

Bible Study Guide for

Exploring
Hebrews

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The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of all facts and quotations as cited in this book.

This study guide has been specifically developed to be used in conjunction with *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*, written by George R. Knight and published by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's own and appear in *Exploring Hebrews*.

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How to Use This Study Guide

Bible study is a great adventure into the world's most influential book. This study guide will help you in your exploration of the Epistle to the Hebrews. You can use it for individual study or it can form the basis for group study and discussion.

Each of the 13 lessons in this study guide divides into four sections. The first, "Learning From Hebrews Itself" employs an inductive approach to Bible study. Inductive study learns through personal discovery rather than just accepting what someone else says. This first section will lead you to determine the meaning of the Bible through your own examination of a scriptural passage. That is, it asks questions that will guide you as you search the text for the answers.

The second section, "Learning With Bible Study Tools," enables you to gain insight through the use of basic aids to Bible study. The three aids utilized are marginal references, a Bible dictionary, and a concordance. These simple tools can benefit your Bible study in many ways.

I would encourage you to obtain at least one Bible with marginal references. But two (featuring different translations) would be better. It is best to use a translation for your study (such as the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, or the New International Version) rather than a paraphrase (such as the Living Bible). A second tool that every Bible student should own is a good Bible dictionary, such as the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* or its equivalent. A third basic tool is a concordance. *Cruden's Concordance* is helpful, but you will find that such volumes as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* or the *NIV Exhaustive Concordance* are easier to use and much more rewarding in what they can teach you.

If you do not have all (or any) of these study helps you can still do the other three parts of the lesson. I would suggest, however, that these small purchases will be some of the most important that you can make. Over time they will greatly enrich your study of God's word.

The third section of this study guide, "Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*," is specifically linked to a devotional commentary that will not only help you understand the Bible better, but will aid you in applying its message to your personal life.

The fourth section, "Learning Through Application," provides you with the opportunity to discover what each Bible passage means to your personal life. Here, so to speak, is where the rubber hits the road. The Bible's authors never intended it to be a book of abstract theology. Rather God inspired them to write it to "instruct you for salvation" and for it to be "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17, RSV).

May God bless you in your study of the most important book you will ever study. Bible study will change your life.

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Lesson One

Hebrews: A Bird's-Eye View

You are about to begin studying one of the most important books in the Bible. One of the best ways to begin is to read through Hebrews in one sitting from a translation such as the New International Version, the Revised Standard, the New Revised Standard Version, or the King James Version. A first reading should take about one hour. Answering the questions in section A will add an additional half hour or so.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. First Impressions

When you complete each chapter on your initial reading, jot down in two or three sentences what you think the author seeks to teach you in that chapter.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

Chapter 7:

Chapter 8:

Chapter 9:

Chapter 10:

Chapter 11:

Chapter 12:

Chapter 13:

B. Now that you have read the Epistle to the Hebrews, write out your impressions of the book as a whole.

C. What kind of a document is Hebrews?

1. Read Hebrews 1:1-4. Do these verses sound like the introduction to a letter? Why or why not? (You may want to compare the introductory verses of Hebrews with those of 1 Corinthians or Philippians.)

2. Read Hebrews 13:20-25. Do the verses remind you of the conclusion to a letter? Why or why not? Compare those verses with the final verses of one or two of Paul's letters, such as 1 Corinthians or Philippians. What similarities and/or differences do you find?

3. What we have in Hebrews is a document that closes like a letter but opens like a sermon. How does Hebrews 13:22 describe the book that we call Hebrews?

(Perhaps it is best to think of Hebrews as a “word of exhortation” that began as a sermon but later circulated in the form of a letter.)

4. You will find practical exhortations throughout Hebrews. The first one appears in 2:1-4. This Bible book alternates between theological explanations and practical exhortations, the latter flowing out of and building upon the former. Thus Hebrews is two things at the same time:

- a. A book with deep theology.
- b. But a book that seeks to apply the implications of that theology to our daily lives.

II. Learning Through Bible Study Tools

Read the article on the Epistle to Hebrews in a Bible dictionary, such as the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* or one of the many other Bible dictionaries. List the things that you find in it that have enriched your understanding of Hebrews.

III. Learning Through *Exploring Hebrews*

Read the “Introduction to the Book of Hebrews” (pp. 13-25). On the basis of your reading:

A. Provide a one-sentence statement on the purpose of Hebrews.

B. List the six major themes of the epistle.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

- C. What does Hebrews say about its author?
- D. What can we determine about the first-century audience of Hebrews?
- E. What is the probable date for the writing of Hebrews? _____ Why choose that particular date?
- F. In two or three sentences indicate the relevance of the Epistle to Hebrews to our lives in the twenty-first century.

IV. Learning Through Application

You have now read through the entire Epistle to the Hebrews. List and discuss what you see as the three most important teachings this Bible book has for your daily life.

A.

B.

C.

Lesson Two

Jesus: The Divine Human

Hebrews 1:1-2:18

The biblical author wrote the book of Hebrews to encourage a group of Jewish Christians who had passed through the first excitement of being believers but then faced hard times, even persecution. They felt alone and thought that perhaps they had made a mistake and should have stayed with Judaism and its Temple, priesthood, and “security.” As a result, some of them had quit attending church (10:25) or even felt tempted to give up their new faith (6:4-6) and to reject what Christ had done for them (10:26-31).

The writer of Hebrews seeks to turn these people around. He wants them to see the greatness of Christ and that His way is the very best. Most of all, the author desires to restore their faith so that they might have full assurance (10:22) of their salvation.

With those thoughts in mind, we need to closely study the first two chapters of this carefully crafted document. At this point it will be helpful to read Hebrews 1, 2.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 1:1-4

1. Paraphrase or summarize the meaning of these verses in your own words.

2. Jesus is God’s most complete Word, or revelation, to humanity. As such, Hebrews 2:1 tells us that we need to listen carefully to what we have heard about Him. But why should we listen to Him or about Him? Hebrews 1:1, 2 begins to answer that question. For one thing, His revelation is better than that of the prophets. But why is it better? In response, verses 2 and 3 present seven items related to Christ’s superiority. Examine those two verses carefully and list those seven items.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.
- g.

3. How should those seven characteristics strengthen the faith of the spiritually wavering recipients of Hebrews?

4. What does verse 3 imply about the relationship of Jesus and God? What makes you think that?

B. Hebrews 1:4-14

1. These are not the easiest verses in Hebrews to understand. But do your best to paraphrase and/or summarize their meaning.

2. You will find the key to unlocking the meaning of this passage in verses 4 and 14. What do they say about the angels? What do they tell us about Jesus and/or what He accomplished?

3. Now go back and trace the contrasts between Christ and the angels in verses 5-13. What do they tell us about Jesus? How does He differ from the angels?

4. List those phrases (and identify them by verse) in 1:4-14 that state or infer that Jesus is God.

5. Write out the verse that promises ultimate victory to Jesus.

C. Hebrews 2:1-4

1. Paraphrase or summarize the meaning of these verses.

2. What is the problem presented in these verses? What is the author afraid will happen to the book's readers? What is the solution they need to follow?

