

* Dr. Bill Cullen

**God Reveals**

**Revelation**

 **Holy Spirit**

 **Inspires**

 **Scripture**

 **Holy Spirit**

 **Inspires**

**Dogma**

 **Holy Spirit**

 **Inspires**

**Doctrine**

 **Holy Spirit**

**Inspires**

**Local Preaching**

**and Teaching Holy Spirit**

**Inspires**

**Personal Belief**

While “I BELIEVE” Scripture is infallible; all that follow (interpretations) are not. The further removed from Scripture, the more room there is for error and distortions. It is *possible*, however, on any given point, a “personal belief” of an individual, based on and flowing out of Scripture, might be more accurate than a particular local teaching, doctrinal statement of a denomination, or even a dogma. Thus, it is *possible* a “personal belief” could be a correcting influence on a teaching, doctrine or dogma (e.g. from a Protestant perspective, Luther and the Reformation).

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**God Seeks to Make a *CASE* – Through Scripture God Seeks to…**

**CASE = C**onvict us of our sin

 **A**ssure us of grace and forgiveness

 **S**tretch us for growth

 **E**mpower us for action

**2 Timothy 3:15-17**

***“Make Us Wise for Salvation” – “Teach, Rebuke, Correct, Train” – “Thoroughly Equipped for Every Good Work”***

(**TEACH** – God’s objective will; **REBUKE** – expose where out of alignment;

**CORRECT** – show how to get into alignment; **TRAIN** – develop character through repetition)

***(LAW—God Expects/Requires***: As **Curb** = Guardrail; As **Mirror** = Reveals sin; As **Map** = Guide

***GOSPEL—God Does***: As **Invitation** = Promise Made; As **Assurance** = Promise Confirmed; As **Empowerment** = Promise Experienced**)**

**In discussion it can be helpful to do five things:**

* **Name** (identify) our current biases, that is, our particular slant or perspective on the issue being discussed.
* Do **Critical reflection** – personally identify why each of us has the bias we hold.
* Hear the **Christian** **Story** – the Church’s bias (includes Scripture, Church history and traditions) on the issue being discussed. (Scripture is inerrant, the Church’s story isn’t equally so as the Church’s story involves human interpretation.)
* Seek to **Understand, Integrate, & Grow** – in a respectful way bring our various biases into dialogue with each other. Thus, we allow our biases to respectfully challenge one another, affirm one another, correct one another, etc. (frequently involves *assimilation* [reinterpreting or ignoring experience or data in light of the scheme] and/or *accommodation* [modifying the scheme or developing a new scheme in order to accommodate the data].
* **Vision & Respond** – identify our new, revised or renewed bias which will shape our beliefs, values, decisions, and behaviors.

Christian Shared Praxis Developed by Dr. Thomas Groome

* *"A teacher’s/facilitator’s first responsibility is not to answer questions but to help students identify and articulate their questions so that they the students choose to actively seek answers and have something upon which to attach answers." –* Bill Cullen
* *"In education, especially in the education of senior high youth and adults, it is not our purpose to tell people what they 'should' think, feel, believe, value or do. Rather, our purpose is to give people data or information that 'makes' them think or rethink about what they think, feel, believe, value and do."* – Bill Cullen

**Video**

**Bible Project – min. –** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fNWTZZwgbs**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fNWTZZwgbs)



***Introduction to Hebrews***

***By Chuck Swindoll***

***https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-general-epistles/hebrews***

**Who wrote the book?**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews remains shrouded in mystery. Even early in the church’s history, a Christian as learned as Origen had to admit his ignorance of the true author of Hebrews. Several theories regarding the author’s identity have been proposed over the years, but all of them contain significant problems.

Most of the churches in the eastern part of the Roman Empire believed Paul to have authored the book, leading to its early acceptance into the Canon by the churches in those areas. Even though Clement of Rome drew much from Hebrews in his late-first-century letter to the Corinthian church, many in the Western church pointed away from Paul as the source of the book. Authors such as Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, and even Clement have been considered as possibilities. The unknown authorship of this book should not shake our confidence in its authority. Hebrews makes important theological contributions to the biblical Canon, it has been drawn upon as sacred Scripture since the late first century, and Christians have for two millennia consistently upheld the divine inspiration and, therefore, the canonicity of the book of Hebrews.

**Where are we?**

The strongly Jewish character of the letter to the Hebrews helps to narrow down its date of composition, most likely AD 64–69. Significantly, the book makes no reference to the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in AD 70, and the author wrote as if the sacrificial system were still in existence ([Hebrews 10:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Heb%2010.1%E2%80%932), [11](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Hebrews%2010.11)). With its myriad references to Hebrew customs and the Old Testament, the book was likely sent to a Jewish Christian community, possibly in Rome.

**Why is Hebrews so important?**

Hebrews clearly lays out the present priestly ministry of Christ in the life of the believer. Jesus is both the divine Son of God and completely human, and in His priestly role He clears the way for human beings to approach the Father in heaven through prayer ([Hebrews 4:14–16](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Heb%204.14%E2%80%9316)). The priesthood of Jesus is superior to the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron, because only through Jesus do we receive eternal salvation (5:1–9). Furthermore, Jesus became the permanent and perfect High Priest, going beyond all other priests by offering Himself as a sinless sacrifice on behalf of the sins of human beings (7:24–26; 9:28).

**What's the big idea?**

Throughout its pages, Hebrews makes clear that Jesus Christ exceeds all other people, pursuits, objects, or hopes to which human beings offer allegiance. Hebrews pictures Jesus as better than the angels, as bringing better lives to humanity through salvation, as offering a better hope than the Mosaic Law could promise, as a better sacrifice for our sins than a bull or a goat, and as providing a better inheritance in heaven for those who place their faith in Him ([Hebrews 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Heb%201.4); [6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Hebrews%206.9); [7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Hebrews%207.19); [9:23](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Hebrews%209.23); [10:34](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Hebrews%2010.34)). Jesus is indeed superior to all others.

This message of the superiority of Jesus would have been particularly important to Jewish Christians in Rome, who were struggling under Nero’s persecution and were considering moving back toward the Mosaic Law. The writer to the Hebrews showed these Jewish Christian believers that, though they were faced with suffering, they were indeed following a better way . . . and they should persevere.

**How do I apply this?**

The ancients created idols fashioned of wood and stone. Modern society has set aside that type of idol in favor of new idols—idols of fancy gadgets, material wealth, a comfortable lifestyle, and even our children. Human beings have seen and experienced the limitless bounty of idolatry, where we place some created object or person in the place of the one true God. What idols do you hold dear in your life?

The letter to the Hebrews makes clear that only one Person deserves to hold the primary place in our lives. While we are busy idolizing our move up the corporate ladder or placing all our hopes in our kids, Jesus offers us a better position, a better priest, a better covenant, a better hope, and a better sacrifice.

Only when we give Jesus His rightful place in our lives will everything else in life fall into its rightful place.

***"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me;***

***it has hands, it lays hold of me." – Martin Luther***



**“Speak Lord, Your Servant Is Listening” (1 Samuel 3:10).**

***Underline or highlight words you find particularly significant in the passages.***

***As they apply, complete the sentence stems below: (feel free to be selective)***

1. As I reflect upon these passages, a question I have is….
2. A new or renewed thought for me is….
3. A common denominator that seems to run through many of the passages is….
4. In at least one verse, something I found to be unique, surprising and/or challenging is….
5. The audience addressed & the context of the passage(s), both historically and within the chapter, suggest…
6. A related or some related Scripture passage(s) that come to mind are….
7. These passages seem to align or not align with the historical teaching of church of or in…
8. These passages seem to align or not align with contemporary society’s thinking of or in…
9. These passages would have me understand my vocation of loving my neighbor to mean….
10. If God is serious here and means for me to take these passages seriously,….
11. In light of these passages “living a life worthy of my calling/vocation” means….
12. In the light of what God is telling/showing me in these passages I think, feel, and/or believe….
13. In and by the empowering grace of God I will….

