

# HOLINESS REVEALED

GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

Copyright © 2015 by Wesleyan Publishing House  
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

This guide is to be used in conjunction with *Holiness Revealed: A Devotional Study in Hebrews* by Amy Reardon in partnership with The Salvation Army (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015).

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce the contents of this publication for ministry or educational purposes. No portion of this publication may be reproduced for profit without prior written permission of the publisher.

# CONTENTS



About This Guide	4
Week 1. The Incomparable Christ	5
Week 2. The Perfect Rest	7
Week 3. The Real Promise	9
Week 4. The Better Covenant	11
Week 5. The Practical Implications	13
Week 6. The Final Outcome	15

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE



This group leader's guide, based on Amy Reardon's book, *Holiness Revealed*, provides six sessions of interaction with the book of Hebrews. In *Holiness Revealed*, the author combines keen insight and conversational, easy-to-understand writing to help readers learn Hebrews' message about holiness. As you and your group members explore Hebrews for six weeks, you will examine various interpretations of its difficult passages, and you will learn why a holy life is so important, not only to our holy God, but also to daily victory over sin.

Expect six weeks of unforgettable, practical study!

WEEK 1

# THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

HEBREWS 1–2



## TO THE FACILITATOR

Welcome the group members to this opening session of *Holiness Revealed*. Make sure everyone knows everyone else. Perhaps it would be good to have each person introduce themselves.

## FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

The recipients of Hebrews needed to see how preeminent Jesus is and how authoritatively and clearly God communicated through him. So the writer of Hebrews lauded Jesus as the preeminent Son of God, Creator, and Savior.

We cannot identify the writer of Hebrews by name, but we can identify him as a Hebrew Christian. His reference to “our ancestors” (Heb. 1:1) marks him as a Hebrew, and his description of Jesus as Savior in chapter 2 points to him as a Christian.

The Hebrew people held prophets and angels in high regard, but no prophet or angel could compare with Jesus. The prophets conveyed God’s message in Old Testament times, but Jesus presented God’s message not only verbally, but also in the flesh. He declared the Father by what he said and by who he was. He was God in the flesh, and after dying for our sins, he arose and ascended to the Father, where he sat down at the Father’s right hand (vv. 1–4).

God never called an angel his Son, but he declared that Jesus is his Son. Further, he declared his righteous Son is sovereign and eternal. Someday Jesus’ enemies will be his footstool (vv. 5–14).

Having emphasized that God communicated through Jesus in “these last days” (v. 2) and declared Jesus’ preeminence as God’s Son, the creator and sustainer of all things and the sovereign

Lord, the writer warned his readers not to ignore the perfect salvation Jesus provided. He urged them not to drift away. Knowing the message delivered by angels carried punishment for those who disobeyed it, the Hebrews needed to realize the necessity of heeding and guarding the message of salvation that God confirmed so clearly (Heb. 2:1–4).

In *Holiness Revealed*, Amy Reardon raises a serious concern about drifting. She says, “It is not new that Christians are vulnerable to drifting. But twenty-first-century drifting may get us off course further than ever before, because now we live in an environment that is ceasing to make reference to God at all. . . . We cannot afford to be careless with the gospel, or we will soon convince ourselves there is no need for it. How long will it take for Christianity to be nothing more than a sentimental relic?” (p. 44).

Continuing his plea for his readers to stay focused on Jesus as the incomparable Son of God, the writer of Hebrews alluded to Jesus’ right to receive glory and honor. He became human and died to make us holy members of God’s family. He destroyed the Devil’s power, and serves as our faithful High Priest. He successfully endured temptation, and is able to help those who are tempted (vv. 5–18).

## FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Read John 1:18. How did Jesus make God known?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is “the exact representation” of the Father (Heb. 1:3)?
3. How would you refute the argument that Jesus is not the Son of God but only a son of God?
4. Why do you agree or disagree that people sometimes honor angels unduly?
5. How do angels “serve those who will inherit salvation” (1:14)?
6. How might a believer ignore salvation?
7. What is so subtle about drifting away from the message of salvation?
8. Why was Jesus made a little lower than the angels? Why did he submit to that humiliation?
9. How has Jesus helped you triumph over temptation?

