



BE
GOD'S

Family

VOLUME 3
READINGS, DEVOTIONS, POEMS

Fishers United Methodist Church

Introduction

Over the previous three years, we have taken a sweeping overview of the entire Bible with studies on the four Gospels (“Be with Jesus”), the rest of the New Testament (“Be on Mission”), and the Old Testament (“Be God’s Light”).

Now we slow down and go deeper. Our focus in 2025 will be on the New Testament books that focus on Jewish people who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Throughout the Bible, the Hebrew people are considered children of God, that is, His family. Through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, believers in Him are grafted in. Hence, this year’s study: “Be God’s Family.”

First, we look at the Gospel of Matthew, written for a Jewish audience who had become Christian. It draws on many Old Testament and Jewish traditions, texts, concepts, customs, and more. Matthew clearly points to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah for the Jews and the entire world.

Second, we will spend several weeks exploring the book of Hebrews, which by its title alone is very Hebrew. This New Testament book examines the person and work of Jesus through the lens of numerous Old Testament people, practices, sacrifices, holy days, and more.

Finally, we will close out the ten-month study by examining two shorter New Testament books: Galatians and James. In Galatians, Paul addresses whether Jewish circumcision and the law of Moses are prerequisites to faith in Jesus Christ. In James, the brother of Jesus discusses whether works or faith are most essential to Christian living.

One of the great bonuses this year is that a number of people from our church are joining me in writing the devotionals for this study. They will bring fresh insights and perspectives to our devotion time. Each of them is engaged in training by me, a small cohort with one another, and personal prayer as they produce what you will read and reflect on. Make sure to thank them throughout the year as you are impacted by their words.

There are several components to this year-long exploration:

1. **Daily Scripture Readings** – Actually, they are five days a week. Consider reading each weekday to anchor your day in Scripture.
2. **Daily Devotions** – These are written by others and me, and correlate with the daily Scripture to help you think more deeply about what you are reading.
3. **Daily Poems** – These are written by my sister-in-law, Rev. Dr. Martha FrizLanger. They will help you imagine the Scripture through poetry. This year, the poems will be based on a portion of a Psalm or other literature from the Old Testament that connects with the theme of that day’s New Testament reading.
4. **Weekly Studies** – These studies, written by my colleague Rev. Dr. Ben Greenbaum, are great tools for small groups and classes.
5. **Weekly Sermons** – If you cannot attend worship with us in person, you can always watch them online, visit fishersumc.org/begodsfamily for easy access, or view them in the Fishers UMC app.
6. **Weekly Podcasts** – Ben and I and some special guests will spend some time each week dialoguing about that week’s readings, visit fishersumc.org/begodsfamily for easy access or your favorite podcast platform.

The hope is that we are all drawn to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this study as One who is Holy, yet approachable through His kindness and salvation. All Scripture references are NIV unless otherwise noted.

It is my prayer that you will be motivated to embrace the fact that you are a child of God, called by Him to “Be God’s Family” in the world.

Enjoy the journey!

Rev. Mark A. Ellcessor

Senior Pastor, Fishers United Methodist Church



4/28/2025 - WEEK 18 DAY 1

The Son is the Radiance of God's Glory

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 1:1-3

Devotional By: Bill Ringenberg

The Epistle (letter) to the Hebrews is the most difficult New Testament book for the modern reader. The writing style is advanced and the epistle assumes the reader has a good understanding of the Old Testament. Written in the late first century A.D., it is not clear who is the author, (probably not Paul) but likely someone in the Pauline circle- a good guess is Barnabus.

Its major emphases are:
the primacy of Jesus as the new best representative of God and thus the fulfillment of the messianic expectation of the Jews to whom the author is writing.
the critical importance of remaining constant in the Christian faith.
With the Gospel of John, the epistle is one of the best interpretive theologies of the New Testament.

In the opening verses of the book of Hebrews, the writer expresses boldly his central thesis, namely that Jesus, the Messiah, is the newest and fullest revelation of the nature of God. He does so in the elegant language of a skillful and knowledgeable writer. God has long revealed Himself in multiple ways such as scripture, nature, human events and personal experience. But now in verse one, the writer emphasizes the importance of revelation through the Old Testament prophets. We gain the fuller revelation of the Incarnate One, Jesus (God come in the flesh) as the God-man who has always been with God, the Father from the foundation of the world (verse two).