***If through a passage you feel God… (explain).***

* + 1. convicting you, --------------------------------------------------------------- mark it “C”.
		2. disturbing you, --------------------------------------------------------------- mark it “D”.
		3. inspiring or challenging you, ---------------------------------------------- mark it “I”.
		4. forgiving and/or comforting you, ---------------------------------------- mark it “F.”
		5. guiding you, giving you direction, --------------------------------------- mark it “G”.
		6. sending or commissioning you for mission or service, ------------- mark it “S”.
* To/for whom or what are you being sent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
	+ 1. empowering you, ------------------------------------------------------------ mark it “E”.
		2. The passage that is the most meaningful for you today------------ mark it \*.

***Bill Cullen’s Goals in and for Bible study:***

1. Participants experience the presence and touch of God.
2. Participants leave wanting to return.
3. Participants leave wanting to respond to God’s touch.
4. Participants experience being a part of the Body of Christ.
5. Participants gain some sort of Biblical knowledge and/or insight.

**NOTE**: For Bill the first goal is the primary goal. If it happens, and only it, the time has still been well spent. However, when the first goal happens, it typically leads to the following four goals happening. The fifth goal is important, but it is *only* important as it serves the above four goals. If the fifth goal is made to be the most important, it generally comes at the expense of the above four.

*“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”* (1 Corinthians 8:1)

**Hebrews**

**Hebrews 1:1-14 (NIV)**

**The Son Superior to Angels**

\_\_\_1  In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

\_\_\_2  but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

\_\_\_3  The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
\_\_\_4  So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

\_\_\_5  For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

\_\_\_\_\_\_6  And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

\_\_\_\_\_\_7  In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

\_\_\_8  But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

\_\_\_9  You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

\_\_\_10  He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

\_\_\_11  They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment.

\_\_\_12  You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

\_\_\_13  To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?
\_\_\_14  Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

**Hebrews 2:1-18 (NIV)**

**Warning to Pay Attention**

\_\_\_1  We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

\_\_\_2  For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,
\_\_\_3  how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

\_\_\_4  God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

**Reflect and Discuss**

* + - 1. ***V. 1* – What are some things we know about God through the prophets?**
* **What do we know about Jesus from the prophets?**
* **Do you have a favorite Messianic prophesy *(consider Is 53:2-12)*? If so, share.**
* **How is Jesus superior to the prophets?**
	+ - 1. **Other than the prophets, how else did God speak to people in the Old Testament?**
* **What are some of the other “various ways” through which God speaks to us today?**
* **What is the way God most or best speaks to you? Explain.**
	+ - 1. ***V. 2-3* – What more about God do we learn in and through the person of Jesus? *(see Jn 1:1-18; Jn 10:30; Jn 14:9)***
			2. **Compare and contrast Jesus with angels. What are their similarities? …their differences.**

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. To what do you think God would have you pay more careful attention? Explain.**

**2. Thinking back, have there been times in your life when you seemed to have “drifted away” from God and His will? Explain. With what consequence?**

**3. What can you do to be more attentive? What does attentiveness look like in practical terms?**

**4. From what have we been saved? For what have we been saved? *(see Mt 5:16; Jn 15:8,16-17; Ro 3:23-26; Ro 6:23; Eph 2:8-10; Phil 2:12-13; 2 Pe 2:9)***

**Jesus Made Like His Brothers**

\_\_\_5  It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to

come, about which we are speaking.

\_\_\_6  But there is a place where someone ha s testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

\_\_\_7  You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor

\_\_\_8  and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.
\_\_\_9  But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

\_\_\_10  In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.
\_\_\_11  Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

\_\_\_12  He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

\_\_\_13  And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."
\_\_\_14  Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--
\_\_\_15  and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

\_\_\_16  For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.
\_\_\_17  For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

\_\_\_18  Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**Hebrews 3:1-19 (NIV)**

**Jesus Greater Than Moses**

\_\_\_1  Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

\_\_\_2  He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.

\_\_\_3  Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

\_\_\_4  For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

 **Reflect and Discuss**

* + - 1. ***Vs. 5-13* – Pick three words or phrase you find either significant, interesting, or which raise a question for you in these verses? Explain.**
			2. ***Vs. 7,9* - In what way(s) was Jesus made “a little lower than angels”?**
* **In what way(s) is Jesus superior to the angels?**
	+ - 1. **What does it mean to be “holy” and to be “made holy”? (ἁγιάζω – hagiazō = holy, hallowed, sanctify – set apart for the purposes of God)**
* **Do you see yourself as being holy? Explain.**
	+ - 1. ***V. 11-12* – What does it mean to you and for you to be Jesus’ brother or sister? *(see Eph 3:14-21)***
* **Do you understand it more in terms of giving you status, privilege, or response-ability? Explain*. (see Mt 5:16; Mt 28:19-20; Jn 15:16-17; Jn 17:15-18; Acts 1:8; Eph 2:8-10)***
	+ - 1. ***Vs. 14-18* – While being “fully divine,” Jesus was also “fully human*.”***
* **What does it mean to you and for you that Jesus was fully human? Why is this important? *(see Mt 24:36; Mt 27:28-30,46; Lk 2:6-7; Lk 2:46,51-52; Lk 22:44; Lk 23:46; Jn 6:66-67; Jn 11:35; Jn 19:28; Heb 4:14-16)***
* **Is it easy or difficult for you to think of Jesus as being “fully human” and experiencing temptation and suffering in the same way you do?Explain.**
* **How can and does Jesus’ victory over temptation help you? *(see 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Cor 5:17)***

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. When you fix your thoughts and eyes on Jesus *(see Heb 12:2)*, what thoughts and images come to mind? What feelings do you experience?**

* **In what sense is Jesus an apostle (ἀπόστολος – Apostolos = messenger, sent one)? …our high priest? *(see Heb 9:16-28; Heb 10:11-22; 1 Jn 2:2)***

**2. To and for what was Jesus appointed and sent? To and for what was Jesus faithful? *(see Mt 26:39; Jn 12:23-33; Jn 17:18; Phil 2:5-8)***

* **To, for, and in what was Moses faithful? How is Jesus and Jesus’ faithfulness superior to Moses**

\_\_\_5  Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.

\_\_\_6  But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

**Warning Against Unbelief**

\_\_\_7  So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice,

\_\_\_8  do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert,

\_\_\_9  where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.

\_\_\_10  That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.'

\_\_\_11  So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

\_\_\_12  See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.
\_\_\_13  But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

\_\_\_14  We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

\_\_\_15  As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."
\_\_\_16  Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?

\_\_\_17  And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert?
\_\_\_18  And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?

\_\_\_19  So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

**Hebrews 4:1-16 (NIV)**

**A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God**

\_\_\_1  Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.

\_\_\_2  For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.
\_\_\_3  Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.

\_\_\_4  For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work."