## WRAP-UP

Conclude this session by having the group read or sing “Fairest Lord Jesus.”

WEEK 2

## THE PERFECT REST

HEBREWS 3–5



### TO THE FACILITATOR

If your group members are typical adults, they must feel overworked and under rested. Tell them this session focuses on rest—the kind of rest God provides and doesn’t want anyone to miss.

### FOCUS ON GOD’S WORD

Jesus is God’s Son and the owner and builder of the church. As members of his house, the Hebrews were exhorted to fix their thoughts on Jesus, hold on to their courage, and retain their hope (Heb. 3:1–6). Apparently, the Hebrews were tempted to abandon their hope of the eternal, but unseen, things Jesus had provided for them in favor of returning to the visible things found in Judaism.

The writer of Hebrews issued a strong warning not to harden their hearts and turn away from God. Their forefathers in the wilderness incurred God’s anger by refusing to enter the Promised Land. Although those who spied the land showed clear evidence that it was abundantly fruitful, the Israelites heeded the recommendation of the majority of the spies that they not enter the land. Only Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people to believe God and enter it. So that generation of unbelieving Israelites died in the wilderness. The readers of Hebrews were admonished to reject unbelief and hardness of heart so they would not stop short of the rest provided by Christ (3:7–4:5).

Regarding this rest, Amy Reardon comments, “We’ve seen that everything Christ offers is newer, fuller, better. He is the better mediator of a superior covenant. And so, while the rest offered to the Israelites was earthly, the rest offered to us goes beyond that. Through Christ, we can enter into God’s eternal rest” (*Holiness Revealed*, p. 75).

After God created all things, he rested. All who enter God's rest have obeyed God's Word, and no one can fool God's Word. It penetrates the mind and heart, so that God knows who has believed and who has not (vv. 6–13).

Encouragement to obey God's Word and to enter into his rest comes from knowing we have a sympathizing High Priest in heaven. He was tempted as we are, but he overcame every temptation, and is available to receive our prayers. If we take our concerns to him, he will respond with mercy and grace to help (vv. 14–16).

Every year in Israel's history, the high priest offered sacrifices for his own sins and those of the people, but Jesus is a superior High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He obediently submitted to the Father's will by dying for our sins. He is the source of eternal salvation for all who exercise obedient faith in him (Heb. 5:1–10). The writer of Hebrews wanted to write more about Jesus' high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, but his readers had not advanced far enough spiritually to absorb it. They were stuck in elementary teachings (5:11–6:3).

## FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. What image do you think comes to people's minds most often when they hear the term *eternal rest*? Why do you agree or disagree that this image is accurate?
2. Why is Jesus worthy of a greater honor than Moses?
3. Why do you agree or disagree that God's house is not a building but a body of Christians?
4. Is it necessary that believers exercise courage today? Why or why not?
5. Read Hebrews 3:13. How does the deceitfulness of sin harden the heart?
6. Read Hebrews 4:3. In what sense have believers already entered into God's rest?
7. How does the Word of God resemble a two-edged sword (4:12)?
8. How does prayer addressed to our High Priest alleviate anxiety?
9. Why do you agree or disagree that most Christians have not progressed beyond elementary biblical teachings?
10. What might encourage believers to advance in the knowledge of "the truths of God's word" (5:12)?

## WRAP-UP

Close with a brief prayer session. Ask for prayer requests. List the requests on a chalkboard or whiteboard, and have volunteers carry the requests to the throne of grace in prayer.

## WEEK 3

# THE REAL PROMISE

## HEBREWS 6–8



### TO THE FACILITATOR

Ask the group members to remember a broken promise they received in their childhood. Have a volunteer read aloud Hebrews 6:17. Explain that this session focuses on what God promised to his heirs and confirmed with an oath.

### FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

Hebrews 6:4–6 is a challenging passage, and it has received various interpretations. In *Holiness Revealed*, Amy Reardon comments, “If we have not found enough controversy yet in Hebrews, we’ve found it now. Here are people who cannot be ‘brought back to repentance’ (v. 6). Many scholars find this passage terribly problematic and are unable to come to a conclusion as to its meaning” (p. 96). However, in spite of the controversy, we can accept this passage as a clear warning to welcome and obey God’s Word. Like rain falling on farmland, God’s Word produces a useful crop in the lives of those who drink it in. But those who reject God’s Word produce only worthless thorns and thistles in their lives (vv. 4–8).

The writer of Hebrews expressed confidence in his readers but urged them to remain diligent in their faith. Instead of becoming lazy, they needed to imitate those who practiced faith and patience and inherited the promises (vv. 9–12).

It is impossible for God to lie. He took an oath to keep his promise to Abraham. Being assured that God will keep his promises to us, we have a hope that is secure in Jesus, who is our High Priest in heaven (vv. 13–20).

Some first-century Hebrews might have questioned how Jesus could be the believers' High Priest, because he was not a descendant of Levi. However, none of the Levitical priests were perfect. But Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. Every Aaronic (Levitical) priest died and therefore was unable to continue in office, but Jesus lives forever and offers a better covenant than the covenant of law under which the Aaronic priests served. Because Jesus lives forever, he is able to save to completely those who come to God through him. He lives to intercede for them (vv. 21–25).

As the sinless Savior, Jesus offered himself once and for all as the sacrifice for our sins, and then he sat down on the right hand of God (7:26—8:1).

Moses built a tabernacle that was temporary. It served as a shadow of what is in heaven. He also introduced the covenant of law that was temporary. Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant that writes God's laws in the hearts and minds of his people. God, who made the first covenant, dissolved it and called it obsolete. The new covenant is better than the old (vv. 2–13).

## FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Why do you agree or disagree that Hebrews 6:4–6 describes lost people who were saved but then turned away from God?
2. How does it encourage you to know it is impossible for God to lie?
3. How would you describe a lazy faith?
4. How does the Christian's hope differ from the kind of hope an unbeliever might have?
5. What similarities do you see between Melchizedek and Jesus?
6. What does it mean to you that Jesus saves completely?
7. How has your life been enriched by knowing Jesus is a High Priest who lives forever?
8. What promises has God given you that enable you to face life's challenges?

## WRAP-UP

Ask volunteers to complete the following sentence: "Because Jesus is my High Priest who lives forever . . ."

WEEK 4

## THE BETTER COVENANT

HEBREWS 9:1—10:18



### TO THE FACILITATOR

Your group is familiar with various contracts. Perhaps they have all signed a contract on a car or house. Tell them some contracts are better than others. They may include better terms or benefits. This session looks at the contract or covenant Jesus introduced and sealed with his blood.

### FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

The old covenant, under which the people of Israel lived in Old Testament times, involved a tabernacle (later a temple), priesthood, and sacrifices. Moses oversaw the construction of the tabernacle so that it was built and furnished exactly as God had instructed. It consisted of a courtyard and two tents or rooms. The first room, called the Holy Place, housed a lampstand, and a table on which twelve loaves of bread were placed weekly. A curtain separated the Holy Place from the second room, called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. The altar of incense and the ark of the covenant stood in the Most Holy Place, and only Israel's high priest could enter the Most Holy Place—once a year with blood to atone for the people's sins of ignorance and his own sins. However, this annual offering of blood could never clear the conscience. Everything associated with Old Testament worship simply prefigured what was to come—the new covenant (Heb. 9:1–10).

Christ served as our High Priest. He offered his blood for our sins so that we might be cleansed to serve the living God. His death ushered in a better covenant, and he is now our perfect representative in heaven. He will appear a second time, not to bear our sins, but to finalize our salvation, freeing us forever from the presence of sin (vv. 11–28; compare 1 John 3:2).