D. Hebrews 2:5-9

1. Summarize or paraphrase the meaning of this passage.

2. What does this passage have to say about the victory of Jesus?

E. Hebrews 2:10-18

1. Paraphrase or summarize the meaning of this passage.

2. What do these verses tell us about Jesus' relationship with human beings? In what ways do they indicate that He is like us? In what ways do they infer that He is different from us?

II. Learning Through Bible Study Tools**A. Through the use of your Bible's marginal references answer the following questions.**

1. What New Testament texts in addition to Hebrews 1:2 tell us that Jesus was the Creator? (Hint: You will need to use the marginal references to 1:2 to get started, but you may also have to consult the marginal notes in some of the additional passages referred to in 1:2 to get the full answer.) Write out those texts and give the reference to each.

2. Where in the Old Testament does the quotation in Hebrews 1:5 come from?

3. What is the source for the long quotation found in Hebrews 2:6-8? Carefully compare the quotation in Hebrews with its source in the Old Testament. You will find a shocking difference between the New and the Old Testament versions. What is it? The New Testament says that humanity was _____ while the Old Testament declares that _____. That difference is in all accurate translations and occurs in the original languages. We will study it further below under the "Learning Through Using *Exploring Hebrews*" section.

B. Through the use of a concordance list every text in Hebrews that speaks of Jesus as a high priest.

C. Read each of those texts and write two or three sentences on the impact of their message for your life.

III. Learning Through Using *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 1-7 (pp. 29-58) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

A. Section 1 highlights the parallels between the opening verses of Hebrews and those of Genesis.

1. What are the key elements in that parallelism?

2. What significance do you see in that parallelism?

B. Section 2 points out the fact that one of the key words in Hebrews is “better.”

1. What seven things do those connected with Jesus have that are better:

a.

- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.
- g.

2. Read the texts connected with those seven “betters” and write out a possible reason why the author pounds home the “betterness” of Christianity.

C. Summarize the four lines of argument indicated in section 3 that demonstrate that Christ has a higher place than any angel.

D. According to section 4, why should we listen to Jesus? What is at stake?

E. As you noted in the Bible tools section above, Hebrews 2:7 presents a problem in that it says that God created humans “a little lower than the angels” (RSV), while Psalm 8:5 has “God” instead of angels. List the two points noted in section 5 that help us to understand the difference.

F. According to section 6, if Jesus was sinless, in what way was He perfected?

G. What are the main implications of the discussion in section 7 regarding Jesus' victory over "the one having the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14)?

IV. Learning Through Application

1. I have now studied two chapters of Hebrews. What does it mean for my Christian experience that Jesus is God?

2. What significance does it have for my experience that He is also human?

3. What relevance does it have that He is both divine and human?

4. In what ways do I think the information in Hebrews 1, 2 should have strengthened the faith of those teetering on the brink of rejecting Christ and going back to Judaism?

5. How should that same information help those of us who struggle in today's secular culture with the temptation to "give it all up" for the manifold "joys" lurking everywhere in the world around us?

Lesson Three

Jesus: The Better Leader

Hebrews 3:1-19

In Hebrews 1 and 2 we discovered who Jesus is—that He is both divine and human, that He is both God (1:8) and one of us (2:14-17). Because of His unique identity He can bridge the gap between God and sinful humanity. Or, to put it another way, He is qualified to become “a merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17). As we noted in our last assignment, the image of Jesus as our high priest will dominate the entire Epistle to the Hebrews.

Another image that will flow through the book of Hebrews is one first raised in Hebrews 2:10—that Jesus is the “pioneer” of our salvation. The idea here is that Jesus is the leader, the one who breaks the path and shows what direction those journeying, like Abraham, must take to reach that heavenly city whose “builder and maker is God” (11:16, 10).

The fact that Jesus is a pioneer in the pathway to the kingdom implies that He is a leader. Chapters 3 and 4 take up that topic and demonstrate that Christ is a better leader than either Moses or Joshua. He will eventually guide His people into the heavenly rest of the kingdom (4:8, 9). At this point it will be helpful to read all of Hebrews 3.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself.

Hebrews 3 consists of 3 paragraphs. We will now look at each one.

A. Hebrews 3:1-6. Read these six verses again carefully.

1. In your own words summarize what Hebrews is saying.

2. The point is clear. Jesus is greater than _____, just as the builder of a house is greater than a _____. Therefore, Jesus deserves more _____.

3. What do you think the author means in 3:6 when he says we are God’s house?

B. Hebrews 3:7-11.

1. Read and summarize the meaning of those 5 verses in your own words.

2. What is the “rebellion” of 3:8? That verse is a quotation from Psalm 95:7, which in turn refers to the events of Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:1-3. Be sure to read all of those texts before you formulate your answer to this question.

3. What is the “rest” of 3:11?

C. Hebrews 3:12-19

1. Read those verses and summarize their meaning in your own words.

2. What key word(s) do you find in both verses 12 and 19? _____ How did that attitude affect the future of those who held it?

3. If unbelief was central to their problem, what is the opposite attitude that you find highlighted in verse 14? _____

4. In those two words in verse 14 we have a major key to understanding Hebrews. The author is contrasting those who have faith in the unseen God (11:1-3) with those who are wavering in their confidence and their Christian walk (2:1; 10:25).

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

A. Did you notice that Hebrews 3:1 calls Jesus an apostle? How can that be? Isn't Jesus the one who has disciples who are eventually called apostles?

Use a Bible dictionary to answer the following questions.

1. What is the basic meaning of the word apostle?

2. If that definition is true, then on what basis can Jesus as God (1:8) be called an apostle?

B. The Old Testament viewed Moses as Israel's greatest leader. Not only did he lead the Exodus, he also received the Ten Commandments from God. Thus he was even greater than the prophets. Use your marginal references to explore that last idea. (Hint: just in case your Bible doesn't have it listed, read Numbers 12:6-8.)

1. In what ways is Moses superior to the prophets?

2. What word do you find in both Hebrews 3:5 and Numbers 12:7? _____ How do the ideas in those two verses relate to one another?

C. Use a concordance to discover all the uses of the word “rest” in Hebrews 3 and 4.

1. List the reference for each usage and the number of times each verse employs the word.
2. Read each of those verses (in context if you prefer). Do all these verses speak about the same type of rest? _____ List the types of rest that you have identified.
3. Before we go any further in our study, briefly discuss what the author is trying to tell us through the multiplied use of “rest.” (Don’t worry if your answer isn’t as clear as you would like it. We will return to the concept of “rest” in Lesson Four.)

D. Use the marginal references to Hebrews 3:18 to find out where in the Old Testament God swore to the Israelites that they would never enter His rest. It appears in _____. Read that entire Old Testament chapter.

1. Summarize its events.
2. Note that Hebrews 3:19 says that the Israelites were “unable” to enter. Compare verses 39-45 in our Old Testament passage and discuss how the Old Testament passage helps us understand the idea of “unable.”

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 8-10 (pp. 61-72) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

- A. How does section 8 help us more fully understand the phrase “consider Jesus” in Hebrews 3:1?
- B. Section 8 also enables us to grasp the meaning of *Pontifex Maximus*. What is a *Pontifex Maximus* and what significance does the idea have for my life?
- C. List and briefly discuss the three lessons that can be learned in section 9 from the warning of Hebrews 3:7-11.
- D. Summarize what section 9 has to tell us about God’s “wrath.”
- E. Discuss what section 10 teaches about the implications of “today.”