\_\_\_5  And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

**and Moses’ faithfulness?**

* **To and for what have we/you been called? What does it mean and look like for you to be faithful to and in your calling? *(see Mt 4:19; Mt 28:19-20; Jn 15:8,12,16-17; Jn 17:15-18; Gal 6:9-10; Eph 4:1-2,16; Phil 2:3-8; Jas 1:27; Jas 2:17,26; 1 Jn 3:16,18)***

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *V. 8* – What does a hard heart look like? What are signs or indicators of a hard heart?**

* **What causes hardness of hearts? *(see Eph 4:17-19,30)***
* **In regard to what might Christians be most inclined to develop a harden-heart?**
* **What about you?**

**2. *V. 11* – What does it mean to rest in Jesus? *(see Mt 11:28-30)***

**3. *V. 12* – What causes you to have doubts? What does Satan like to use to try to turn you “from the living God”?**

**4. *V. 13* – What can you/we do to encourage one another so that our hearts remain tender and responsive?**

**5. *V. 15* – Whose voice are you most likely to hear and to respond – Satan’s or the Holy Spirit? Explain.**

* **Whose voice is the loudest?**
* **How might Satan’s voice be turned down or muted? *(see Jn 10:3-4; Col 3:15)***

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *Vs. 1-8* – To what events is the author of Hebrews referring? *(see Gen 2:1-2; Num 13:26-33; Jos 24)***

* **What rest awaited the Israelites and why did they fail to enjoy it?**

**2. *V. 2* – What gospel rest awaits us? How do/can we enjoy it?**

**3. God rested on the seventh day. This was the first day for Adam and Eve. What significance, if any, do you find in this for us today? Explain.**

**9.  What do you make of *v. 10*? What does it mean to rest from your own work? *(see Eph 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-9)***

* + **What does God's rest have to do with one trying to earn salvation with good works?**

**10. *V. 12* – In what way is the Word of God sharper than a double-edged sword?**

* + **In what ways have you experienced this in your own life?**
	+ **What has the Word of God revealed about your own thoughts and attitudes of the heart?**

\_\_\_6  It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience.

\_\_\_7  Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

\_\_\_8  For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.

\_\_\_9  There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

\_\_\_10  for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

\_\_\_11  Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.
\_\_\_12  For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

\_\_\_13  Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**Jesus the Great High Priest**

\_\_\_14  Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

\_\_\_15  For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.

\_\_\_16  Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

**Hebrews 5:1-14 (NIV)**

\_\_\_1  Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

\_\_\_2  He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.
\_\_\_3  This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

\_\_\_4  No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was.

\_\_\_5  So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

\_\_\_6  And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

\_\_\_7  During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one

who could save him from death, and he was heard

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. Compare *Vs. 14-16* with *Heb 2:14-18*. What do we learn about Jesus?**

**2. *V. 16* – What confidence does having Jesus as your/our high priest give you? Explain. *(see Heb 10:19-23; 1 Jn 2:2)***

**3. *Vs. 5:1-10* – Compare and contrast the Levitical priesthood with that in the order of Melchizedek. *(see also Heb 7:1-28; Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:4: Heb 6:20)***

**4. In what ways is Jesus like Melchizedek? In what ways is Jesus’ priesthood superior to the Levitical priesthood?**

**5. How do you understand *5:8-9*, particularly “he learned obedience” and “once made perfect”? *(see Phil 2:5-8)***

* **How do these verses impact your understanding and appreciation of Jesus being “fully human” as well as “fully divine”?**

**(“Learned obedience” fully understood obedience through experience along with its consequences).**

because of his reverent submission.

\_\_\_8  Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

\_\_\_9  and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

\_\_\_10  and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

**Warning Against Falling Away**

\_\_\_11  We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.

\_\_\_12  In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

\_\_\_13  Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.
\_\_\_14  But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

**Hebrews 6:1-20 (NIV)**

\_\_\_1  Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,

\_\_\_2  instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
\_\_\_3  And God permitting, we will do so.

\_\_\_4  It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,

\_\_\_5  who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,

\_\_\_6  if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

\_\_\_7  Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.

\_\_\_8  But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

\_\_\_9  Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case--things that accompany salvation.

\_\_\_10  God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

\_\_\_11  We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.

\_\_\_12  We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *Vs 5:11-6:3* – What would you consider spiritual milk and what would you consider solid food? *(see 1 Cor 3:1-2; 1 Pe 2:2)***

**2. Spiritually, do you see yourself as being: Explain.**

 **a. an infant e. adolescence**

 **b. a toddler f. young adulthood**

 **c. early childhood g. adulthood**

 **d. childhood h. wise old sage**

**3. Do you think your church caters to a particular group? Explain. What are you needing: (a) milk, (b) solid food, (c) other\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? *(see Mt 7:24,26; Mt 4:4; Col 3:15; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Jas 1:22; 1 Jn 3:18)***

**4. What is wrong or bad with prolonged immaturity?**

**5. *Vs. 9-12* – What encouragement does the author provide? *(See Phil 1:6; Phil 3:12-16; 1 Jn 2:1-2)***

**6. *V. 12* – In what, if anything, have you become lazy or lethargic? Where/how is the Spirit nudging you?**

**7. What is God most wanting you to hear and remember in and from *5:11-6:12*?**

**The Certainty of God’s Promise**

\_\_\_13  When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself,

\_\_\_14  saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."
\_\_\_15  And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

\_\_\_16  Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.
\_\_\_17  Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.

\_\_\_18  God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

\_\_\_19  We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,
\_\_\_20  where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

**Hebrews 7:1-28 (NIV)**

**Melchizedek the High Priest**

\_\_\_1  This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,

\_\_\_2  and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."

\_\_\_3  Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

\_\_\_4  Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!

\_\_\_\_\_\_5  Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people--that is, their brothers--even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.

\_\_\_6  This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

\_\_\_7  And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.

\_\_\_8  In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.
\_\_\_9  One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,

\_\_\_10  because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *Vs. 13-17* – Why does God swear by Himself? How meaningful is this for you?**

**2. Brainstorm and list promises of God. Which is/are most meaningful for you at this time? *(see 2 Cor 1:20)***

* **Has the promise been fulfilled? Are you waiting patiently? Are you waiting impatiently? Are you doubting? Explain.**

**3. *V. 19* – How meaningful is it for you to have the author liken God’s promises to an anchor? Explain.**

* **In what way(s) has your Christian hope been an anchor for you?**

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. Review the questions for Hebrews 4:14-5:10.**

**2. For you, what is the most significant point the author makes in chapter seven? Explain.**

**3. What comfort do you find in having Jesus as your/our high priest?**

**4. The Jewish Christians to whom the author of Hebrews was writing were being tempted to return to their old ways. When and where do you see Christians today being tempted to revert to relying on outdated understandings and practices (Note: the old isn’t always bad).**

**Jesus Like Melchizedek**

\_\_\_11  If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come--one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?

\_\_\_12  For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.

\_\_\_13  He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.

\_\_\_14  For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.
\_\_\_15  And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears,

\_\_\_16  one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

\_\_\_17  For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

\_\_\_18  The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless

\_\_\_19  (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.
\_\_\_20  And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath,

\_\_\_21  but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'"

\_\_\_22  Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

\_\_\_23  Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;
\_\_\_24  but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.
\_\_\_25  Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

\_\_\_26  Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.
\_\_\_27  Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

\_\_\_28  For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

**Hebrews 8:1-13 (NIV)**

**The High Priest of the New Covenant**

\_\_\_1  The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. What is your understanding of “covenant” (in Hebrew – ברית – *berith; in* Greek – διαθηκη – *diatheke*)?**

* **In Scripture there are basically two types of**

\_\_\_2  and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

\_\_\_3  Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer.