Verse three also makes clear that Jesus came to purge our sins. It also states that when Jesus' earthly mission was completed, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" suggesting His ongoing role of intercessor for us with the Father.

As you read these opening verses of the Book of Hebrews, compare Jesus to the Old Testament prophets.

What are some ways Jesus is superior to the prophets of the Old Testament?
What is God revealing to you about Jesus in these opening verses?

Poem

O Radiance, O Glory
Hebrews 1:1-3, Psalm 34

I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
Psalm 34:4-5

*O Radiance, O Glory
Shine on me
Let me bask in your brilliance
The Light of creation
The Dawning of time
The Sunrise of resurrection
For You alone can bring life
You alone can cause the
Photosynthesis for my soul
Allowing newness
And growth
And fruitfulness
To turn my abiding branches
Into heavy laden bearers
Of who You are
O Radiance, O Glory
Shine on me*



4/29/2025 - WEEK 18 DAY 2

The Son is Far Superior to the Angels

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 1:4-14

Devotional By: Charlie Hart

Yesterday's passage and devotional outlined Jesus' superiority to the prophets. Today's scripture makes the case for His supremacy to the angels. Angels played an important role in scriptural texts as they are mentioned nearly 300 times. Four angels are mentioned by name, including Michael, Gabriel, and the fallen angels Lucifer (Satan) and Apollyon. Scriptural texts include angels delivering news and warnings, providing guidance and comfort, and performing heroic actions like removing the stone from the front of Jesus' tomb.

Angels continue to be a regular topic of mention in pop culture. Many famous books, movies, and songs contain angelic characters, plot lines, titles, and tributes. Clarence Odbody taught George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* that Bailey's life had meaning and was worth continuing. Dan Brown's follow up to the bestseller "The DaVinci Code" was entitled "Angels and Demons." The Penguins sang the hit "Earth Angel" in 1954. Marvin Berry and the Starlighters famously covered the song during the Enchantment Under the Sea Dance in the Michael J. Fox movie, *Back to the Future*.

While our fascination with angels is understandable, the writer in today's passage makes it very clear that Jesus is the Son of God, and angels are not. Verse 13 states that, "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?'" The answer is none. Only Jesus received this directive. He reigns supreme.

While it's acceptable to appreciate the role that angels have played and continue to play in the biblical narrative, God is a jealous God. The writer of Hebrews warns us not to give angels praise and worship above or equal to what we give to Him and to Jesus.

Do you have any angels that sit on a higher pedestal than Jesus? How can you make sure that Jesus becomes (or remains) the top priority in your life?

Poem

Languishing, Languishing
Hebrews 1:4-14, Psalm 102

But you, Lord, sit enthroned
forever; your renown
endures through all generations.
Psalm 102:12

*Languishing, languishing, desert
owl scavenged
Vanishing, vanishing, hope
vaporized
Banishing, banishing, exile, in ruin
Attend, Lord, to my tears!*

*Withering, withering, great vine
now fruitless
Dithering, dithering, hands wring
confused
Slithering, slithering down into
pitfall
Hear now, Lord, my longing!*

*Reigning Thou, reigning Thou, now
and forever
Maintain now, maintain now Thy
sure sovereignty
Gaining Thou, gaining Thou, Thy
good e'er working
Releasing those condemned*

*Resting here, resting here, in Eden's
glory
Divest clear, divest clear all of my
pain
Guesting near, guesting near close
to Thy bosom
My King forever, unchanged*



4/30/2025 - WEEK 18 DAY 3

Pay Attention so You Don't Drift Away

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 2:1-4

Devotional By: Peggy Cooke

This scripture says "so we don't drift away". That reminds me of the song by Simon and Garfunkel that came out in 1977, "Slip Sliding Away." The song says "You know the nearer your destination, the more you slip slide away." I felt like that was me in college. One of my sisters was going to the same college. She told me that we should go to Saturday night church and take communion. Then we could go our separate ways with our friends, go to parties and then sleep in on Sunday. It made sense in my little pea brain at the time. Obviously, I was slip sliding away wanting to do what Peggy wanted to do. I went to Saturday night church mostly to appease my parents in case they asked if I made it to church during our weekly Sunday evening phone call. I could answer "Yes" with no guilty conscience. In hindsight, I was backsliding.