IV. Learning Through Application

A. In my personal life how can I more fully consider Jesus?

B. What meaning does the teaching of Hebrews 3 on “today” have for my life?

C. Why is it important to me that Jesus is greater than Moses?

Lesson Four

Jesus: The Better Rest

Hebrews 4:1-13

Our adventure continues as we begin the study of Hebrews 4. Chapters 1 and 2, as you recall, helped us realize who Jesus is. He is both God (chapter 1) and also one of us (that is, a human being, chapter 2). Thus He is qualified to be our high priest because He can bridge the gap between God and sinners (2:17, 18).

Chapter 3 introduced us to Jesus as a leader who was greater than Moses and in Hebrews 4:1-13 we discover that He is also greater than Joshua. Just as those leaders guided Israel on their Exodus pilgrimage, so it is that Jesus is the leader who will take His people into the kingdom of heaven, the ultimate rest for God's people.

That word "rest" is important in Hebrews 4. Whereas chapter 3 began to discuss the Exodus generation and the rest they expected at the end of their journey, chapter 4 will expound upon the concept of rest and begin to explore its wider meanings and implications. With that in mind it is time to carefully read Hebrews 4:1-13.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself.

As usual, we will examine the passage paragraph by paragraph.

A. Hebrews 4:1-5

1. Summarize in your own words the message of this passage.
2. What do you think the word "rest" is referring to in 4:1?
3. What does it refer to in 4:3 and 5?
4. What does rest refer to in 4:4?
5. Keep your eyes on the word "rest" in this passage and your mind on its various meanings.

B. Hebrews 4:6-10

1. Summarize in your own words the message of this passage.
2. In 4:6 who never entered because of disobedience?
3. Who is David appealing to in verse 7?
4. In reference to verse 8 there is a sense in which Joshua gave Israel rest when he took the nation into the Promised Land. But there is still another rest beyond the Canaan one, a great rest spoken of as “another day” (verse 8) or the rest that remains to be given (verse 9). What is the rest that is even greater than the Canaan rest?
5. What are the implications of the use of rest in verse 10?

C. Hebrews 4:11-13

1. Summarize these verses in your own words.

2. What is the rest of verse 11 that God's people are seeking to enter?

3. What has the judgment scene of verses 12 and 13 got to do with entering God's rest? How does judgment fit into the context of Hebrews 3, 4?

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

A. "Faith" is the key to success (and failure) in Hebrews 4:2.

1. Use your concordance to find every reference to faith in Hebrews. Write down the references.

2. Now read each passage and provide a one-sentence summary of the role of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

B. Compare Hebrews 4:6, 11 in a modern translation (including the one in *Exploring Hebrews*) and the King James Version. Here we find a major difference in one word. Whereas modern translations in verse 6 say they failed to enter because of _____, the KJV says it was because of _____.

How are “unbelief” and “disobedience” related? Go back to Numbers 14 for help in explaining your answer.

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 11 and 12 (pp. x-xxx) of *Exploring Hebrews*.

A. How is Jesus related to a Christian’s entering God’s rest in section 11?

B. As you have noticed, Hebrews employs the word “rest” in several different ways. Without an understanding of that varied usage Hebrews 4 can be difficult to understand. Using section 11 in *Exploring Hebrews*, briefly describe the three types of rest referred to in Hebrews 4.

1.

2.

3.

4. How does the Canaan rest relate to the heavenly rest?

5. What connection does the heavenly rest have to the Sabbath rest?

6. How does rest in Christ as Savior relate to the heavenly rest?

B. Summarize the three characteristics of God's Word discussed in section 12.

1.

2.

3.

4. How do those three characteristics relate to the concept of judgment in Hebrews 4:12, 13?

5. According to section 12, what significance does Hebrews' teaching on judgment have to the saving gospel of Christ?

IV. Learning Through Application

A. How should I respond to the warning of Hebrews 4:1, 2?

B. In what way can I enter Christ's rest now?

C. In what ways can I make my current Sabbath keeping a bit more like the heavenly rest that it foreshadows?

D. In what ways has the Bible been a two-edged sword in my past life? If I were completely open, how would and should it operate in my life "today"?

E. We cannot escape the judgment language of Hebrews 4: 12, 13. In the context of chapter 4, what is Hebrews' answer to the judgment in my life? How can I better implement that answer?

Lesson Five

Jesus: The Better Priest

Hebrews 4:14-6:20

Thus far Hebrews has deluged us with a sea of “better thans.” Jesus, the biblical author declares, is better than the prophets, better than the angels, better than Moses, and better than Joshua. Now we are ready to discover that He is also a better priest.

The topic of Jesus being a priest first surfaced in Hebrews 2:17. It doesn’t appear again until 4:14, which tells us that “we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” Hebrews 5:1–10 will expand upon that topic. At that point our author takes a necessary detour. But in 6:20 he will again pick up on the priesthood and will continue his discussion through the end of chapter 7. It is now time to read Hebrews 4:14–6:20.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 4:14-16

1. Summarize the message of this passage.

2. Here in these verses we have a great promise. It comes right after the judgment scene of 4:12, 13. Explain the meaning of 4:14–16 in that judgment context.

B. Hebrews 5:1-10

1. Summarize this passage in your own words.

2. What do you think it means that Jesus learned obedience through suffering? Was He disobedient before? Perhaps 5:9 helps us understand, when it juxtaposes becoming the source of eternal salvation with suffering in the context of learning obedience. Also, a reading of Matthew 26:36-46 might help. In what way did Jesus learn obedience?

C. Hebrews 5:11-6:8

1. Summarize this passage.

2. What do you think is the problem discussed in this passage? What, specifically, is it in 5:11, 12? In 6:4-6?

3. Is the biblical author presenting a wake-up call or a condemnation? What clues can you find for your answer?

D. Hebrews 6:9-12

1. Summarize these verses.

2. What does the word “beloved” tell us about those the author was speaking to in 5:11–6:8?

3. List those items in verses 9–12 that indicate that these people are not beyond hope. Now do the same for verses 13–20.

4. We are beginning to see a pattern in Hebrews. The boundless promises of 4:14–16 follow the judgment scene of 4:12, 13. Likewise, the promise of 6:9–12 appears after the warning and judgment scene of 6:4–8. God hasn’t given up on these people. But He does want to wake them up out of their dullness (5:11; 6:12) and He desires to keep them from committing apostasy (6:4–6).

E. Hebrews 6:13–20

1. Summarize this passage.

2. Why do you think our author at this point describes the swearing of an oath?

3. Perhaps the oath has to do with His promise to Abraham and His people. Hebrews 3:11 mentioned God vowing that the wilderness generation would not enter the Promised Land. And they didn’t! Now we find God swearing that those who have faith, like Abraham, will inherit the promises (6:12, 13) related to salvation (6:9). Just as God kept His oath to the wilderness generation, so will He fulfill His vows to those who trust in Him. Thus we have an “anchor” for our soul (6:19).

4. The concept of “anchor” in 6:19 alludes to the “drifting” in 2:1. Using the context of each of those passages, discuss what you think the author seeks to tell us by those metaphors.

