both in the wilderness and in the final hours before the cross. Though Jesus triumphed over the temptation, He felt its full brunt in His humanity.*

There were no temptations the Jewish readers were experiencing that Jesus didn't experience. He was tempted "in all points" (4:15). He couldn't be a more suited sympathizer with their needs.

### **B. He invites us to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16; James 4:6–10)**

Instead of giving up, the Jewish readers were to go to the throne of grace to get the "mercy" and "grace" they needed (Heb. 4:16). Prayer is the means to approaching the throne of grace. "Grace" is God's enabling. The Jewish believers needed God's grace to successfully face temptation. God never intended for believers to try to triumph over temptation on their own.

**READ:** Hebrews 4:16. **ASK:** Given the truth of this verse, how important is prayer to gaining victory over sin and temptation? (Q7) *It is vital. God's grace comes through prayer. We cannot be victorious and grow as a believer without God's grace.*

Why do we not go to the throne of grace as often as we should? Often the problem is pride. We don't think we need God's help, so we don't ask for it. Not praying for others is another indication of pride. When we are wrapped up in ourselves, we don't concern ourselves with the needs of others.

**READ:** James 4:6–10. **ASK:** What connection did James make between God's enabling grace and humility? (Q8) *God's gives grace to the humble and lifts them up. Christ invites us to the throne of grace, but it takes humility to go there often.*

## **III. Our Great High Priest Intercedes Continually for Us**

### **A. His priestly ministry has no end (Heb. 7:3–25)**

As further evidence for not returning to Judaism, the writer of Hebrews develops the superiority of Christ's priesthood in chapter 7. The comparison of Christ to the levitical priesthood reveals that Christ's high priestly ministry has no end.

Christ was not a descendant of the tribe of Levi. He was instead after the priestly order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a priest without a genealogy and without a known beginning or end (7:3). He therefore remained a priest continually. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, as did Levi by virtue of still being in Abraham's loins (7:4–10). This means the levitical priesthood recognized the superiority of the order of Melchizedek.

The levitical priesthood was inherently tied to the law. Since no one could be made perfect by the law, the priesthood connected to the law needed to change if the problem of sin was to be permanently dealt with (7:11, 12, 18, 19). Christ, Who is after the order of Melchizedek, is the answer to the flawed priesthood and law (7:13–17). Unlike the temporary levitical priests, Christ's priesthood lasts forever (7:17). We are able to draw near to God through Christ's high priestly ministry (7:19).

Furthermore, Christ's priestly ministry began by God's oath rather than by a commandment (7:20–22). The oath makes Christ's priesthood superior to that of the levitical priesthood. It also sets Christ up as the guarantee of a better covenant than the Old Testament could sustain. Because Christ is flawless, He can guarantee a better relationship between God and humanity (7:22). We enjoy personal fellowship with God without the need for sacrifices and priests.

The continuous nature of Christ's priesthood is important. Because it is eternal (7:23, 24), Christ is able to save "to the uttermost" those who come to God through Him (7:25). Salvation is forever secure because Christ's priestly ministry is eternal.

This oath is first recorded in Psalm 110:4.

**READ:** Hebrews 7:25. **ASK:** How would the Christian life be affected if we weren't sure if our salvation was secure? (Q9) *We would be focused on our salvation instead of serving God. We would have no true peace or hope.*

Jesus' priestly ministry is also continuous for all believers. Christ always lives to make intercession for us (7:25).

**ASK:** How should we respond to Christ's continuous intercessory ministry on our behalf? (Q10) *We ought to take advantage of access to God by constantly having an attitude of prayer.*

## **B. He has been perfected forever (Heb. 7:26–28)**

**READ:** Hebrews 7:26. **ASK:** What made Christ the fitting sacrifice for us? (Q11) *He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."*

Because Christ was the perfect sacrifice (7:26), He does not need to daily offer up sacrifices as the levitical priests did. He paid for sins once for all "when He offered up himself" (7:27).

As our sacrifice, Christ is "consecrated," or "perfected," forever (7:28). He stands in contrast to the levitical priests who had "infirmity," a reference to their sinfulness and mortality. Christ completed His mission in offering Himself up as the perfect sacrifice. He is the perfect high priest forever. There could never be a time when Christ would fail as our great high priest.

## **IV. Our Great High Priest Is Our Example**

As our great high priest Who is perfected forever (7:28), Christ also becomes

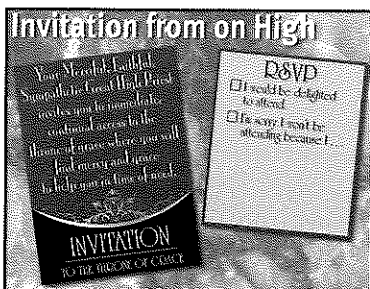
Hebrews 12 talks about our obedient response to our great high priest.