Eventually I figured it out and started going to Church on Sunday and back to growing my faith. I was no longer drifting away but found my anchor again in Jesus. Therefore, I was not being carried away by the next current that came along or the wind. This passage warns of disobedience intellectually as well as morally. There will be just punishment for those unwilling to change their ways. Today, I am so grateful for a loving, forgiving and gracious God that I serve. He speaks the truth. God's Word reveals that he has power over all that he has created. His signs and wonder, along with the gifts of the Holy Spirit confirm this truth.

Can you relate to back sliding? I don't think we plan on it. It just happens. Some seeds to backsliding include: temptations, spiritual warfare, lies, accusations, weirdness, discouragement, doubting. Are you sliding into any of those or something else? We can't escape if we listen to the flesh because it brings corruption. Seek the Lord, get right with Him so you will be able to enjoy the fullness of abundant life and experience the Holy Spirit. When we listen to God, he will always be with us, ready to help and encourage us in our faith walk.

Poem

May My

Hebrews 2:1-4, Psalm 119:169-176

*I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek
your servant, for I have not
forgotten your commands.
Psalm 119:176*

*May my eyes be ever on You
Seeking guidance for my path
May my heart be reined in by You
Lest I stray, incite Your wrath
May my soul be sealed by Jesus
By His blood firm in Your palm
May my lips be cleansed with fire
Lest I utter falsehood wrong
May my arms be ever lifting
Those whose burdens heavy bear
May my mind be ever sifting
Thoughts—bring comfort and bring care
May my hands be lifted skyward
This my attitude of praise
May my body know full glory
When by You at last I'm raised*



5/1/2025 - WEEK 18 DAY 4

Jesus Was Made a Little Lower than Angels

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 2:5-9

Devotional By: Kim Arnott

Angels – God’s messengers and protectors. Mediators between God and humanity. While they may be all these things, the author of Hebrews tells us of a limitation of these angelic beings. The earth has never been subject to them, and it will not be subject to them in the future. This authority is reserved for another entity – humanity.

Have you ever wondered what God thinks of us? Does God think, as we hear in Genesis 6:6, that God “*regretted that (God) had made human beings on the earth, and (God’s) heart was deeply troubled*”? Even though humans can do the most senseless things sometimes, and God is probably “deeply troubled”, in Hebrews 2, we are reminded of just how much God cares for and values humankind. And we are also reminded of the sacrifice Jesus suffered on our behalf.

God loves and values us so much that God created us “*a little lower than the angels*” and “*crowned (us) with glory and honor*”. Are you not humbled by this declaration? Why would the creator and ruler of the universe care for us so much? As insignificant as we are, God so cherishes us that we have been elevated to a position of glory and honor. And not only that but God created us to be rulers over the earth. Rulers, guardians, and caretakers of all the good that God created. Back in Genesis we hear that God said,

“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26)

The author of Hebrews reiterates this same message by quoting Psalm 8:4-6 which says that God esteems his human creation so highly that dominion of all the earth has been given to them, not to angels. But we are limited as well. We cannot yet be true rulers over the earth. Our sins prevent us from fully claiming the glory and honor that God wishes to bestow on us.

As sinful as we are, Jesus has redeemed us. Jesus became “*nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man.....*” (Philippians 2:7-8a) Jesus, creator and one with God, superior to the angels, humbled himself to become one of us. By Jesus’ perfect life, death and resurrection, he has fulfilled the words of the Psalmist. Jesus has attained the glory and honor “for every man – that ever was or will be born into the world” (John Wesley, Notes, Hebrews 2:9) Glory be to God!

Poem

Majestic Your Creation
Hebrews 2:5-9, Psalm 8

*You have made them a little lower
than the angels and crowned
them with glory and honor.
Psalm 8:5*

*Majestic Your creation
A mirror of Your name
Throughout the heav’ns reflected
Exclaiming all Your fame*

*To ponder each created--
The bird, the fish, the beast--
It’s more than can imagine
From greatest to the least*

*Yet You have us created
Your image-bearers here
Just lower than the angels
Yet greater in Your care*

*You, high enthroned and vaulted
Descend to us to save
Then with You, we’re exalted
By conquering the grave*

*So with the babes we babble
In tongues diverse and wide
Your praise and great redemption
Which Your grace does provide*



5/2/2025 - WEEK 18 DAY 5

Jesus Shared in Our Humanity

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 2:10-18

Devotional By: Dave Rizk

A few months ago, the Department of Medicine at my University met to vote for a new chairperson. I was so motivated to run, thinking my experience and years of work for the University would equip me to lead the department and serve our community. The other candidate had less experience and less influence on the team. While thinking about it, I realized if my goal is to serve the community better, why don't I endorse my opponent and help him to be a better leader so we have two people serving our community? With two leaders working together, we bring more ideas, team engagement, and better service to our community.