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

- A. Hebrews 4:16 speaks of approaching the “throne of grace” with boldness. What is grace? Read the discussion in a Bible dictionary. How does it help you understand the concept of boldly approaching the throne of grace?**
- B. Use a concordance to discover the two places in the Old Testament that discuss Melchizedek. The first is found in _____, while the second is located in _____. Read both passages carefully. Our author will be returning to them in chapter 7. Meanwhile, list those things that we can learn about Melchizedek from the Old Testament.**
- C. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told us not to swear oaths. But here in Hebrews 6:13-20 we find God doing exactly that. Why did God do so? (Reading the article in a Bible dictionary on oaths or swearing will help you answer this question.)**

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 13-19 (pp. 83-110) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

A. Was Jesus really tempted in every way like us? Summarize the main points of the discussion of section 13 on this topic.

B. According to section 15 what was the real problem of the sluggish ones of 5:11? And what did the author hope to achieve by chiding them?

C. According to section 17, how do we know that those the author speaks so sternly to in 6:4-6 were Christians?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

D. From the discussion in section 18, how do we know that those severely chastised in 6:4-6 had not committed the unpardonable sin?

E. List and briefly discuss the five parallelisms found in section 19.

IV. Learning Through Application

A. What does it mean for my life that I can go to the throne of grace with boldness or confidence? In what specific ways do I approach God's throne of grace? Or do I hesitate to seek God's help? Why?

B. Does Jesus being my heavenly high priest have any significance for my daily life? If so, what aspects of His heavenly role are of value as I go through my day?

C. What meanings or potential meanings does the fact that Jesus learned obedience through suffering hold for my life?

D. What things might possibly lead me to slip away from Christianity?

E. If I am completely honest with myself, what would I say is the true anchor of my soul (as opposed to what I know to be the correct Christian answer)? Why is this (are these) aspects of my life so important? Should I change my anchor(s)? If so, what steps can I take?

Lesson Six

Jesus: The Better Priesthood

Hebrews 7:1-28

Some people have strange interests. Take the author of Hebrews, for example. The epistle shows a real fascination with Melchizedek, a person mentioned only two other places in the Bible—Genesis and Psalm 110. Yet, for some reason, Hebrews picks up on this obscure Old Testament personality and has more to say about him than any other Bible book. Why?

Hebrews 7 provides us with the answer to that question as it discusses the all important issue of priesthood. And it is no side issue for our author. After all, the priesthood, as the first-century Jews saw it, belonged exclusively to the tribe of Levi. With that in mind, given the fact that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, it is imperative for our author to demonstrate that He could still be a priest.

The book will show that Jesus can not only be a true priest, but that He can be a better priest—in fact, the only truly effective priest, the only one “able to save fully and completely those coming to God through Him, because He continually lives to intercede for them” (7:25). With that truth in mind, now is an excellent time to read Hebrews chapter 7.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 7:1-3

1. Summarize these three verses in your own language.
2. What can we learn about Melchizedek from 7:1-3?
3. What do these verses teach us about Melchizedek’s relationship to Abraham?

B. Hebrews 7:4-10

1. Summarize these verses.
2. What do these seven verses tell us about Melchizedek's relationship to Abraham?
3. Why do you think the author of Hebrews makes such a complex argument regarding Abraham's connection to Melchizedek?

C. Hebrews 7:11-19

1. Summarize these verses in your own words.
2. Verses 11 and 19 present a very similar idea. What is it? How is it important in the ongoing flow of the argument in Hebrews?
3. What "former commandment" and "law" is Hebrews 7:18, 19 speaking of? How do you know?

4. Hebrews 7:19 presents the idea of a “better hope.” From what we have studied so far in Hebrews, discuss some of the ways that the priesthood of Jesus presents Christians with a better hope.

D. Hebrews 7:20-25

1. Summarize these verses.

2. Verse 24 says that Jesus’ priesthood continues forever and is permanent. Reread the chapter and list all the verses that have to do with Jesus and the order of Melchizedek being perpetual. What is the author trying to tell us by that repeated emphasis?

3. What do you see as the most important verse in Hebrews 7:20-25? Why? Why is that verse important when considered in the contextual flow of the book?

E. Hebrews 7:26-28

1. Summarize these verses.

2. What do these verses tell us about Jesus as high priest? List the points they present and briefly discuss the importance of each one.

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

- A. Read the article “Melchizedek” in a Bible dictionary. In what ways does that reading enrich your knowledge?
- B. Read the article on “Priest” and/or “Priesthood” in a Bible dictionary. What did you learn that might be helpful in understanding the Epistle to the Hebrews?
- C. Using your marginal reference to Hebrews 7:5, find the place(s) in the Old Testament that discuss the tithe for the priests. Write down the Bible reference(s) here _____ and read the surrounding verses for the context. Why, according to the Old Testament, did the priests receive a tithe?
- D. Through the use of your Bible’s marginal references for Hebrews 7:14, find and list those texts that indicate that Jesus is from the tribe of Judah. Why is that fact a problem? How has the author solved the problem?

E. Use a Bible dictionary (or regular dictionary) and summarize the exact definition of “intercession.”

1. Through that source and/or your concordance see if you can find the two texts outside of Hebrews that treat Jesus as the Christian’s intercessor. Write out the thought of those texts.

2. How have those parallel texts enriched your understanding of Hebrews?

F. Use a concordance to find and list all the texts in Hebrews that use the word “hope.” Summarize your impression of those texts in the light of the “better hope” of 7:19.

III. Learning By Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 20–24 (pp. 113–132) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

A. After reading section 20 indicate some of the Jewish ideas regarding Melchizedek, how Christians can go off the track on the study of that mysterious personality, and how the reading helped you fill out your knowledge of him.

B. Discuss the idea of Melchizedek living “forever” in the light of section 21.

C. In discussing the fact of 7:11 and 19 that the Levitical priesthood brought nothing to perfection, section 22 highlights the real purpose of priesthood and what it is supposed to accomplish. Summarize the main points you find there.

D. Why, according to section 23, is Hebrews 7:25 the location of “the greatest truth in Hebrews”?

E. According to section 24, what is the significance of Hebrews 7:28 to the argument being set forth in the epistle?

IV. Learning Through Application

A. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Christ can save us fully and completely.

1. What can that mean for my life?

2. Do I, if I am open to my inner self, really want to be saved fully and completely? Why or why not?

B. What significance does the fact that Jesus continually lives to make intercession have for my life?

C. Hebrews 7:26 indicates that Jesus isn't just like me with all of my faults. Could He be my Savior if He is just like me in every way? Why or why not? How can I, as a sinner relate to One who is truly perfect and purified (7:28)?

Lesson Seven

Jesus: The Better Covenant

Hebrews 8:1-13

For the past few chapters of Hebrews we have been discussing Jesus as a better priest who has a better priesthood. We have seen that His priesthood is superior to that of the Levitical priests who served in the Jerusalem Temple. We have observed that whereas their ministry really perfected nothing (7:11, 19), Jesus' priesthood truly accomplishes what the others could only point at. And most importantly, we have glimpsed the fact that Jesus, having an indestructible life through His resurrection (7:16), ever lives "to save those who draw near to God through him" (7:25, RSV).

But what good is a priest who has no temple and no agreement, or covenant, with God concerning the meaning of his ministry? It is to those topics that Hebrews now turns.