The writer of Hebrews reviewed a few major points in Hebrews 10. He pointed out again that the law was only a shadow of good things to come. It was impossible for the annual Old Testament sacrifices to take away sins, but Jesus' one sacrifice for sins was sufficient to make us holy. After providing the perfect sacrifice, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:1–14).

Based on Jesus' sacrifice, God established the new covenant in which he has placed his laws in our hearts and minds. He will never remember our offenses again, and he will no longer require a sacrifice for sins (vv. 15–18).

## FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Why do you agree or disagree that the new covenant is better than the old?
2. How does the ark of the covenant picture Christ and/or his priestly ministry?
3. How would you worship God if you could no longer worship in a church building?
4. Why is Jesus a better High Priest than all the high priests who ministered under the old covenant?
5. How completely does the blood of Christ cleanse believing sinners? Defend your answer.
6. How did the following emphasize God's holiness and human sinfulness: the role of Israel's high priest on the Day of Atonement, the curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, and the sacrifices?
7. Hebrews 10:18 declares there is no longer any sacrifice for sin, but what kinds of sacrifices do some people today try to offer for their sins?
8. How does it encourage you to know that someday Jesus' enemies will become his footstool?
9. In addition to offering verbal praise to Jesus for dying for you, how else can you show him your appreciation?

## WRAP-UP

Ask volunteers to quote or read Scripture verses that refer to Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. Conclude this session by having the group read or sing "Nothing but the Blood."

## WEEK 5

# THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

HEBREWS 10:19—11:31



### TO THE FACILITATOR

The New Testament Epistles often follow doctrinal teaching with exhortations about holy living. The letter to the Hebrews is an example of this structure. Beginning with Hebrews 10:19, the writer presents the practical implications of the teachings he presented. This session focuses on very practical matters.

### FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

Jesus opened the way to God's presence, where he serves as our Great High Priest. Knowing these truths, we ought to draw near to God with a sincere, cleansed heart and confident faith. We ought to guard our hope and motivate others to show love and perform good deeds. Furthermore, we ought to keep assembling for worship and encourage our fellow believers (Heb. 10:10–25).

The writer of Hebrews warned his readers about the consequences of deliberate, habitual sinning. This kind of lifestyle insults the Savior's sacrificial blood and invites God's wrath (vv. 26–31).

The Hebrews had stood strong by faith when persecution struck them in the early days of their Christian life. Now was no time to cast aside their confidence. God promised that in a little while he would reward those who persevere with confidence but destroy those who shrink back (vv. 32–39).

We cannot see the promised reward, but we reach for it by faith, which the writer of Hebrews identifies as confidence in what we cannot see. We did not see God create the earth, but we believe he did it *ex nihilo*, out of nothing.

A list of men and women who exercised faith appears in Hebrews 11. Abel, Enoch, and Noah receive mention. Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, is commended for his faith. He obeyed God's call to leave his homeland and go to an unrevealed location. By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise, fathered Isaac when he was elderly, and offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He knew God's promises depended upon Isaac's being alive and providing descendants, so he believed if Isaac died God would raise him from the dead (vv. 4–19).

Along with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, Moses, too, exercised faith. He renounced prestige, sinful pleasure, and the treasures of Egypt to identify with the Israelite slaves and lead them out of Egypt after keeping the Passover by faith. By faith he saw the invisible (God) and did the impossible (crossed the Red Sea dry-shod). Rahab, the prostitute, also was a hero of faith. She provided sanctuary for the two men Joshua sent to spy out Jericho (vv. 20–31).

## FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. Jesus opened the way to God for us. How would you answer the assertion that there are many ways to God?
2. How has a fellow believer encouraged you?
3. Why should believers attend church?
4. In *Holiness Revealed*, Amy Reardon comments, "Don't be afraid. The salvation you received when you first claimed the blood of Jesus is not hanging by a thread" (p. 182). Why do you agree or disagree with this comment?
5. If a young child asked you what faith is, what would you say?
6. By faith, Christians believe God created the world. Do you think it takes faith to believe the world evolved? Why or why not?
7. What has been the most difficult challenge to your faith? How did you meet that challenge?
8. Do you think faith requires Christians to give up anything? If so, what does it require us to give up?
9. How has God rewarded your faith?

## WRAP-UP

Have volunteers tell what they think they and their fellow Christians should attempt this week by faith. Read or sing "Faith Is the Victory."

WEEK 6

## THE FINAL OUTCOME

HEBREWS 11:32—13:25



### TO THE FACILITATOR

Remind the group that holiness is more than a theological concept. It is tangible. It reveals itself in our lifestyles. When holiness shows in the way we live, it demonstrates our faith in and love for the Lord. Tell the group this final session zeroes-in on daily living.

### FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

This session discusses heroes of the faith who witnessed God's faithfulness and power when they faced enormous challenges (Heb. 11:32–40). Although they did not see the fulfillment of what God had promised, ultimately they will join us in receiving something better that God has planned (vv. 39–40). The faith of those men and women mentioned in Hebrews 11:32–38 inspires us to finish our race with faith, faith that translates into daily actions that honor God and bless others.

The many faithful witnesses encourage us to persevere, but it also encourages us to understand how much Jesus loves us, what he endured for us, and the fact that he lives for us. He endured the insults and wicked actions of sinful men, and we should recognize that God may use similar opposition to discipline us, his children, so that we may share in his holiness and reap a harvest of righteousness (Heb. 12:1–13).

As we share God's holiness and become righteous, our lives will overflow with these attributes. We will try to get along with our fellow believers. We will avoid sexual immorality and covetousness (vv. 14–17).

Under the old covenant, Israel could not approach God directly without encountering death, but we come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, his angels, believers of the past, and Jesus, who mediated a new covenant by shedding his blood (vv. 18–24). We can anticipate a blessed future in the New Jerusalem. In view of this blessed future, we ought to be thankful and worship God with reverence and awe (vv. 25–28).

As God’s holy people, we ought to love one another, show hospitality, and remember those who are in prison or being mistreated (13:1–3).

Our marriages should be pure, and our lives should be free of greed. We ought to depend upon God to meet our needs. Further, we ought to respect our spiritual leaders and follow their example. We must reject false teaching, stand with Jesus in spite of being ostracized by society (vv. 4–14).

Praise should be our continual sacrifice. We should practice kindness and charity, obey our leaders, and pray for them (vv. 15–18). The writer of Hebrews requested prayer for himself. He wanted to lead a holy life and once again be in the presence of his readers.

The epistle closes with a benediction, a plea to heed the message of Hebrews, news of Timothy’s release, greetings from believers in Italy, and a final benediction of grace (vv. 19–25). It is appropriate this epistle that includes so many exhortations and warnings ends with the mention of grace. Without God’s grace, a holy life would be impossible.

## FOCUS ON LIFE

Discuss the following with your group.

1. How has someone you know proved to be a hero of the faith?
2. Why do you agree or disagree that faith and wealth are mutually exclusive?
3. How will life in heaven be better than your present life?
4. Amy Reardon interprets “sin” in Hebrews 12:4 as “people who wish to defame and harm believers” (*Holiness Revealed*, p. 202). Why do you agree or disagree with her interpretation?
5. How has the Lord used a mean person to discipline you or someone you know?
6. How might a believer keep bitterness from taking root in his or her life?
7. How can a couple protect their marriage from evil influences?
8. Why do you agree or disagree that persecution of Christians will intensify in Western nations?
9. How might believers bring joy to their spiritual leaders?

## WRAP-UP

Have volunteers tell what they have gained from the study of *Holiness Revealed*. What significant truths will they apply to their lives?