Jesus was made the perfect leader, or pioneer, of our salvation through his suffering as the complete sacrifice for us. Jesus did not need to suffer for his own salvation because he was God in human form. He perfectly obeyed God through his own painful crucifixion to finalize our salvation. When we suffer, we carry on Jesus' work. Our suffering can make us, as servants of God, more sensitive to the needs of others. People who have dealt with pain can reach out with compassion to others who are hurting. Ask God to use your experience to help others if you have suffered.

We sometimes get consumed by titles or positions when serving God. We should learn from Jesus's example and his servant attitude. In this passage, Jesus teaches us to sacrifice to bring our fellow parishioners to eternal glory.

A Call to action: Can you think of a way to exemplify the servant attitude in your everyday actions?

Poem

Christ's Portion
Hebrews 2:10-18, Isaiah 53

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.
Isaiah 53:11-12

*To think that I'm Christ's portion
Is more than I can bear
Such love beyond conceiving
Such grace beyond compare
That Christ, to me inherit,
Gave everything He had
Considered me His treasure
His pearl, in skull field clad
This Prince, through thorn fields
ravaged,
Whipped, scourged by Dragon's tail
He shielded me from fire
Where demoned hell's mouth railed
Across the vast, deep chasm
Which separated us
He rides victorious, champion
To waken me from dust
To think that I'm Christ's portion
Is more than I can bear
Such love beyond conceiving
Such grace beyond compare*



5/5/2025 - WEEK 19 DAY 1

Fix Your Thoughts on Jesus, the Faithful Son

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 3:1-6

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

What are you thinking about, right now?

What do you think about when you wake up, go to bed, and your waking hours? What occupies your thought life when you are under stress, overjoyed, and everything in between?

Here's a better question. What does it mean to "fix your thoughts on Jesus?" Here are some truths about Jesus in the book of Hebrews:

Jesus is greater than the prophets of the Old Testament.

Jesus is superior to the angels of God.

Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Moses.

Jesus is the Son of God, creator of heaven and earth.

Jesus became human, tempted in every way like we are.

Jesus is our high priest, making the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus shed His blood in place of ours.

Jesus gives us access directly to the throne of God in heaven.

Jesus offers us His Sabbath rest.

Jesus is worthy of our faith.

Jesus is worthy of our action.

Jesus is worthy of our lives.

What are you thinking about, right now?

Poem

Forget-Me-Not

Hebrews 3:1-6, Psalm 103

*Bless the LORD, O my soul
And all that is within me bless His
holy name! Bless the LORD, O my
soul and forget not all His benefits
Psalm 103:1-2*

*Sweet tiny blue flower
With heart golden hue
Forget-me-not bouquet
I give unto you*

*I'll focus, remember
All that you have done
Each day as sun rises
Her courses to run*

*With thoughts fixed upon you
Your benefits strong
The way you've sustained me
Forgiven my wrongs*

*Your constant compassion
Which heals all my ills
Your death which redeemed me
Your love, my heart stills*

*O, how could I forget
Your great loving care?
Your anger against me
Reined in, O, forbear!*

*Beyond any love
I have known on this sphere
True love and respect now
I boldly declare*

*So sweet little flower
Bouquet I now raise
Accept, Lord, this gift
As my offering of praise*



5/6/2025 - WEEK 19 DAY 2

The Israelites Tested God in the Wilderness

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 3:7-11

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

At the end of the book of Genesis, the entire nation of Israel had relocated to Egypt for food and security. The next book of the Bible, Exodus, opens four hundred years later. By then Israel had grown to a vast nation within Egypt, though now as slaves to Pharaoh.

Enter Moses.

He led the people out of bondage and through the Red Sea on dry ground. For the next forty years, God continued to provide for the Israelites as they were awaiting entrance into the Promised Land. They complained against Moses, rebelled against God, and embraced idolatry.

God told them to have no other gods; they built a golden calf. God gave them bread from heaven; they wanted meat. God provided water from a rock; they got cotton-mouthed with thirst for self. God commanded them to refrain from adultery; they prostituted themselves with false gods.

