



Growth Group Studies // Term 4, 2022

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Three	Hebrew 10:1-18 – A Greater Perfection
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Five	Hebrews 11:1 – 12:3 – A Greater Faith
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Study 5 – A GREATER FAITH

Hebrews 11:1 – 12:3

Getting Started

1. Who is someone in your life that has a faith you admire? Why?

Read Hebrews 10:39-11:3

2. Hebrews 10:39 defines who we are – “... those who have faith and are saved”.
 - a. Use Hebrews 11:1-3 to help write your own definition of faith.

Faith is trust. It's certain and assured. Which means that having faith in something, or someone, will display itself in the way you live your life.

- b. Thinking back over Hebrews 1 – 10, what is our faith in?

Jesus and the promises God has made us in him.

Read Hebrews 11:4-40

3. These verses describe the faith for which “the ancients were commended” (v.2). Break into smaller groups and divide up the following table. Once each group has completed their sections, quickly share your observations with the other groups.

For each one, see if you can unpack what the person/s had faith (trust) in, and how that expressed itself in their life. Some boxes might be hard to fill out without looking up the Old Testament passage that records the events described. Two examples are given below:

Who	What did they hope for? Why?	What did their faith produce?
Abel	Abel understood what we do – that God exists. Abel hoped for a relationship with Him.	A sacrificial offering for God.
Enoch		
Noah	Warned about coming judgment.	Built an ark.

Who	What did they hope for? Why?	What did their faith produce?
Abraham		
Sarah		
Isaac		
Jacob		
Joseph		
Moses' Parents		
Moses		
Israel		
Rahab		
Those we "do not have time" to be told about!! (vv. 32-38)		

4. Look again at vv. 13-16. Ultimately, what were all these people hoping for?

They were hoping (waiting) for the same thing we are - God's heavenly city.

5. According to vv. 39-40, why did they not receive it?

Because Jesus had not yet come. They needed to be made perfect, as do we.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

6. What do you think it means that Jesus is the "pioneer and perfecter of faith"?

Jesus is the faithful one. Not only has he received what was promised, he has made it possible for us to receive what was promised. He makes our hope assured.

7. How would you define the "race marked out for us"?

The life we live as we wait to receive what has been promised.

Thinking It Through

8. As you run the race, what help do you find in:
 - a. knowing that you are "surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses"?
 - b. "fixing [your] eyes on Jesus"?
9. What hindrances and entanglements has this passage encourage you to throw off? Share one with your group.

Study 6 – A GREATER DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:4-13

Getting Started

1. What springs to mind when you hear the word 'discipline'? Mark on the spectrum below how you feel about the idea of being disciplined:

No thanks!

Bring it on!

Read Hebrews 12:4-13

2. How might Hebrews 10:32-35 and 12:3 help us understand what is meant in v. 4? What situation do you think the original recipients of this sermon-letter were in?

Context is important for this passage. The original recipients were heavily persecuted (or know those who were) - 10:32-35. Jesus is given as an example of "enduring opposition from sinners". It seems best then, v. 3, to understand the phrase - "In your struggle against sin" - to be a reference to persecution. Struggling against those who sin *against* you.

3. What then, is v. 4 not saying?

This is *not* a passage about wrestling with temptation. It's not about struggling against sin to the point of shedding blood.

4. In vv. 5-6 there is a quote from Proverbs 3:11-12. How does the writer of Hebrews interpret the situation of the original recipients?

Persecution is a way God disciplines his children, that he loves. It's not out of his control, he is in control of it.

5. Using vv. 5-11, spend some time unpacking the positive reasons that God disciplines His children. You might like to list them out before discussing each one.

- Because he loves us
- It shows that we are legitimately his children
- So that we might respect Him (he cares about us)
- It's for our good = sharing in his holiness
- Produces a harvest of righteousness and peace
- It trains us

6. V. 10 says our human fathers "disciplined us for a little while as they thought best." One implication of this is that their discipline of us was not always good.

How can we be sure then, that God's discipline is always 'for our good' (v. 10)?

Because He has told us (vv. 5-6, Prov 3:11-12). But especially because of Jesus - he has already made us His children, and He is making us like Jesus.