\_\_\_4  If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

\_\_\_5  They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

\_\_\_6  But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.
\_\_\_7  For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.
\_\_\_8  But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.
\_\_\_9  It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my

covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.
\_\_\_10  This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

\_\_\_11  No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.
\_\_\_12  For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

\_\_\_13  By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

**Hebrews 9:1-28 (NIV)**

**Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle**

\_\_\_1  Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary.

\_\_\_2  A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.

\_\_\_3  Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place,

\_\_\_4  which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

\_\_\_5  Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot

**Covenants. *(Gal 3:15-18)* The covenant God made with Abraham is an example of a covenant of divine commitment *(Gen 12:2-3; Gal 15:4-21)*. The covenant God made with Moses and the Israelites at Sinai is an example of a covenant of human obligation *(Ex 20:1-17; see also Jos 24).***

* **What is your understanding of each covenant? How are they alike and how are they different?**
* **Who has responsibility in each covenant? Explain. What responsibility???**

**2. Do you see the covenant embodied by Jesus as being truly a new covenant or a renewal of the covenant God made with Abraham? Explain.**

**3. In what way(s) is the covenant embodied by Jesus a superior covenant?**

**Reflect and Discuss**

1. ***Vs. 1-5* - What images come to mind when you thing of the Biblical tabernacle? …the temple?**
2. ***V. 7* – What comes to mind when you hear the phrases "blood sacrifice" and "cleansed with blood"?**
3. **Why were the gifts and sacrifices of the OT worshipper not sufficient to cleanse their guilty consciences?**
* **When you feel guilty, how do you try to cleanse your conscience? *(Ro 3:24-25; Ro 8:33-34; 1 Jn 2:2)***

discuss these things in detail now.

\_\_\_6  When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry.

\_\_\_7  But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

\_\_\_8  The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.

\_\_\_9  This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

\_\_\_10  They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

**The Blood of Christ**

\_\_\_11  When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

\_\_\_12  He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.
\_\_\_13  The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer

sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

\_\_\_14  How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

\_\_\_15  For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

\_\_\_16  In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it,

\_\_\_17  because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.
\_\_\_18  This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.

\_\_\_19  When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.

\_\_\_20  He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."

\_\_\_21  In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.
22  In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *V. 12* – By what means did Christ enter the Most Holy Place? What holy place did He enter?**

**2. *Vs. 13-15* – What is the difference between ceremonial cleansing and the cleansing of Christ?**

**3. *Vs. 19-22* – Why the emphasis on the shedding of blood?**

1. **The phrase “once for all” appears five times in Hebrews *(7:27; 9:12; 9:26; 10:2; 10:10; see also Ro 6:10; 1 Pe 3:18)*. What significance does this phrase have for you? Explain. *(see also 1 Jn 2:2)***
* **Why do you think the author kept emphasizing that Christ’s sacrifice was "once for all"?**
* **What does it mean that Christ fully and completely satisfied God’s wrath over sin and has settled all accounts that all can be right with God?**
1. ***Vs. 9:14 & 10:22* – Discuss the statement: “Christians ought not feel guilty. Guilt suggests that there is an outstanding debt, but there is no longer any debt outstanding. Jesus paid the penalty and all debts have been settled. However, Christians can and ought to feel sorry. Christians are sorry that Jesus had to pay the penalty for sins, although they are glad and grateful that He has.”**

cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

\_\_\_23  It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
\_\_\_24  For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

\_\_\_25  Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

\_\_\_26  Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

\_\_\_27  Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

\_\_\_28  so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

**Hebrews 10:1-39 (NIV)**

**Christ’s Sacrifice Once for All**

\_\_\_1  The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.
\_\_\_2  If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

\_\_\_3  But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins,
\_\_\_4  because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

\_\_\_5  Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;

\_\_\_6  with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.
\_\_\_7  Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'"

\_\_\_8  First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).

\_\_\_9  Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.

\_\_\_10  And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

\_\_\_11  Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

\_\_\_12  But when this priest had offered for all time one

sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.
\_\_\_13  Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,

\_\_\_14  because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

\_\_\_15  The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

\_\_\_16  "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

\_\_\_17  Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

\_\_\_18  And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

**A Call to Persevere**

\_\_\_19  Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

\_\_\_20  by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

\_\_\_21  and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
\_\_\_22  let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

\_\_\_23  Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

\_\_\_24  And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

\_\_\_25  Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

\_\_\_26  If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins

is left,

\_\_\_27  but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

\_\_\_28  Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.
\_\_\_29  How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

\_\_\_30  For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."

\_\_\_31  It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

\_\_\_32  Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering.

\_\_\_33  Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *Vs. 19-20* – What new way(s) of thinking and living does the life, death and resurrection of Jesus offer the world? *(see Mt 5:38-48; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 19:10; Jn 13:34-35; Ro 5:7-8; Ro 12:21; Ro 15:1-2; 1 Cor 1:18-25; 1 Cor 10:24; 2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 4:29,32; 1 Jn 3:16)***

**2. *V. 22* – How do you draw near to God? How do you best connect with God?**

**3. *V. 23* – What causes you to “swerve” in the living out of your faith?**

**4. *V. 24-25* – What does the author encourage in order that we might better live unswervingly?**

**5. *Vs. 26-39* – What consequences can we expect if we fail to respond to God grace?**

those who were so treated.

\_\_\_34  You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.
\_\_\_35  So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

\_\_\_36  You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.
\_\_\_37  For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay.

\_\_\_38  But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."

\_\_\_39  But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

**Hebrews 11:1-40 (NIV)**

**By Faith**

\_\_\_1  Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

\_\_\_2  This is what the ancients were commended for.
\_\_\_3  By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

\_\_\_4  By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

\_\_\_5  By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

\_\_\_6  And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

\_\_\_7  By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

\_\_\_8  By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

\_\_\_9  By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.
\_\_\_10  For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

\_\_\_11  By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

\_\_\_12  And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1.   *V. 1* – How would you define faith? Explain.**

* **What is the greatest example of faith you have seen?**
* **Why or how is faith necessary to function in life (e.g. faith that your next meal is not poisoned, faith that when you get in a car you will not get in an accident)? *(see 2 Cor 5:7)***

**4.   *V. 6* – What role does faith play in approaching and pleasing God? *(see Ro 1:5; Ro 14:23)***

**5.   *V. 7* - What did Noah's faith prompt him to do?**

**6.  *Vs. 8-12* - How did faith affect Abraham's life? *(see Ro 4:18-22)***

**7.  *Vs. 17-19* – What was Abraham greatest demonstration of faith? *(see Gen 22)***

* **Do you think or why do you think the NT writers seem to gloss over Abraham’s struggles with faith*? (see Gen 12:11-20; Gen 15:2-4; Gen 16:1-4; Gen 17:15-18; Gen 20:1-13)***

**8.  *Vs. 24-28* – What hard choices did Moses make because of his faith?**

**9.  *Vs. 32-34* – What were some of the victories enjoyed by faithful Old Testament believers?**

**10.  *Vs. 35-38* – How does this passage disprove the notion that faith always leads to earthly blessing?**

**11.  Why do you think God sometimes leaves us in the dark about His will?**

**12.  What are some examples from your life of both trusting God and doubting Him?**

**13.  Which characters named in this chapter would you most like and least like to trade places with? Why?**

**14.  With what do you need to trust God even though you can't see what the future holds? How can you show this trust?**

\_\_\_13  All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.
\_\_\_14  People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

\_\_\_15  If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.