The result: none of them would be allowed to enter the Promised Land; none of them would enter God's rest. Living a Godly life is not a matter of, "I don't get it." In the end, it's a matter of, "I don't want it."

In today's passage, the Holy Spirit calls this "rebellion." The dictionary defines rebellion as the act of resisting authority. Teens rebel against parents. Citizens rebel against governments. Everybody rebels against God.

Psalms 14:2-3 says, "The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Enter Jesus.

Though we were in bondage to sin, Jesus opened a safe passage to peace with God, to life in Christ, to ministry in the Spirit, to eternity in heaven.

Will you yield to Him and walk in the way that leads to life?

Poem

Proclaiming Your Name
Hebrews 3:7-11, Psalm 95:1-7

*Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our
Maker; for he is our God and we are
the people of his pasture, the flock
under his care.
Psalm 95:6-7*

*When bonded in slav'ry
You set us all free
When chased by our en'my
You opened the sea
When tired and thirsty
Your Rock water gave
When hungry and fainting--
Heav'n's Manna to save
Each day and each night
Cloud and fire beside
When idols we worshipped
Your wrath did not hide
You claimed us "My people"
We claimed you "Our God"
You are our Great Shepherd
We go where you trod
We build now an altar
Our hearts set aflame
We enter Your promise
Proclaiming Your name*



5/7/2025 - WEEK 19 DAY 3

Turning an Unbelieving Heart Toward God

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 3:12-19

Devotional By: Nancy Foust

Hebrews 3:15 says: As has just been said: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." The rebellion he is speaking of is when Moses led the people out of Egypt, those that disobeyed God, and those that perished in the wilderness.

What does "harden" your heart mean? Harden means to stop having kind or friendly feelings for someone or caring about something. I think the Bible defines harden, more particularly, as type of final judgment of God that takes place before someone dies. Completing either of these actions, we must look at temptation as the biggest interruption in our kind and caring hearts. How do we get rid of all those nasty thoughts and daily interruptions on our way to our salvation?

Let's start by understanding that Jesus was tempted with these interruptions. Three ways in His prayer moments after His Baptism, Satan tried his best. Did He give in? NO, because he is perfect. We are not perfect, so let's review our daily issues and think of ways to improve and stop them. These interruptions come in all styles. Here is a short list for us to think about.

1. Eating too much
2. Spending too much
3. Laziness
4. Venting on social media
5. Gossiping
6. Feeling jealous
7. Viewing Porn
8. Lying
9. Cheating
10. Abusing alcohol
11. And many others

Some of these can be changed by altering our daily habits: eating, spending, social media etc. Others can be more difficult and may require outside help. Whatever it takes, we need to find ways to be better. A friend told me she would choose two of the above each week. She conscientiously thought before they became a problem and said a little prayer for God's guidance to help her stop!

Jesus said, "NO- go away" to Satan. We can be more like Jesus. By softening our hearts to God's desires, we are reaching for our ultimate goal: God's love and trust and our salvation. Can you make a goal of improving your heart to lessen your hardening this week?

A prayer for Hebrews 3: 14. Dear Lord, thank you for allowing us to become partakers of Christ. Help us to hold onto your beginning of our confidence in you and your promises to remain steadfast in our faith to the end. Amen

Poem

Today!

Hebrews 3:12-19, Psalm 95:8-11

"Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,..."
Psalm 95:8a

*Today I must enter
Today is the day
O, heart, be compliant
O, God, have Your way
Break, stubborn resistance
Break, proud, haughty eyes
Bow down to Your Maker
Who's enthroned on high*

*Today I must enter
Today is the day
O, heart, be compliant
O, God, have Your way
Don't wait 'til tomorrow
Don't dwell in your past
Today, pray to enter
God's great promised rest*

*[may be sung to Wye Valley by
James Mountain; also known as "At
the Name of Jesus"]*



5/8/2025 - WEEK 19 DAY 4

A Sabbath Rest for the People of God

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 4:1-5

Devotional By: Susan Pressler

The importance of entering God's rest is woven throughout the Bible, beginning with the familiar verses of Genesis in which we are told that God created the universe and all living things in six days. "2By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. 3Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all of the work of creating that He had done" (Genesis 2:2-3).