The writer of Hebrews opens chapter 12 with the word “wherefore,” a link to the previous chapter. Hebrews 11 lists the heroes of the faith—men and women who demonstrated how faith can endure in the face of great challenges. But Christ is the ultimate example of endurance (12:2). As we look to Him, we ought to lay aside sin (12:1).

We are to look to Christ, the “author” and “finisher” of our faith (12:2). “To look” means having eyes for no one but Christ and trusting Him completely. He is to be the central focus of our purpose and course for life. In essence, looking to Jesus is living in the real. When our eyes are fixed on Him, we aren’t creating our own reality.

Jesus endured as He looked forward to the joy set before Him (12:2). His role as the great high priest interceding for us was part of that joy He looked forward to. His joy also included accomplishing the Father's will and presenting believers to the Father as redeemed.

**ASK:** Why might believers reject Christ's invitation? (Record or reveal answers on the RSVP.) (Q14) *They are already comfortable with their lives. They want to use their time as they please. They don't see the value in prayer. They don't want to deal honestly with the Lord about their lives.*



The invitation to approach the throne of grace based on Christ's high priestly role is compelling. But simply feeling compelled to pray is worthless. We must turn the compelling feeling into action.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Prayer Life Evaluation

**ASK:** What three words would you use to describe your prayer life? (Q15)

**ASK:** What does the amount of time we spend in prayer say about what we think about ourselves? (Q16) *If we spend little time in prayer, then we probably think highly of ourselves. We think we can handle life on our own. Much time in prayer shows our humility and dependence on God.*

It is easy to be fooled by Satan into thinking we don't need to pray. The "normalness" of our lives lulls us into a pattern of self-sufficiency. But when we suddenly face the reality of difficult circumstances, we quickly understand we should have been praying all along.

### Taking Advantage of Christ's Ministry

**ASK:** How does an awareness of Jesus' high priestly ministry affect your motivation to pray? (Q17)

**ASK:** What will you do to strengthen your prayer life? (Q18)

Perhaps the first step to strengthen your prayer life is to pray about your prayer life. Praying is a spiritual discipline that requires God's enabling grace. He will help us become consistent and real in our prayer lives if we will simply ask!

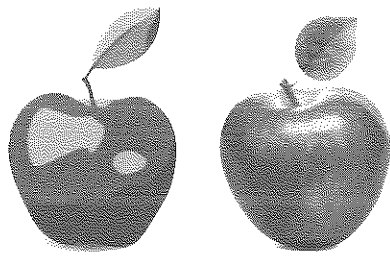
### Summary and Memory Verses

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 5 or use the following: Boldly approach the throne of grace.

Encourage learners to memorize Hebrews 4:15 and 16. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.

#### Living in the Real

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Wake up to reality!                        | 8.  |
| 2. Live in response to Who God is.            | 9.  |
| 3. Live in response to God's person.          | 10. |
| 4. Walk in newness of life as God's redeemed. | 11. |
| 5. Boldly approach the throne of grace.       | 12. |
| 6.  | 13. |
| 7.  |     |



# The Holy Spirit Empowers

## Topic

The Holy Spirit

## Theme

God gives us the Holy Spirit to empower us to live for Him.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider his devotion to God and his dependence on the Holy Spirit and will take steps to strengthen both.

## Materials

- Resources 1, 2, and 7
- Video camera or camera phone

## Scripture Focus

John 16:5–7; Rom. 8:9, 26, 27; 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:17–20; 12:11; Gal. 5:16, 22–24; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; Phil. 4:7

## Summary

Christ's return to Heaven made possible the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit indwells every believer and provides the opportunity for enabling as we devote ourselves to God and depend on the Spirit for power.

## Outline

### I. The Holy Spirit Is Real

- A. He is a person (Rom. 8:26, 27; 1 Cor. 12:11)
- B. He indwells every believer (Rom. 8:9; John 16:5–7)
- C. He motivates
  - 1. Negatively stated (Eph. 4:30)
  - 2. Positively stated (1 Cor. 6:17–20)

### II. The Holy Spirit Offers Power

- A. He wants us to be devoted (Rom. 12:1, 2)
- B. He wants us to be dependent (Gal. 5:16, 24; Eph. 5:18)

### III. The Holy Spirit Produces Fruit

- A. Godly character
  - 1. Love, joy, peace (Gal. 5:22; Phil. 4:7)
  - 2. Longsuffering, gentleness, goodness (Gal. 5:22)
  - 3. Faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22, 23)
- B. Effective service (1 Cor. 12:11)

## Memory Verse

*"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you"*  
(John 16:7).