\_\_\_16  Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

\_\_\_17  By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,

\_\_\_18  even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

\_\_\_19  Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.
\_\_\_20  By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

\_\_\_21  By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

\_\_\_22  By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

\_\_\_23  By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

\_\_\_24  By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

\_\_\_25  He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.
\_\_\_26  He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

\_\_\_27  By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.
\_\_\_28  By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

\_\_\_29  By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

\_\_\_30  By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

\_\_\_31  By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.
\_\_\_32  And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets,

\_\_\_33  who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,

\_\_\_34  quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

\_\_\_35  Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

\_\_\_36  Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.

\_\_\_37  They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated--
\_\_\_38  the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.
\_\_\_39  These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

\_\_\_40  God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

**Hebrews 12:1-29 (NIV)**

**God Disciplines His Sons**

\_\_\_1  Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

\_\_\_2  Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

\_\_\_3  Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
\_\_\_4  In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

\_\_\_5  And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

\_\_\_6  because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

\_\_\_7  Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

\_\_\_8  If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.
\_\_\_9  Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!
\_\_\_10  Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1.   *V. 1* – Who is a Biblical person of faith you greatly admire?**

* **What contemporary person(s) of faith do you admire? To what extent and how do they motivate you in your Christian walk?**
* **Who are your current examples of faith that motivate you?**
1. **What are some things God might want you to “throw off”? What pruning is He doing or wanting to do? *(see Jn 15:1-2)***

**2*.   V. 12:2* – What do you think it means to "fix our eyes"**

* **How is Jesus described in this passage?**
* **What helps you to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus? What hinders you?**
* **Reflect on and discuss the statement: “Fixing our eyes on Jesus does not necessarily remove our problems, it simply enables us to rise above our problems so that they lose their power to defeat us.” *(see Mt 14:25-32; Jn 16:33)***

**6.  *Vs. 5-7* – Why does God disciplines us?**

**7.  *Vs. 9-11* – What is the purpose of godly discipline?**

* **What are some specific ways God might discipline?**
* **What state might your life be in if God neglected to discipline you?**
* **How has God's discipline benefitted you?**

**8.  What step of obedience can you take beginning today to eliminate the need for God to discipline you?**

thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

\_\_\_11  No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

\_\_\_12  Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.
\_\_\_13  "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

**Warning Against Refusing God**

\_\_\_14  Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
\_\_\_15  See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
\_\_\_16  See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.

\_\_\_17  Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

\_\_\_18  You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm;

\_\_\_19  to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them,

\_\_\_20  because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned."

\_\_\_21  The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

\_\_\_22  But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,
\_\_\_23  to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,

\_\_\_24  to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

\_\_\_25  See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

\_\_\_26  At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

\_\_\_27  The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

\_\_\_28  Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *Vs. 14-16* – List the instructions/command God gives us in these verses.**

* **How prevalent is the violation of these instructions in USA culture today? Give examples.**
* **With which of these instructions do you struggle the most?**
* **In regard to these instructions, are your closest friends helping or hindering you. Explain. *(see Heb 10:24-25; Jn 17:15-18)***

**2.   *V. 14* – To what extent are Christians supposed to try to resolve conflicts? *(see Mt 5:9; Ro 12:18)***

* **Holiness is being “set apart for” the purpose of God? To what extent are you living a “holy” life? Explain. What does/would holiness look like?**
* **What roadblocks hinder you in pursuing holiness?**

**3.  What actions do you need to take today so that you can truly say you have made every effort to live a holy life in peace with everyone?**

acceptably with reverence and awe,

\_\_\_29  for our "God is a consuming fire."

**Hebrews 13:1-25 (NIV)**

**Concluding Exhortations**

\_\_\_1  Keep on loving each other as brothers.

\_\_\_2  Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.
\_\_\_3  Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

\_\_\_4  Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

\_\_\_5  Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

\_\_\_6  So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

\_\_\_7  Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

\_\_\_8  Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
\_\_\_9  Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them.

\_\_\_10  We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

\_\_\_11  The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp.

\_\_\_12  And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

\_\_\_13  Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

\_\_\_14  For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

\_\_\_15  Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.
\_\_\_16  And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

\_\_\_17  Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

\_\_\_18  Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

\_\_\_19  I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

\_\_\_20  May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,

**Reflect and Discuss**

**1. *V. 1* – In which of your relationships is this verse particularly important for you to remember? *(see Mt 5:38-44; Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-14; 1 Th 4:9-10; 1 Jn 3:16-18)***

* **Practically speaking, what might this mean or look like?**

**2.   *V. 2* – Do you think or how do you think angels are involved in human affairs? Explain.**

**4.   *V. 3* – What kinds of people does God particularly want us to try to help? *(see Mt 9:11-13; Mt 25:34-40; Ro 15:1-2; Jas 1:27)***

**5.   *V. 4* – How would you define/describe sexual purity and why is it important? *(see Eph 5:3)***

**6.   *V. 5* – What attitude toward money are we to have? Explain. *(see Eph 4:28; 1 Tim 6:9-10; 1 Jn 3:17)***

* **What fact about God can foster a contented spirit? *(see Mt1:23; Mt 28:20; Ro 8:28,38-39)***

**8.  *Vs. 7,17* – How should Christians view those in authority, especially our spiritual leaders? *(Ro 13:1-7; 1 Pe 2:13-18)***

* **Practically speaking, what does this mean for us? What will it actually look like?**
* **V. 17 – What are the benefits of obeying our spiritual leaders?**

**9  *V. 8* – What does it mean to you and for you that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever?**

**10.  *Vs. 9-14* – How do you understand these verses in light of *Ps 51:16-17; Eph 2:8-9; Col 2:16-23*?**

**11.  Vs. 15-16 – What kind of sacrifices does God seek and delight? *(see Ps 51:16-17; Ro 12:1; 1 Jn 4:19-21)***

 **12. *Vs. 20-21* – What did the author pray would happen to his readers? *(see also Eph 2:8-10; Eph 3:14-21; Phil 2:11-12; 2 Tim 3:15-17)***

**13.  Who can and will you encourage to continue walking with Christ? How?**

\_\_\_21  equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

\_\_\_22  Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter.

\_\_\_23  I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

\_\_\_24  Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

\_\_\_25  Grace be with you all.

**Devotional Thoughts and Reflections on Hebrews**

***Heb 1:1-2 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”*** Jesus, You desire a personal, intimate, agape—love/trust relationship with Your creation. While this relationship is meant to be very personal, it is not meant to be private. You would have this relationship be inclusive of all people. To this ends You have sought to communicate with Your people, Your creation, in many and various ways, but Your greatest and most profound communication has been in You, Yourself, becoming incarnate, coming to earth as one of us and through Your Spirit You now indwell us. Theology teaches us “about” You, but it is through Your incarnation and through Your Spirit we really know You in a YADA sense. Through Your Spirit, we experience Your love and Your indwelling presence. Thank You!!! – Jn 1:1-2,14; 1 Cor 2:10-16; 2 Th 2:13; 1 Jn 4:7-8

***Heb 1:3  “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”*** Jesus, You are the exact representation of the Father because You and the Father are God, and You and the Father, along with the Spirit are ONE. – Jn 6:46; Jn 10:30 – As we know You we know GOD. – Jn 1:18 – All things are created, sustained and purified through You, the Word incarnate. – Jn 1:1-3; Jn 1:14; Col 1:15-22 – Jesus, thank You for Your creating me, and for Your recreating me through the power of Your redemptive death and resurrection. – 2 Cor 5:17