In Psalm 95, the writer (probably David) remembers that God was angry with the Israelites because they did not follow His commands after He had freed them from slavery in Egypt. God "declared on oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest" (Psalm 95:11). We know that even Moses did not fully receive God's rest and therefore, did not enter the promised land of Canaan.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that God's "promise of entering His rest" which was described in Psalm 95:11 remains for us today as Christians. We need to be careful to enter His rest (Hebrews 4:1-5). Entering His rest means having total faith in Jesus Christ and then being obedient to His commands. Entering God's rest means accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is not enough to hear God's Word, we must receive it as faith. Importantly, this rest is not just for some of us, it is intended for everyone who trusts in and relies on Jesus Christ (See Pastor David Guzak, Enduring Word, Sermon: "Jesus Gives Rest").

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

Have you entered God's rest? Are you helping other people to enter God's rest?

Poem

O, Gift Of Rest
Hebrews 4:1-5, Genesis 2:1-3

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.
Genesis 2:2-3

*O, gift of rest for weary
Who work resistant ground
With thorns in flesh, weeds choking
God's laborers confound
We praise You, God, for resting
Each Sabbath to revive
Our weary, curse worn bodies
Your holiness, inspire*

*O, gift of rest post labor
The intercessor's strife
The pains extreme, forgotten
The birthing of new life
Contractions long, are silenced
When a new child is born
Into your glorious kingdom
Now sheltered in Your arms*

*O, gift of rest—forgiveness!
After a night of tears
After the broken-hearted
Redeemed from debt arrears
A heavy burden lifted
The weary, finally rest
As Jesus whispers comfort
To child upon His breast*

*O, gift of rest, created
For human's great delight
Not bound by legalism
Not laws which bring more strife
But holy day of freedom
God's gift of jubilee!
A day when we remember
In Christ, we've been set free!*

[may be sung to Aurelia by Samuel S. Wesley; also known as "The Church's One Foundation"]



5/9/2025 - WEEK 19 DAY 5

Today is the Day

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 4:6-7

Devotional

By: Mark Ellcessor

On the old cartoon Popeye, the ever-hungry character Wimpy regularly said, "I'll gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today." He would have loved the famous nine-patty burger at Wayback Burger. It's 5000 calories. Skip the Mayo if you're on a diet.

Too often we have a Wimpy approach to life in Christ. I'll serve more when I retire. I'll give more when I strike it rich. I'll believe more when I have more time to devote to such things.

But God said that day is Today. In 2 Corinthians 6:2, Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8 where the Lord said, "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you." Then Paul boldly proclaimed, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." Jesus is the hope of today!

God's rest has both a future and present connotation for believers in Jesus. After this life, we can be assured of eternity in heaven, in the very presence of the Lord Himself. When believers die, the Bible promises "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Salvation in Christ leads to eternal Sabbath-rest.

But right now, while we are alive in the present, there is a Sabbath-rest which is a taste of what is to come. We can experience the peace of Christ, even when life is hard. We can embrace the love of Christ, even though we don't always feel lovable. We can be encompassed by the grace of Christ, all day, every day.

The promises of Jesus are here for you to claim today. Don't put it off until a Tuesday that will never come.

Poem

Meribah (quarrel, provocation, strife, or contention)
Hebrews 4:6-7, Psalm 95
For Caryl and Jason

Today, if only you would hear his voice, "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" Psalm 95:7b-11

*Like storm clouds rolling, circling
My brooding thoughts swirl round
A bitterness disturbing
A striving which confounds
A loss, a grief contending
Bold questioning God's grace
A bone to pick with Jesus
A yelling in God's face*

*"Why do you let this sorrow
Continue day and night?
Why are you silent, absent
When I alone do strive?
Where are you when you promised
To never leave my side;
When in my darkest moments
Do you seem most to hide?"*

*"Can you not hear my voicing?
My accusations clear?
Are you in heav'n rejoicing
While I am suff'ring here?
I know your call to trust you
I know your call to rest
Yet here I lie in agony
Forgotten and distressed"*

*Lord, take me to your garden
Lord, you, my Eden be
Collapse me now to kneeling
Let quiet cover me
Allow my hands to tarry
Among this soil below
And set my heart to weeding
Deep bitter roots to hoe*

*Uncover now my masking
Expose the angry roots
Which wind beneath my surface
Which strangle out your truth
Assist me, Lord, and guide me
Your strong hand upon mine
As we together cultivate
This broken heart of mine*

*Amidst long winter's freezing
Let me, beneath your mulch,
Discover new growth springing
Sustained 'spite chilling touch
O, shine bright Son upon me
My sorrow to divest
Today, each moment entering
Your vast eternal rest*



5/12/2025 - WEEK 20 DAY 1

Sabbath-Rest

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 4:8-11

Devotional By: Kim Arnott

"Think what a better world it would be if we all, the whole world, had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down on our blankets for a nap." (Barbara Jordan)

Doesn't that sound lovely! What I would give to take a nap sometimes! But rest can be considered a waste of time or not being productive. If we rest, we're being lazy. But resting is part of self-care and crucial to our well-being. We cannot be any good to others if we're exhausted.