The first five verses of Hebrews 8 introduce us to the heavenly sanctuary, in which Christ ministers on our behalf. Then verses 6-13 discuss the all-important agreement, or covenant, that God has made with His people concerning His intention for them through the ministry of Jesus. With that in mind, let's read the 13 important verses of Hebrews 8.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 8:1-5

1. Summarize these verses in your own words.

2. The word "now" in 8:1 obviously points to an important shift in our author's argument. In the context of chapter 7, expound upon the meaning of that important word as it connects what has gone before in Hebrews with what follows.

3. Without going back to the Old Testament text itself at this point, discuss the meaning of such words as "copy," "shadow," and "pattern" in 8:5. What is the significance of those concepts? What important word pictures do they bring into your mind? Why are they used? What can we learn from them?

B. Hebrews 8:6-13

1. Summarize or paraphrase the meaning of this passage.
2. Discuss the three “betters” of verse 6. What does each one mean? How do the three relate to each other?
3. Read verses 7-13 again carefully. As best as you can tell from the text itself, what is the first covenant? What specifically does the text say about that covenant?
4. What from verses 6-13 themselves can we learn about the new covenant? List its characteristics as found in our passage.
5. What does the text itself say about the relationship between the two covenants?
6. Who or what was at fault with the first covenant? Read the verses again carefully. Was it God, the first covenant itself, or the Israelites? What reasons can you give for your answers?

7. Why would God give them an imperfect or incomplete covenant? In what way do you think it was faulty? (Hint: Regarding that last question, think of the entire argument of Hebrews 5-10 rather than importing reasons from other parts of the New Testament. Need more hints? Think about 9:1, 15; 10:9; 7:11, 19, 28; and 8:1-5, texts that form the immediate context of 8:6-13.)

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

A. Hebrews 8:1 says that Jesus is a high priest who sat down at God's right hand.

1. Using a concordance list all the place in Hebrews that mention Jesus sitting down (depending upon the Bible version you will have to look up such words as "sat," "set," and "seated" to find them all).

2. Scripture always depicts other priests as standing. What is the symbolic difference between those priests who are standing and Christ who as our high priest is sitting? (Hint: Some of the other texts you listed may help you here.)

B. Using your Bible's marginal references and/or a concordance find those Old Testament passages that set the stage for Hebrews 8:5 to put forth the idea of a "pattern" or "shadow." You will encounter more than one.

1. List your findings here:

2. What are the implications of what you have discovered?

C. Read the article on “covenant” in a Bible dictionary.

1. Outline what it says.

2. Using your marginal references you will discover that the Old Testament location of the new covenant promise of Hebrews 8 is in _____. Now go back and read the Old Testament version of the new covenant.

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 25–27 (pp. 135–148) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

A. Hebrews is written to a group of Christians who have begun to waver in their faith.

Section 25 speaks to the reason that we need not and should not vacillate in our faith. List the six great reasons why we as Christians can have confidence.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

B. From section 25, describe the evidence demonstrating that the idea of a heavenly sanctuary was not something new to the Jewish mind.

C. Explain what section 25 is talking about when it infers that some Christians have their shadows backward or reversed when they discuss the topic of the sanctuary. What is wrong about that approach?

D. If, as argued in section 26, the two covenants of Hebrews do not refer to the issue of legalism or grace (as in Galatians 4:21-31), then what do they have in mind? How does the new covenant relate to the earthly sanctuary, Christ's sacrifice, and the fact that God's first covenant had a fault (Heb 8:7)? (Hint: You may also want to read again the first part of section 27 along with the last part of section 26.)

E. After reading section 27 answer the following questions.

1. Was there anything wrong with the people of the Exodus generation promising obedience to God? How do you know?

2. Is there something wrong with God's Old Testament law as set forth in the Ten Commandments? How do you know?

3. How does Exodus 20 relate grace to obedience?

4. How do we know that the “new” covenant is older than the “old” covenant?

5. Is grace only for New Testament people? How do you know?

IV. Learning Through Application

A. According to the new covenant of Hebrews 8, what does God want to do with His law in my life?

B. What does that mean for my daily Christian experience?

C. How do I feel when I read the new covenant promises of Hebrews 8:12?

Lesson Eight

Jesus: The Better Sacrifice

Hebrews 9:1-10:18

Hebrews is moving right along. We have a Leader who is God (chapter 1), who is better than the angels (chapter 1), who is altogether human (chapter 2), who is better than Moses and Joshua (chapters 3 and 4), and who is a better priest (chapter 5). Christ is not only our priest, but He has a superior priesthood (chapter 7) and He ministers in a better sanctuary under a better covenant (chapter 8). So far our heavenly high priest has everything but a better sacrifice.

While such passages as Hebrews 7:27 and 8:3 have already alluded to that sacrifice, the author has saved the real exposition of the all-important better sacrifice of Christ for Hebrews 9:1-10:18.

In those chapters we come face-to-face with the human need for cleansing along with the power of Christ's blood to perform that crucial task. Again and again Hebrews 9:1-10:18 speaks of the "once for all" sacrifice of Christ. Beyond that, the passage highlights the facts that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" and that the heavenly sanctuary needs to be cleansed with "better sacrifices" than the earthly (9:22, 23, RSV).

With Hebrews 9:1-10:18 we have come to the same place as each of the four gospels—the essential death of Jesus for each of us. It is now time to read 9:1-10:18.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 9:1-10

1. Summarize this passage in your own words.

2. Hebrews 9:3, 4 places the altar of incense in the Holy of Holies while Exodus makes it plain that it stood in the holy place. What possible explanations are there for this discrepancy?

3. What do you think the author means when he says in 9:5 that we cannot now speak in detail about the earthly sanctuary? Do you see any connection between verse 5 and the problem in verses 3 and 4? If so, explain.

B. Hebrews 9:11-14

1. Summarize or paraphrase the meaning of this passage.

2. What is the major contrast in these verses?

3. What can we learn about cleansing from these verses?

C. Hebrews 9:15-22

1. Summarize in your own words these verses.

2. What do these verses teach us about the importance of blood in the plan of salvation?

D. Hebrews 9:23-28

1. Summarize this passage in plain English.

2. What is verse 23 trying to tell us? How could anything in heaven ever need cleansing? From the context, what is the better sacrifice that can accomplish the heavenly cleansing?

3. Write out the words in this passage that promise the Second Advent.

E. Hebrews 10:1-10

1. Summarize the message of these verses.

2. What is the absolutely crucial, the very most important, contrast in these verses?

3. What has that contrast to do with the central message of Hebrews as our author has been developing it?

F. Hebrews 10:11-18

1. Summarize this passage.
2. Describe the benefits of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice according to these verses.

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

- A. In a concordance look up all the references to “blood” in Hebrews. Discuss from these verses why “blood” is central to the entire epistle.**
- B. In your concordance search for all words in the Bible version that you are using that are related to cleansing, purging, or purifying. Just what is it that needs to be cleansed? How does Hebrews relate that cleansing or purging or purifying to blood?**
- C. Using a concordance find the four things that are “impossible” or “not possible” in Hebrews.**
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

D. Read in a Bible dictionary the article on “sanctification.”

1. What is the basic meaning of the word.

2. We usually think of sanctification as a process, as the work of a lifetime. Why, then, does Hebrews 10:10 refer to it as a past event in the life of a Christian?