***Heb 1:4 “So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”*** Jesus, the epistle to the Hebrews is all about Your superiority. The author will demonstrate Your superiority to angels, to Moses, to the tabernacle/temple, to the Levitical priesthood, to the sacrificial system, to the Sinai Covenant. You are superior because You and You alone are sufficient to satisfy all righteousness, to justify sinners, and to redeem what was lost. I do not have a righteousness of my own, but You have bestowed upon me and upon all who receive You a superior, all-sufficient righteousness—Your righteousness. Thank YOU!!! – 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:8-9; 1 Jn 2:2

***Heb 2:1-4 “We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away…. how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”*** Jesus, it is easy to read the Scriptures regularly and even to believe them, yet not really pay attention to them and to be only minimally affected by them. I read Your word daily and I have memorized large portions of it, but I must confess more often than I would like to admit I can read it as a tasked to do rather than with attentive listening, striving to be molded by what I am reading. Help me to be an increasingly attentive reader, hearer, and RESPONDER. – Ps 119:105; Mt 4:4; Mk 4:9; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Jas 1:22; 1 Jn 3:18

***Heb 2:10-11 “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.”*** Jesus, You are the author of my salvation and You obtained it through choosing to suffer in my place my deserved penalty. – 2 Cor 5:21 – You set things right and You proudly have chosen to call me, undeserving me, brother. WOW!!! Help me to value all people as You value ME and THEM. Help me to love all people even as You have loved ME and THEM. – Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:7-16

***Heb 2:14-15 “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*** Jesus, I sometimes wonder if we do a disservice to the Christmas event, by all our pomp and ceremony. You, God almighty, became incarnate, taking on human flesh in order that You might SUFFER and DIE a horrible death. – Phil 2:5-8 – Yes, Christmas does give us reason to celebrate, and at that 1st Christmas there was a heavenly chorus. – Lk 2:13-14 – You became God’s gift of love for all humankind. In fact, You were the ultimate “love child” conceived as a gift of love for all humanity. Yet, in our celebration, may we never lose sight of the sacrifice involved, the price You paid in becoming one of us. Thank You for Your love. Thank You for Your sacrifice. Thank YOU!!!

***Heb 2:17-18 “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”*** Jesus, knowing that You were and are fully God as well as fully human, it is hard to wrap my mind around the truth that You were tempted just like me. – Heb 4:15 – As hard as it is to wrap my mind around this truth, I do fully believe it. You became like me in every way, except sin. You knew the pains and the temptations of humanity. You suffered as You were tempted, but You remained fully obedient even in death. – Phil 3:5-8 – In Your death You made atonement for my sin and for the sins of all humanity. – Heb 10:10; 1 Jn 2:2 – Thank You for Your faithful obedience. Thank You for Your sacrificial death. Thank You for loving me and all humanity as You do. – Ro 5:7-8 – THANK YOU!!!

***Heb 3:1 “Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.”*** Jesus, the words “holy brothers” refers to all Christians as people who have been “set apart” for Your purposes, the purposes of God. We are encouraged to fix our thoughts on Jesus, upon You (God’s apostle = one who are sent and high priests = intercessors and sacrifices). – Heb 12:2; Ro 3:24-25; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 2:2 – As we fix our eyes on Jesus, upon You, the Spirit works in us a Christ-transformation. – Ro 12:1-2; 2 Cor 2:18; Gal 2:20; Gal 3:27; Gal 4:19; 1 Jn 3:1-2 – As we are increasingly transformed into Your image, a life of love and servanthood become our trademark. – Mk 10:42-45; Jn 13:34-35; Phil 2:3-8; Phil 2:12-13 – Amen, make it so!

***Heb 3:3-6 “Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house…. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house….”*** Jesus, the house Moses built as Your servant was the tribal confederation of Israel, a people of Yahweh God, descendants of Jacob/Israel and his sons. This Israel was a people rooted in and governed by Your Holy Law. It served Your purposes and Your plan to an extent. The house You are building as the incarnate Son is one rooted and governed by Your indwelling through Your Spirit. It physically takes form in and through Your incarnate presence in Your body the church of which all believers in You are a part. It is characterized by Your nature, a nature of grace. – 1 Cor 6:16; Gal 3:23-27; Gal 4:1-7; Gal 5:16 & 18; Eph 1:22-23; Eph 2:21-22 – Increasingly form Yourself in me that I might increasingly become a more fully functional member and servant in Your house/body of which I am a part. – Gal 4:19

***Heb 3:7-9 “So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.’”*** Jesus, this passage reminds me of Mk 4:9 “He who has ears, let him hear” and of Jas 1:22 “Don’t merely be hearers of the Word and so deceive yourself, be doers of the Word.” You do not want me to obey out of fear, but out of faith and trust in You—in Your love, Your wisdom and Your power. – Ro 1:5; 1 Jn 4:18 – Help me to increasingly recognize Your presence and work in my life in order that I might grow in trust and in trust grow in obedience. – 1 Jn 4:19; 1 Jn 5:3-5

***Heb 4:1-3 “Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said….”*** Jesus, we enter Your rest by believing in and trusting in Your completed work on our behalf. At creation You worked for six days and on the seventh day You rested. Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day and their first full day was spent in You as they entered Your rest after the completion of Your creative work. Thank You for Your completed work of both creation and redemption in order that I and all might rest secure in Your grace. Mt 11:28-30; Eph 2:8-9; Tit 3:4-7

***Heb 4:14-16 “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*** Jesus, the times I feel most lonely are not the times when I am alone, but the times I feel no one understands what it is to be me, and the times I feel no one really cares. You, however, fully know and understand me and You care. You became incarnate. You took on flesh. In Your Incarnation You experienced the same needs and temptation I face—You understand. Your incarnation is also a demonstration of how very much You care. You cared enough to enter our world and to become one of us. You cared enough to suffer what we suffer, to suffer even more than we suffer, for You bore the suffering for the sins of all humankind. Thank You Jesus. I know You understand and that You care. I know that I am not alone. – Mt 1:23; Mt 28:20 – Help me to love as You love. To enter the world of the lonely and the hurting. Move me to care. Care through me. – Jn 1:14; Jn 13:34-35; Gal 6:2; 1 Jn 4:19

***Heb 5:1-2 “Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.”*** Jesus, I am weak, prone to temptation and prone to sin. – Ro 3:23; Ro 7:15-25 – That does not give me an excuse to sin for I am also a new creation, recreated in You with You indwelling me. – Ro 6:1-13; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20; 2 Pe 1:3-4 – However, it does provide me with a reason for understanding, empathy, and compassion as I work with sinners like myself. – Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:32 – Jesus, give me Your heart and mind as I work with and interact with others. May I deal and relate with others as You deal and relate with me.