7. Vv. 12-13 draw out an implication of God's discipline.

a. What is the command?

Strengthen yourself.

b. How will we do it? Read Proverbs 4:20-27.

Especially note the connection with God's word. God makes us strong through His word which brings us to Jesus.

c. What do you think is meant by the illustration of "the lame" being "healed"?

God is transforming us through discipline. He is bringing us spiritual health.

Thinking It Through

8. Where do you see “struggles against sin” in your life, and in the lives of other Christians? Share how these verses have encouraged you?

9. How will these verses encourage us when hardship makes it feel like God is:

a. Absent?

In hardship it can *feel* as though God is absent, but He never is. He brings discipline to grow us because He loves us.

b. Unwilling to help?

God is never unwilling to help, on the contrary He is always helping us, even when we can't see how.

c. Punishing us?

God never punishes His children, because Jesus has already been punished for our sin. Discipline and punishment are not the same thing.

Study 7 – A GREATER INHERITANCE

Hebrews 12:14-29

Getting Started

1. What's the most valuable thing you've ever lost?

Read Hebrews 12:14-29

2. How does the example of Esau explain the commands and warnings of vv. 14-17?

Esau was "godless". He sold his inheritance (the promises of God) for a meal. Later, when he realised the gravity of his mistake, it was too late. Don't make the same mistake!

3. Vv. 18-21 describe the mountain that we have *not* come to. What mountain is being spoken of? What happened there? Try drawing a picture of the scene being described. (c.f. Exodus 19, Deuteronomy 4-5)

It's Moses and Israel gathered at Mt Sinai as God makes the old covenant. Note especially the way it draws out how terrifying it was to be in the presence of God.

4. Vv. 22-24 describe the mountain that we *have* come to. The description is made up of important (and unusual!) phrases. Discuss together what they mean:

- a. "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"

Mt Zion = the mountain the earthly Jerusalem is built on, it's where the temple was, the place where God was present with his people. It was the shadow of the "heavenly Jerusalem": the new creation where God and His people will dwell forever.

- b. "the church of the firstborn"

Church means gathering. Firstborn means the supreme one. Here it is talking about all those who will be gathered to Jesus for eternity. Eternal life is not primarily about us, it's about Jesus being glorified, for he is

supreme.

- c. "the spirits of the righteous made perfect"
The people who make up the "church of the firstborn". Made perfect by ...
 - d. "Jesus the mediator of a new covenant"
Jesus has brought God and His people together.
 - e. "the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel"
c.f. Genesis 4:10-11
Just as Abel's blood cried out to God, how much more does Jesus' blood!
5. Having defined all the phrases, see if you can summarise vv. 22-24 into a sentence. What is our inheritance?
6. What is the warning in v. 25? Why, according to vv. 26-27, is it vitally important?
If Mt Sinai was terrifying, how much more when we stand before God on the final day. Make sure you are ready!
7. What do you think it means to "worship God acceptably" (v. 28)? What connections can you see between vv. 14-17 and vv. 28-29?
Worship involves every aspect of our lives. It expresses itself in obedience to God's word.

Thinking It Through

8. Is the worship of God a fearful or joyful activity?
Because of the blood of Jesus that speaks so powerfully, we have nothing to be terrified of. Yet, God is not to be mucked around with. If we serve God with reverence and awe we have nothing to fear, but will find joy in the fact that He has made it possible for us to worship Him.
9. Vv. 14-17 call us all to holiness. How might the repeated phrase – "See to it that no one ..." – shape the way we live this out? What could this look like for your Growth Group?
Note how it calls us to help and care for each other as we make every effort to live in holiness.

Study 8 – A GREATER WORSHIP (PART 1)

Hebrews 13:1-6

Getting Started

1. "Worship is an all of life activity for the Christian". Agree or Disagree? Why?

Hebrews 13:1-19 is the final section of this sermon-letter, before it ends in **vv. 20-27**.

A quick reading might leave you with the impression that this is a haphazard list of commands stuck on at the end! But when we are careful to remember the context, it changes how we listen to these verses. So:

2. How do you think Hebrews 12:28-29 shapes our understanding of Hebrews 13?

How we treat God matters, holiness matters. Heb 13 is made up of commands that express what this looks like.