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 28-34 (pp. 148-176) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

A. According to section 29 what was the weakness of the earthly sanctuary?

B. Briefly describe the “translation lesson” in section 29.

C. Summarize the “defilement” and “cleansing” lesson in section 30.

D. According to section 31 the epistles of Paul highlight four great metaphors of salvation. Hebrews offers a fifth. List all 5 and state their relationship to blood.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

E. Summarize Craig Koester's (section 32) solution to Hebrews' claim that something in heaven needs cleansing.

F. List from section 32 the great once-for-all passages of Hebrews. Why do you think our author repeatedly pounds home that idea?

G. According to section 33, Hebrews 10:4 and 10 sum up the discussion of 10:1-10.

1. What is essence is that summary?

2. How does it fit into the ongoing flow of the argument in Hebrews?

H. According to section 33 what can we learn from “shadows” (10:1)?

1. Summarize the main points of Jesus as God’s answer to the sin problem in section 34.

IV. Learning Through Application

A. What difference does it make to me that Jesus died once for all?

B. What difference does it make to me that Christ rose again?

C. What difference does it make in my daily life that Jesus is ministering in heaven for me?

D. What passages in Hebrews 9:1-10:18 especially give me hope and assurance? List each verse and give a reason why that text is important.

Lesson Nine

The Necessity of Holding Firm

Hebrews 10:19-39

The first 10 chapters of Hebrews have presented a powerful argument for having confidence in Christ, even when outward circumstances look discouraging. The author has set Christ forth as better in every way. Christians have no need to be fearful or backward or ashamed of their faith.

To the contrary, Hebrews 4:16 set the stage for one of the Epistle’s several themes when the author wrote, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (4:16, KJV). The scripture for our current lesson picks up on that theme when it suggests we can boldly enter God’s sanctuary because of the blood of Jesus (10:19). And 10:22 suggests that we may as Christians come before God with full assurance.

The author does not have the slightest doubt that Christ is truly the anchor of the soul (6:19). For that reason in the last half of chapter 10 the epistle urges its readers to hold firm and not to throw away or turn their backs on their faith in Christ.

Before we begin our lesson we need to read Hebrews 10:19-39 slowly and prayerfully.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 10:19-25

1. Summarize the meaning of this passage in your own words.
2. Why, according to the book of Hebrews, can Christians boldly enter the sanctuary? List five or six specific reasons.
3. Verse 22 lists several attributes possessed by Christians. List them and briefly discuss what each one means. Also note how they might relate to one another.

4. What do you think, given what you know about the book of Hebrews, was happening in 10:25? Why might it be important as we view verses 24 and 25 for Christians to actively participate in a church group?

B. Hebrews 10:26-31

1. Summarize the meaning of this passage.

2. Describe your feelings as you read these verses.

3. What is the problem here? Have these people committed the unpardonable sin?

4. Read Hebrews 10:19-39 again to provide some contextual reasons for your answer to the question under number 3 above.

C. Hebrews 10:32-39

1. Summarize or paraphrase the meaning of these verses.
2. Describe your feelings as you read these verses.
3. Compare and contrast your feelings after reading verses 32 through 39 with your feelings after reading verses 26 through 31.
4. What is our author attempting in this sequence? What does the epistle want its readers to do?
5. List the good Christian qualities that these wavering Christians had previously possessed according to 10:32-39.
6. Compare 10:26-31 with 10:32-39 and discuss the author's motivational strategy.

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

- A. Using your marginal references for 10:26-31, find the thundering passage in Hebrews that parallels this one in intent and fearfulness. Now, briefly compare the similar elements in the two passages.
- B. Now read the passages immediately following each of those judgment passages. How are they alike? What do they say about the people being “thundered at”? What do you see as the author’s purpose in both sequences?
- C. Read the article on the unpardonable sin in a Bible dictionary. How does what you find there better help you understand the topic?
- D. What is the Old Testament source for Hebrews 10:37, 38? _____. Where does Paul use that passage so powerfully? _____. Do you think, given the contexts of the two books, that the passage in Hebrews uses the text in the same way as in the other book? Explain your answer.

III. Learning By Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 35-37 (pp. 179-191) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

- A. In the light of section 35 contrast humanity's access to God as set forth in the Old Testament with the way the book of Hebrews presents it.**
- B. Why, according to section 35, the big change?**
- C. According to section 36, what are the two aspects of what we might call the "gospel" function of judgment?**
- D. What lesson does section 37 draw from the athletic or pilgrimage imagery of Hebrews 10:32-36?**
- E. Summarize the main points in the discussion in section 37 of the different applications that Hebrews and Romans give to Habakkuk 2:3, 4.**
- F. Section 37 discusses how Hebrews 10:39 sets the stage for chapter 11. With the context of Hebrews 10 and 11 in mind, discuss the implications of this stage setting.**

IV. Learning Through Application

- A. How can I look forward to the coming time of trouble without fear? How does Hebrews help me in this matter?**
- B. How do I relate to the threatenings of God's judgment? In the light of Hebrews, how should I respond to them?**
- C. What steps can I take to arrive at a more positive attitude toward God's judgment pronouncements?**
- D. Why should I go to church? Would the author of Hebrews agree with my reasons? Why or why not?**
- E. How can I relate more healthily to the reasons given for church attendance in Hebrews 10:24, 25? What specific people would God like me to encourage or stir up?**
- F. How do I know from my study of Hebrews that God has not given up on me, that I have not committed the unpardonable sin? What specific reasons can I offer?**

Lesson Ten

The Example of the Faithful

(Part I)

Hebrews 11:1-22

The first 10 chapters of Hebrews have provided its readers reasons for confidence in Christ and the Christian way of life, they have warned them not to throw out what they already have, and they have promised both present and future blessings at the end of time.

More specifically, chapter 10 closed by noting that Christians will live by or according to their faith. That is, their faith will determine how they live their lives. Verse 38 quotes Habakkuk as saying that God finds no pleasure in those who draw back from living by faith. “But,” our author writes, “we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who have faith for the saving of the soul” (10:39).

Hebrews is now ready for its great faith chapter. Chapter 11 provides a panorama of faith in action in the experiences of God’s people in past ages. The author cites their example to encourage those who can’t see through the present darkness to victory. The message of Hebrews 11 is that nothing has changed. The Old Testament saints lived by faith rather than by the perceptions of their daily experience, and so must God’s Christian people do the same. They (and we) must endure by “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). We are now ready to read Hebrews 11:1-22.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

I. Hebrews 1:1-3

1. Summarize these three verses in language that is meaningful to you.

2. What do you think our author means by the “assurance of things hoped for”?

3. What is the meaning of “conviction of things not seen”?

4. Explain how the “assurance of things hoped for” and the “conviction of things not seen” relates to the rest of Hebrews 11 as well as to the entire book of Hebrews.

B. Hebrews 11:4-7

1. Summarize or paraphrase the meaning of this passage.

2. Given what you know about the Bible and the argument presented in Hebrews, why do you think Abel’s sacrifice was more acceptable to God? What evidence do you have for your position?

3. What does it mean that Abel’s faith continues to speak to us?

4. In the context of verse 1, how is it that Noah lived by faith? (Be quite specific about assurance and what he saw or didn’t see.)

5. What does it mean to be “without faith” in verse 6? If one lives without faith, then what does he or she actually live by?