***Heb 5:11-14 “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*** Jesus, as a teacher and leader in the church I need discernment. Give me wisdom as I work with those I seek to teach and to lead. First and foremost, may I teach and lead Your truth and Your will. Second, make me sensitive to the readiness of those with whom I work. Help to not to coddle or pamper people, but help me also not to push people before their readiness. Guide me in appropriately challenging people even as You challenge me. Help us all who are Christians to celebrate where we are in our faith and its expression—our relationship with You, but at the same time to never be satisfied to remain there. Lead me to be an equipper rather than merely a pacifier. – 1 Cor 3:2; Eph 4:11-13; Phil 1:6; Phil 3:12-14; Col 1:28-29

***Heb 6:1-3 “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”*** Jesus, we are tempted to make the point of Christianity being “eternal salvation” so we keep rehearsing the elementary teaching. Receiving You as Savior (saved by grace through faith), however, salvation isn’t the end goal. Salvation is merely the birthing into newness of life. The end goal is Your Kingdom (Your REIGN) whereby You in Your love govern our lives and Your creation here as well as throughout eternity. As we move on toward maturity, we move into teaching what it means and looks like to live as citizens of Your Kingdom here and now. Make this, along with the birthing (salvation), the focus of my teaching. – Mt 3:1-2; Mt 4:17; Mt 6:10 & 33; Mt 10:7-8; Mt 11:12; Mt 12:28; Lk 17:20-21; 2 Tim 3:15-17

***Heb 7:11-19 “If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?…For it is declared: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’ The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.”*** Jesus, You have a superior priesthood through which You offer a superior sacrifice—YOURSELF! Thank You! – Ro 10:3; Gal 2:16,21; Gal 3:11; Gal 5:3-4; 1 Pe 1:18-19; 1 Jn 2:2

***Heb 7:24-25 “but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”*** Jesus, all I can say is that I thank and praise God for You (which is really thanking You for You). You have been, are and always will be there (and here) for me – looking out for me and interceding for me. You intercede not by arguing my merit (I haven’t any). Rather You intercede on the bases of Your merit, on the bases of Your sacrifice on my behalf and on behalf of all humankind. Your merit and Your sacrifice satisfy my lack even as great as my lack is as I bring nothing to the table except debt. I thank You and I praise You both for who You are and for what You have done. – Ro 3:23-25; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 5:16; Eph 2:8-9; Tit 3:4-7; 1 Jn 2:2

***Heb 7:27 “Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”*** Jesus, You were the perfect sacrifice because You had no need to make sacrifice. You never sinned – perfect, without blemish, without fault. Need the best, You gave Your best. You gave Yourself for me and for all humankind. You took upon Yourself my sin in order that I might take upon myself Your righteousness. – 2 Cor 5:21 – I have life because You assumed my death. Thank You. Lead me now to “consider myself dead to sin but alive to God” and to “present myself as alive from the dead and my body as an instrument of righteousness.” – Ro 6:11 & 13

***Heb 8:6-7 “But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.”*** Jesus, things can get a little confusing when one reads Scripture in relationship to a 1st and 2nd covenant or an old covenant and a new covenant. When Paul talks of 1st and 2nd covenant in Gal 3:15-25 he is referring to the covenant with Abraham being a blessing to the nations as the 1st covenant and the covenant with Moses on Sinai as the 2nd covenant. Here the author of Hebrews in talking about the old covenant is referring to the covenant with Moses on Sinai and in talking about a new covenant he is referring to the covenant foretold by Jeremiah in – Jer 31:31-34; see also Heb 8:8-12. – This is a covenant of GRACE in the person and work of Jesus/YOU, as it is communicated and empowered by Your Spirit. The old covenant was not bad, but it was powerless to save, not because of any fault in it, but because of fault/sin in humankind. We/I need GRACE and I thank YOU for it.

***Heb 9:12-14 “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*** Jesus, You were the perfect sacrifice—once or all. By Your sacrifice atonement has been made for all sin—past, present, and future, for the sins of believers and for unbelievers alike. – 1 Jn 2:2 – Unfortunately, unbeliever will not enjoy salvation, not because atonement has not been made for their sin, but because they reject the atonement that has been made. – Mt 12:31 – As atonement has been made, our consciences can be clear because there is no longer any legitimate accusation against us. It is Satan, not You, who is the accuser. Your atonement is meant to mute the accuser’s voice. – Ro 8:33-34 – Help me to listen to Your voice of GRACE and to be Your voice of GRACE for those I encounter. – 2 Cor 5:17-20

***Heb 9:22 & 28 “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness…. so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*** Jesus, through Your sacrifice, through the shedding of Your blood You paid the penalty for every sin of all humankind from the time of the fall to the time of Your 2nd Coming. You have made atonement at a terrible price. Reconciliation has been made and is a reality for those who through faith will receive it. – Jn 1:12-13; 2 Cor 5:21 – You have now commissioned us/me as a messenger of reconciliation. Manifest Your Spirit in me and proclaim Your message through me. – Acts 1:8

***Heb 10:1,8-10 “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship…. First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*** Jesus, the law tells us what needs done, but it is powerless to inspire or empower us to do it. As the perfect law has not been obeyed, atonement needed to made, and it could only be made through blood sacrifice. The blood of animals while pointing to the needed sacrifice, were/are insufficient. Only the sacrifice of one who *needs* no atonement is sufficient to make sacrifice for all those who do need atonement. It can only be made by a perfect human. You were/are the only sufficient sacrifice and in Your sacrifice full atonement has been made. There is no more guilt—that is, there is no longer any outstanding debt. THANK YOU!!! – Gal 2:21; 2 Cor 5:21; Col 2:16-23; 1 Jn 2:2

***Heb 10:19-22 “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus…let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”*** Jesus, Your sacrifice, Your blood gives us confidence to enter Your presence. We are able to do so not on the bases of our merit, but on the bases of Your merit and our redemption. Our consciences are now cleansed through the purification of Your blood. In You we are now righteous, that is, in right relationship with You. Thank You! – Ro 3:24-25; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:8-9; Tit 3:4-7; 1 Pe 1:18-19; 2 Pe 1:3-4

***Heb 10:23 “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”*** Jesus, most of us have heard the line “Trust me. Just trust me.” Frequently, that line can generate distrust, rather than encouraging trust (especially when we hear it from politicians or used car salesmen). Yet, that is also what YOU ask us to do. However, You do not ask us to “trust You” with blind faith. You ask us to trust You on the bases of remembrance and on the bases of Your proven faithfulness. You are the God who was faithfulness in the lives of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. – Ex 3:16 – You are the God who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. – Ex 20:1-2 – You are the God who demonstrated His love by giving His life for sinners. – Ro 5:8 – Help me to remember Your faithfulness through history and help me to recognize and remember Your faithfulness in my personal history. In remembrance and in light of Your demonstrated love and faithfulness, move me to trust and to an obedience of faith. – Ro 1:5; Ro 12:1; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Tim 2:13; 1 Jn 5:3-5

***Heb 10:24 “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”*** Jesus, Luther is attributed to have rightfully said “God doesn’t need our good works, but our neighbor does.” My works have absolutely no impact on my relationship with You. In my relationship with You the only thing that matters is YOUR work in Your suffering and death for me and for all humankind. – Phil 3:8-9; 1 Jn 2:2 – However, our neighbor (that includes anyone and everyone in need – Lk 10:25-37 – does need our works our good deeds. – Gal 6:9-10; Col 4:5; 1 Jn 3:16-18 – You love, therefore, as Your followers, we love. – Jn 13:34-35 – “We cannot love God whom we have not seen, if we don’t love those we have seen.” – 1 Jn 4:19-21 – We are Your hands, feet, ears, and voice in the world today. As You love me, love others through me. – 2 Cor 5:20; Phil 2:12-13