Read Hebrews 13:1-6

3. Consider each of the commands in verses 1-6:

a. Verse 1

- i. What is the command?
- ii. What is the reason?
[We are! We are God's children \(12:7\)](#)
- iii. What practical changes could you make to your Growth Group to encourage this?

b. Verse 2

- i. What is the command?
Show hospitality to strangers, non-Christians.
- ii. What is the reason? (c.f. Genesis 18:1-33)
You never know who God will bring into your life!
- iii. To get practical, how could hosting meals create opportunities to share Jesus? What stops us from doing this more?

Meals help create relationships. Relationships help us share Jesus as we share life together. What stops us? Time, effort, cost, etc.

c. Verse 3

- i. What is the command?
- ii. What is the reason?
- iii. Most of us don't personally know Christians imprisoned for their faith. How might we keep this command?

Increasingly, we'll need to support each other in persecution, as Australian culture further marginalises Christians. There are also many Christian organisations we can support, that seek to support the persecuted church, or operate in countries where Christians are at risk – e.g. some of our church Mission Partners, Compassion.

d. Verse 4

- i. What is the command?
Honour God's design for marriage.
- ii. What is the reason?
Holiness matters.
- iii. As we seek to ensure God's purposes for marriage are "honoured" in our lives, how might we better support each other in purity – married or single?

In what ways can we encourage each other in sexual purity as we live amongst a culture that is anything but.

e. Verses 5-6

- i. What is the command?
- ii. What is the reason?
- iii. When do you find financial contentment hard? When do you find yourself drawn towards the love of money? What are some practical steps you can put in place to worship God in the way you deal with money?

Spend some time committing all these things to God in prayer as we seek to "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe".

Study 8 – A GREATER WORSHIP (PART 2)

Hebrews 13:7-25

Getting Started

1. Is there a Christian leader who profoundly shaped you as a follower of Jesus? Share with the group what made them so influential in your life.

Read Hebrews 13:7-21

2. How do vv. 7-8 and vv. 17-19 help us understand the role of Christian leaders? See if you can write a job description for Christian leadership.

It might be something like:

Christian leadership is having responsibility for others, under God. It is exercised by teaching the Word, prayer, and setting an example for others to imitate. The goal is that we might grow together to maturity in Christ.

3. At first glance, it might appear as though vv. 9-16 have little to do with Christian leadership. However, we have seen that the verses either side do (vv. 7-8, vv. 17-19). This suggests there is a strong connection.

Use the following questions to work through vv. 9-16. Once unpacked, consider what they contribute to our understanding of Christian leadership.

- a. From v. 9:
 - i. what is the warning?
Don't be carried away by *false teaching*.
 - ii. what seems to be the situation of the original readers?
It appears they were hearing a false teaching that required the food laws of the old covenant to be obeyed, thinking that would make their faith strong.
 - iii. what do Christian hearts need/not need?
Strengthened by grace.

- b. What is the grace that will strengthen our hearts? (vv. 10-12)

Jesus, and his sacrifice. Knowing Jesus and what He has done for us is what will strengthen our hearts.

- c. What will this grace produce in us? How? (vv. 13-16)

A sacrifice of praise (not for sin!) to God. A life that openly and joyfully professes His name.

- d. What connections can you see between vv. 9-16 and Christian leadership?

True Christian leadership points people to Jesus. It is grace that saves and transforms, not rules. Helping people know Jesus, who He is and what He has done, is what leadership is all about.

4. Look again through the closing prayer of vv. 20-21. How does this add to our understanding of Christian leadership? Can you refine the job description you wrote earlier?

Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep. He is our leader.

Thinking It Through

5. Discuss. How important is Christian leadership?

6. What are we to do if our Christian leaders fail in their work?

7. Brainstorm together. This passage invites us to “remember”, “consider”, “have confidence in”, “submit”, and “pray” for our leaders.

a. How have you seen this done well? How have you seen it done poorly?

b. What will you do differently in light of this passage?

If you have time ... share with the group the one thing that has stood out to you the most as we have studied Hebrews 8 – 13 together.