C. Hebrews 11:8-12

1. Summarize the message of verses 8-12.

2. Relate Abraham's experience in verses 8-10 to verses 1-3 and verse 6. That is, how does Abraham's experience in verses 8-10 illustrate the meaning of 11:1-3, 6?

D. Hebrews 11:13-16

1. Summarize in plain English the significance of these verses.

2. The fact that the patriarchs of Hebrews 11:1-12 all died in faith was important to the epistle's first readers. How much of the Promised Land did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob own when they died? Given their earthly situation, what lesson does our author seek to convey to the book's readers through their example?

3. What implications do verses 13-16 have for the present and the future in the lives of the epistle's audience?

4. What do you think it means when it says "God is not ashamed to be called their God" (11:16)?

E. Hebrews 11:17-22

1. Summarize the message of these verses.

2. How would you have felt if God had promised you an heir through whom His blessing would come (11:18) and then He told you to sacrifice that very person? What would you have thought about God? About His promises? About the future? (Note: Be personal here. Put yourself and your children in Abraham's place.)

3. What common factor do you see in the brief stories in 11:20-22? Why is it significant in the context of Hebrews?

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

A. Use your marginal reference to find the Old Testament story of Abel. What did each of the brothers sacrifice? Given what we know of Hebrews 9 and 10 and the Old Testament, what are the implications as to why God accepted one offering and rejected the other?

B. How can Hebrews 11 use Sarah and Abraham as illustrations of faith in relation to the birth of Isaac? Have you read the Old Testament stories on this topic? Use your marginal references and/or a concordance to find them. What was the problem with their "faith"? How could God still call them people of faith?

- C. Use a concordance and/or your marginal references to find the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in the Old Testament. The Genesis text contains at least one indication that Abraham believed his son would not die or remain permanently dead. What is it?

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 38–43 (pp. 191–212) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

- A. According to section 38, what is the main lesson to gain from Hebrews 11?
- B. In relation to section 39, why do some readers find the Cain and Abel story to be meaningless?
- C. Are all works bad? According to section 40, what is the difference between “good” works and “bad” works? What kinds of works were Abel, Enoch, and Noah commended for?
- D. According to section 41, what is God's response to things deemed impossible by human minds? Illustrate your answer with concrete examples.

E. List and briefly discuss the five faith lessons highlighted in section 43.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

IV. Learning Through Application

A. How do I respond when I face “impossibilities” relative to God’s wishes in my life?

B. How patient or impatient am I in the face of God’s apparent inaction? In what specific ways can I utilize the lessons of Hebrews 11 to enable me to become more patient?

C. What lesson from Hebrews 11:1-22 will help me live more by faith and less by sight?

Lesson Eleven

The Example of the Faithful

(part II)

Hebrews 11:23-40

Hebrews 11 is one of the most well-known and one of the best loved chapters in the Bible. Most people think of it as the faith chapter. It begins with what many see as a definition of faith and closes with the eternal reward of those who have been faithful. In between we have a sweeping panorama of Bible characters who based their lives on faith in the unseen rather than on sight and their experience in the world around them.

In lesson 10 we began to examine this focused history of the faithful, beginning with Abel and ending with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Most of us felt comfortable with Scripture including those people in the Faith Hall of Fame. Even though none of them were without fault, they were basically “good” people.

The second half of the chapter will present some Bible characters of a different nature. My first thought on reading verses 31 and 32, for example, is to cry out “how did Rahab the prostitute, Samson, and Jephthah get in here?” That is part of what we want to discover as we continue to examine this very important chapter of the Bible. It is now time to read Hebrews 11:23-40.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 11:23-29

1. Summarize and/or paraphrase the meaning of these verses.

2. In what way, in the context of Hebrews 11:1, did Moses’ parents show that they were living by faith?

3. Verses 24-29 illustrate four ways that Moses demonstrated faith in the light of the meaning of verses 1 and 6. List those four ways and discuss the implications of each. Note what was visible and what was invisible in each instance and identify why it took faith to follow God in each case.

a.

b.

c.

d.

B. Hebrews 11:30-40

1. Paraphrase and summarize the teaching of these verses.

2. Picture yourself around a campfire outside of Jericho. Suddenly Joshua stands up and tells you that you as a group are going to walk around the city for seven days. Then, when the trumpets sound, the walls will collapse. How would you feel and respond to such a claim? (Now don't cheat on this one. How would you really feel if I got you together next week and said the same thing about New York City or Tokyo?) What reasons can you give for your response?

3. What can we learn from verses 33-35 about following God?

4. What can we discover from verses 36–38 about following God? And how can we relate the lessons of verses 33–35 with those of 36–38?

5. What do verses 39 and 40 teach us about the reward of the faithful? What implications might those lessons have for such Bible teachings as the Second Advent, the resurrection, and the state of people in death?

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

- A. Did Moses really not fear the anger of the king (11:27)? Through either a concordance or your Bible’s marginal references go back to the Old Testament story of Moses’ run-in with Pharaoh. What does the Old Testament say about Moses’ fear or lack of fear? Is it possible to harmonize the Old Testament teaching with that of Hebrews? How?**
- B. Using your marginal references, find the chapter in the Old Testament that deals with the institution of the Passover. Read the story. In what ways does faith enter into it?**
- C. Use your concordance to discover whom the New Testament calls our “Passover.” Read the article on “Passover” in a Bible dictionary. What conclusions can we draw from those two exercises?**

D. Use your marginal references or a concordance to locate what the Old Testament says about Jephthah. Summarize your findings.

E. Use your concordance to locate the Old Testament depiction of Samson. Summarize his characteristics. Does the Bible picture him as a shining example of faith?

F. Use a concordance to discover all you can about Rahab. List the basic facts about her in both testaments.

G. Discuss why you think the Holy Spirit included such people as Jephthah, Samson, and Rahab in the list of the faithful.

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 44 and 45 (pp. 212–220) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

- A. Describe the “secret of faith” as set forth in section 44.**
- B. From section 45 list the parallels between both the positive and negative “rewards” of the faithful with what we know of Old Testament history. For example, among those who “overcame kingdoms” were Moses and his parents who successfully defied kings.**

IV. Learning Through Application

- A. What feelings do I have when I discover that such people as Samson, Rahab, and Jephthah made it into God’s list of the faithful? Why do I react that way?**
- B. What specific things can I do in my life to keep my eyes more on that city whose builder and maker is God and less on the city of this world’s honor and glory?**

C. What does it mean for me to live the life of a Christian pilgrim as described in Hebrews 11?

D. How is the life of such a pilgrim different from the way those of the world pursue their lives? How is it different from what I usually think of as a “normal” Christian life?

E. If God examined my life today, would He conclude that I am among the faithful? Why?

Lesson Twelve

Enduring to the End

Hebrews 12:1-29

The first 10 chapters of Hebrews demonstrated that Christ was superior in every way to anything else a Christian might turn to. The climax of the argument was that Christ is our high priest in heaven—that He was a priest who could truly handle the sin problem. His priesthood, of course, was based on a better covenant and a better sacrifice—His once-for-all sacrifice for the entire human family.

Because of the effectiveness of Christ's heavenly ministry, Hebrews has been arguing, Christians need to be careful not to drift away from Him, not to rebel against Him, and not to surrender their faith, no matter how difficult life becomes.

Then came Hebrews 11 with its galaxy of heroes who had lived by faith rather than outward appearances. Those faith heroes were examples of how the recipients of the letter could also live.