***Heb 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*** Jesus, Christianity is meant to be a religion of “personal” relationship, but it was and is never meant to be private. Christianity, while being personal, is also meant to be communal and public. The one and only fault God found with His creation was that man (Adam) was alone. – Gen 2:18 – We are here not only to have a relationship with You, but also with one another. – 1 Jn 1:1-4 – You have made us one body in order that we might enjoy one another, support one another, encourage one another, doing whatever we can to help one another. – Ro 12:15-16; 1 Cor 12:21-27; Gal 6:1,2,10 – It is for this reason it is important for us to regularly meet together. Make regularly meeting together with other Christians for the purpose of spurring one another on in faith, love and good works a priority in my life. Then move me to actually do the good works. – Ro 1:11-12; Heb 10:24-25; Phil 2:12-13; Jas 1:22; Jas 4:17

***Heb 11:1-3  “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*** Jesus, Hebrews 11 is known as the great faith chapter of the Bible. Different translations express verse 1 a little differently. “Faith is the substance of things hope for…” NKJV Personally, I would translate verse 1 as “Faith is the substantiating of things hope for….” Faith is the means by which Your objective truths are made real in our subjective experience. Your truth is truth regardless of our belief or unbelief. However, Your truth becomes or is made real in our experience through faith. The fact that people are saved by grace is truth regardless of whether or not we believe it, but our salvation by grace become our personal experience when or as we receive it through faith. – Eph 2:8-9 – Theologians talk about this as “objective justification” vs. “subjective justification.” Objectively, Jesus You saved everyone through Your death and resurrection. – 1 Jn 2:2 – Subjectively, only those who believe (receive through faith) will experience the salvation You Jesus have obtained to them. – Jn 3:16; Acts 16:31 – We all walk by faith. – 2 Cor 5:7 – The only question is, “in what do we have faith?” It is not our faith that delivers. Our faith only receives. It is only the object of our faith that can deliver and that object can only fully deliver if our faith is in YOU. – Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12

***Heb 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*** Jesus, You created us in Your image in order that we might have and enjoy a love-trust relationship with You in a way that no other aspect of creation can. – Gen 1:27 – The original sin was distrust in Your love (trusting the suggestion of the serpent instead) which led to the eating to the forbidden fruit. Distrust in Your love broke humankind’s relationship with You. It is through trust in Your love as You incarnate it, that the love-trust relationship for which we were created in Your image is restored. – Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8; Eph 2:8 – You would have everything we do, think and say flow out of trust in You and Your love. – Ro 1:5; Ro 14:23; 1 Jn 5:3-5 – Grow in me such faith, such trust, by renewing me in Your acts of faithfulness! – Ro 12:1-2

***Heb 12:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*** Jesus, chapter 11 is a roll-call of persons of faith in the Old Testament. In Heb 12:1 the author of Hebrews calls us to live by the faith we see demonstrated in the previous chapter. With faith in You—Your will, Your ways, Your love, Your power—we are instructed to throw off anything and everything that would hinder or interfere with our progress and maturing in the life You have in mind for us. It is a life of loving service, a life of loving relationships with You and with others. It is a life that leads to the abundance of Your creative and redemptive design. In faith move and guide me by Your Spirit that I might live a life worthy of my redemption and my calling. – Ro 1:5; Ro 6:11-13; Ro 12:1; Gal 5:25; Eph 4:1

***Heb 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*** Jesus, I love this verse. To fix our eyes, our focus upon You is to fix our eyes on a love (for Your are love incarnate) that has the ability and desire to deliver. It is to fix our eyes on a “CAN DO” God who “is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all I ask or can even imagine.” – Eph 3:20; Jn 16:33; Mt 14:25-33 – The verse also states that You endured the cross because of the “joy set before You.” Elsewhere Scripture tells us You endure that cross for sinners, that is, You endured the cross for the likes of me. – Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8; 1 Tim 1:15 – That makes me and all sinners, all humankind, in spite of our sin, Your joy. The thought of spending eternity with me, with anyone and with everyone gives You joy. It gives You so much joy that, in spite of our sin, You would choose to suffer and die a horrible death in order that we, that everyone who believes, would receive Your sacrificial love and enjoy an eternal, a never-ending relationship with You. – Jn 1:12-13 – Thank You for Your love, for Your sacrifice, and for the life I now have in and with You. – Jn 5:24; 2 Cor 5:17

***Heb 12:3-4 “Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”*** Jesus, You know temptation and suffering to a far greater degree than I do or ever will. I am tempted to the point that I give into it. Then it is no longer temptation, but sin. You never sinned so Your struggle against sin never ended during Your earthly life. – Heb 2:17-18; Heb 4:15-16 – You were opposed by sinful people, yet You loved them, us, me. And You did not grow weary in Your love even though it led to Your crucifixion—Your death. – Ro 5:7-8; Phil 2:5-8 – You did all that for us, for me. But there is even more. Through Your Spirit You now live in me – Gal 2:20 – empowering me, in order that You might live through me for others. – Jn 15:4-5,8; 2 Cor 3:4-6; Gal 6:9-10; Col 1:28-29 – Amen, Jesus! So be it!

***Heb 12:5-7,11 “And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?... No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*** Jesus, it is semantics, but in my mind, as I use the words, there is a difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment, in my mind, focuses on the past. It is done to make someone pay. And it is generally done out of anger. Discipline may be the exact same action, but it is done with a different motive. Discipline’s focus is on the present and the future. Discipline is not done to make a person pay, but to teach and to train them. Discipline is done out of love. Using these definitions, You do not “punish” people because You have already bore all punishment. – Ro 3:24-25; 1 Jn 2:2 – You do, however, discipline us for our good. Thank You for bearing my punishment and for atoning for my sins and the sins of all humankind. And thank You for Your discipline through which You train, prune and refine me. Increasingly transforming me into Your image. – Jn 15:1-8; Ro 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 4:19; Col 1:28-29

***Heb 13:1-4 “Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”*** Jesus, these verses all deal with how we treat others. We are to care for all people as if they were family. This includes strangers—people whom we do not know. – Gal 6:9-10; 1 Jn 4:19-21 – We are to see things from the perspective of others, to empathize with them and to respond accordingly, to respond to them as if we were them. It is as we treat or mistreat others, that we treat and/or mistreat You. – Mt 7:12; Mt 25:34-46; Ro 12:10-16; 1 Jn 4:19-21

***Heb 13:5 “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*** Jesus, we tend to seek to find fulfillment in many “things” – money, fames, physical health, occupation, family members, friends, etc. All of these things are meant to be appreciated and enjoyed as gifts and blessings, but they are not to be sought after as the source of our contentment or fulfillment. We are to seek our contentment and fulfillment in You, in Your love, and in responding to Your will. All else is meaningless, folly, vanity. – Eccl 1:2 – Paul tells us that he learned to be content in whatever his situation or circumstance, because He found His contentment in You—trusting in You and Your love. – Phil 4:11-13 Jesus, may it be so with me.

***Heb 13:16 “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”*** Jesus, Luther has said “God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.” Our salvation and relationship with You is obtained through Your work, not ours. However, our salvation which You freely give us is meant to be played or lived out through us in good works in order that through us others might experience and benefit from Your love. – Gal 5:6; Gal 6:9-10; Eph 2:8-10; Phil 2:12-13; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 10:24 – May others experience You and Your love through me today.

***Heb 13:20-21 “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*** Jesus, it is all YOU. You were/are the Word of creation. – John 1:1-3 – It is You who redeems through Your suffering and death, through Your sacrifice and the shedding of Your blood. – 1 Pe 1:18-19; 1 Jn 2:2 – And it is You through Your Spirit who is at work in us and through us to accomplish Your will. – Jn 15:4-5; 2 Cor 3:4-6; Gal 5:25; Eph 3:20; Phil 2:12-13; Col 1:29; Tit 3:4-7 – Work out Your will in and through me today.