While I think that God absolutely wants us to physically rest, the author of Hebrews is talking about something more, something different – Sabbath-rest. "Sabbath" comes from the Hebrew word *Shabbat* which means "rest". It's based on the practice of *shmita* - the year of rest for the land every seven years. It's where we get our word "sabbatical". But even more, the idea of Sabbath-rest is not just about inactivity. It's about celebration, joy and blessings.

Let's take this idea of rest a bit further. God promises us another type of rest as well. As we develop a closer walk with God, we can experience rest in his love and grace. The Israelites turned away from God and were not awarded the rest promised them. As we read in Psalm 95:10-11, "For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" But WE can attain God's Sabbath-rest, only through Jesus Christ.

We can rest from our labor just as God rested on the Sabbath from the work of creation. But it's not just about physical rest. God offers us a meaningful, spiritual rest that can only be found in God. Spend time daily in prayer. Make time for worship. Study God's word for greater understanding. This is the kind of spiritual rest that God offers.

God also offers us eternal rest when we will be restored to our original perfection. Then, *"He will wipe every tear from (our) eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* (Revelation 21:4) That's the ultimate Sabbath-rest. Heaven offers us divine rest – the joy and blessing of eternity in the presence of God.

Are you trying to find rest – true, spiritual peace? Trust in God's provision and truly find your Sabbath-rest that is available to us now by faith and trust in Jesus. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28)

Poem

Rest Within Your Arms Hebrews 4: 8-11, Psalm 4

*In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in
safety. Psalm 4:8*

*In childhood, how I fought the hour
Of bedtime, fear of missing out
Of fun and action going on
Rebellion, grumpy murmurs
Until soft covers welcomed me
Fresh linen, breezes wafting
Soon lulled me into dreamland's peace
Deep rest, body recovering*

*In adolescence, late night plans
To bed after fun only
Collapsing weary, bone tired comalike
With difficulty rousing
For tasks set firm with next day's sun
I'd struggle to awaken
No energy, a sleepy haze
Head on the desk a-sleeping*

*Adulthood—busy scheduling
A-to and fro, I'd scamper
Calendar packed, a squeezed tight day
No time to exhale intentional
While multi-tasking daily
No time for play, create
'Cause even when I'd recreate
A competition stake*

*When finally my body
Is in its "last leg" state
Will regret fill my thinking
Restlessness bedtime's fate?
Will days be filled with napping?
A drowsy, listless time
Of meaningless complaining
About my loss of time?*

*O, Lord, teach me the rhythm
Of work and play and rest
Of Sabbath's holy presence
A gift to me, Your best
Keep me from child resisting
Or teen rebellion's cause
Or adult's false believing
I must control it all*

*Instead, make me to lie down
In pastures green and still
Beside your glorious river
To hear the sparrow's trill
Allow me yield all glory
To whom it all belongs
And come to you when weary
And rest within your arms*



5/13/2025 - WEEK 20 DAY 2

Nothing is Hidden from God's Sight

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 4:12-13

Devotional By: Lynette Hart

When I read these verses about the double-edged sword, I am reminded of the suit of armor we are told to put on in Ephesians 6:14-17.

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I remember my son coming home from Sunday School with his suit of armor made of paper plates and cardboard. Ephesians 6:17 speaks of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This sword protects us from the evil one. The Word of God and the knowledge of the word of God is our protector.

Today's Hebrews passage also speaks of the words of God as a sword. But not as a sword to protect us from others but as a God's sword that penetrates into our heart. The word of God looks within us and judges our thoughts and hearts. God's sword can cut into our being and see what mere men cannot.

When children misbehave, they often hide. They don't want their parents or teachers to see what they have done or what mistakes they have made. They cover up the messes they made. They hide themselves. As adults, we often want to hide away. Hide from God. These verses remind us that the sword of God's word sees all. Nothing is hidden. God can see all of us and God's word holds us accountable. When we read the word of God, we learn what standards we are being judged by. We know the rules of God.