In Hebrews 11 it is the readers of the letter who are looking upon the faith heroes as they ran the race of life. Chapter 12 reverses the picture. Now it is the cloud of faith heroes who are watching the Christian readers as they run the race of life. The message is that they need to keep in the race until they have reached the goal. They must endure as did the faith heroes of chapter 11. At this point we need to read Hebrews 12.

I. Learning From Hebrews Itself

A. Hebrews 12:1-3

1. Paraphrase or summarize the meaning of these verses.

2. List the images and aspects of a race or of participating in a race as found in verses 1-3.

3. What role did Jesus play in the race of faith? How does His endurance fit the context and the author's appeal?

B. Hebrews 12:4-11

1. Paraphrase and/or summarize the meaning of this passage.
2. What does the concept of “discipline” have to do with the author’s argument in the flow of Hebrews?
3. What are some of the ways that God disciplines us? What is His aim?

C. Hebrews 12:12-17

1. Summarize the meaning of these verses.
2. What are the functions of these verses in Hebrews’ overall argument?
3. How can one fall back from the grace of God (12:15)? This is a recurring theme in the epistle. In framing your answer go back and read Hebrews 2:1; 6:4-6; 10:26-29. Why do you think our author keeps repeating such counsel?

D. Hebrews 12:18-24

1. Summarize or paraphrase in your own words the meaning of this passage.
2. What are the two mountains? Why the big contrast of access to the two mountains? (Think about the entire argument of Hebrews as you answer the last question.)

E. Hebrews 12:25-29

1. Paraphrase or summarize the meaning of these verses in your own words.
2. What is the purpose in the flow of Hebrews of this paragraph?
3. Verses 25-29 are obviously a warning, but they are also a promise. How does the idea of both warning and promise relate to the idea of “shaking”?
4. Is our God indeed a “consuming fire” or is this just some kind of a primitive, pagan concept of God? What biblical evidence can you supply for your answer?

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

- A. Use your marginal references and a concordance to find the other places in the New Testament that compare the Christian's experience to a race, a run, or a fight. List those texts. After having read them, what do they, when taken together, tell us about being a Christian?**
- B. Perhaps you were surprised not to find Esau in Hebrews 11. After all, he was a son of Abraham through Isaac. But here in chapter 12 we find him as a counter-example of those in Hebrews 11. What is the problem with Esau according to Hebrews 12:15-17? Use your marginal references or a concordance to find his story in the Old Testament. What light does it shed on Esau's attitude and/or problem?**
- C. Use your marginal references to unpack the Old Testament references to Sinai as an unapproachable place.**
1. Write the Old Testament references and the key ideas of your discovery.
 2. Contrast those findings with those verses in Hebrews that talk about Christians being able to come to God with "boldness," "confidence," and "full assurance." (You will probably need to use your concordance for this assignment.)

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 46-50 (pp. 223-240) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

- A. In what ways does section 46 help us gain insight on how we can prepare for the race of life?**
- B. Define the nature of discipline as explained in section 47. What is “discipline” and what is it not?**
- C. Outline the lessons highlighted in section 47 that we can learn from life’s adversities.**
- D. List and indicate the meaning of the three ways in which we might get our feet turned aside from the path of faith. (See section 48.)**
- E. After reading section 49 discuss the “festive gathering” of Hebrews 12:22. How does it relate to the Mount Zion image? Where else does the New Testament talk about the gathering? Describe how those other passages help fill out the picture.**

F. In what ways has section 50 helped you understand the shaking metaphors used in Hebrews 12:25-29?

IV. Learning Through Application

A. What specific things have I learned from Hebrews 12:1-11 that will help me in my Christian life?

B. Do I have any “roots of bitterness” (12:15) in my life? What are they? What can they do to me? What do I need to do to them?

C. Hebrews speaks of God in 12:29 as a consuming fire. Is that good or bad news for me? What do I feel when I read those words—fear or joy? Why? How does the author of Hebrews want me to respond to such a pronouncement?

3. What might those five admonitions be telling us about the first readers of the epistle?

4. What does verse 4 reveal about God's attitude toward sex and marriage?

B. Hebrews 13:7-17

1. Summarize and/or paraphrase the meaning of this passage in your own words.

2. List the several admonitions for Christian living found in these 11 verses.

3. What might be some of the implications behind verses 9 and 10?

4. What might be some of the things that we should learn from verses 12-15?

C. Hebrews 13:18-25

1. Summarize and/or paraphrase the meaning of the passage.

2. These verses contain one prayer and one request for prayer. What can we discover about prayer and the ministry of prayer from those few short verses?

3. You have now read and studied the entire Epistle to the Hebrews. In retrospect, why do you think our author called the epistle a “word of exhortation”? Supply reasons from the epistle to support your answer.

II. Learning With Bible Study Tools

A. Use your marginal references to discover the Old Testament passage that tells the story reflected upon in Hebrews 13:2. Present the basic facts in that story and indicate the nature of the blessing received.

B. Use your concordance and/or your marginal references to find the other New Testament text that talks about the love of money. What information does that passage give that may help us understand the underlying problem?

- C. Use a concordance to find the three places in Hebrews that mention church “leaders” (RSV, NIV) or those who “rule over you” (KJV, NKJV). Read those three passages. What do they tell us about church structure and religious leadership?
- D. Use a concordance to find all the references to the word “city” in Hebrews. Read each passage and write a composite sketch of the epistle’s use of the word “city” with an emphasis on the meaning of Hebrews 13:14.
- E. Timothy is the only personal name that appears in Hebrews. Use a Bible dictionary to find out what you can discover about the various Timothys of the Bible. How many do you find mentioned? What do we know about the Timothy of this passage? How does he relate to Paul’s traveling companion? How do we know?

III. Learning by Studying *Exploring Hebrews*

Read sections 51-53 (pp. 240-254) in *Exploring Hebrews*.

- A. What have you learned about “brotherly love” in section 51?
- B. In what ways does section 52 fill out our understanding of Christian leaders?

C. After reading section 52, list and discuss the four aspects of being worshipful.

a.

b.

c.

d.

D. List and discuss the four important points regarding the author's prayer for the Hebrews in section 53.

a.

b.

c.

d.

IV. Learning Through Application

A. Is my life one of fear or faith? How do I relate to the teaching that there is nothing humans can do to us (13:6)? When it comes to a real crisis, how might I respond to that promise?

B. How is my hospitality quotient when compared to Hebrews 13:1-3? In what specific ways can I adjust my life to raise that level?

C. Is prayer a vital part of my life? Why or why not? In what specific ways can it become more significant?

D. What meaning does the “blood of the eternal covenant” and the resurrection of Jesus have for my life? How does it bolster my faith, boldness, assurance, and confidence? Why?

V. The Epistle to the Hebrews in Retrospect.

You have now studied the book of Hebrews. Let's take a moment for reflection.

A. You have five sentences. Write them out in such a manner as to highlight what you see as the very core of the book of Hebrews.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

B. Why was Hebrews written? And for what kind of people?

C. How do the type of people Hebrews was written to compare with those of us living in the twenty-first century. In what ways are they like us? How do they differ?

D. What are the four most meaningful ideas I have gleaned from studying Hebrews for my personal life?

1.

2.

3.

4.