The word of God is ALIVE! The word of God is the POWER within us and power to learn and grow with God.

What are you hiding from God?
What will God's sword find?
How will God's word give you POWER?

Poem

When All Else Are Scrambling
Hebrews 4:12-13, Psalm 149

*The Lord takes delight in his people;
he crowns the humble with victory.
Let his faithful people rejoice in this
honor and sing for joy on their beds.
May the praise of God be in their
mouths and a double-edged sword in
their hands...*
Psalm 149: 4-6

*When all else are scrambling
When others, distressed
Run 'round with their hands thrown
In fear and protest
I, calm and delighting,
Sit still in God's word
God guarding my Eden
With double-edged sword*

*While others are shrieking
My lips fill with praise
For my God is sovereign
Love's banner o'er raised
I'm humble and resting
My God gives me peace
No trembling nor angst here
But calming release*

*What comfort! What gifting!
This victory sure
As God fights the battles
As God wields His sword
O, faithful ones listen!
O, be not afraid!
God delights in the humble
Wait, His power display!*



5/14/2025 - WEEK 20 DAY 3

Jesus Our High Priest

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 4:14-15

Devotional By: Dan Henke

This letter was directed to 1st Century Jews who were struggling with persecution and considering a return to traditional Judaism. Their question was "Why is Jesus a better alternative?" In this passage, the writer tells them that Jesus was the "great" high priest and sets him above the high priests with whom the Jews were already familiar.

The high priest is already the highest religious figure in Judaism, but by saying Jesus is the "great" high priest, he is greater than them. The writer goes on to show just how much greater Jesus is. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses..." In some passages, the term "sympathize" is used instead. The Interlineal Bible states this word "conveys the idea of sharing in another's experiences, particularly in their suffering or distress. It implies a deep emotional connection and understanding, going beyond mere pity to a heartfelt empathy." Jesus dined with sinners and tax collectors. He allowed a woman of ill repute to wash his feet. He talked to a Samaritan woman. He taught crowds of ordinary people and fed them.

This passage makes a deliberate contrast with the high priests of the time. When Jesus called out the priesthood in the Temple in Matthew 23 for hypocrisy and used the illustration of the priest's prayer in Luke 18, everyone knew what He was talking about. The priests lived better than they did, thought they were better than the people they led and held it over them. Nobody could imagine a high priest like Caiaphas or Annanias dying for them on a cross.

Jesus was also tempted just as we are, Satan tempted Him with power in Matthew 4, and Jesus rejected him. The high priests of the 1st Century did not. They had become addicted to power, and this fueled their desire to oppose and eventually try to kill Jesus. Jesus knows we are tempted too, and this is further proof of His sympathy for us.

Knowing that Jesus is our high priest, we are given the simple command he gave His 12 Disciples: "Follow me." Where does it lead? Following Jesus leads to God's throne of grace, with confidence, that we can boldly speak His truth.

Can you fully follow Jesus?

Poem

No Longer

Hebrews 4:14-15, Leviticus 16

*"This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place:..."
Leviticus 16:3a*

*No longer need I Aaron
A sinner just like me
To stand before God's holiness
And sacrifice for me
For I have Christ, my high priest
Who shed His blood upon
A wooden built cross altar
He died but once, for all
This sinless Lamb, God's offering
Who died there in my place
Has settled all Sin's debtedness
His death, God's gift of grace
No longer need I Aaron
To step within the veil
Of holy, holy, holiness
To intercede, avail
For now, my High Priest, Jesus
Has torn the bulwark veil
And so, I, even I, can stand
My heart felt needs detail
For with Christ's blood I'm sprinkled
His sacrifice complete
I boldly stand before God's throne
No longer in defeat
But all victorious, righteous, true
All 'cause Christ rose for me
Sing holy, holy 'fore the throne!
This e'er my song shall be!*



5/15/2025 - WEEK 20 DAY 4

Making Sacrifice for Their Own Sins

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 5:1-3

Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

Hebrews 5:1-3 tells us that the Hebrews used a high priest to be their advocate and through him they offered sacrifices for their sins and then he asked God to forgive them.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrews selected a high priest, from among their people, to represent them in matters related to God. The Hebrews were required to offer a proper sacrifice to allow the high priest to ask God for their forgiveness.

In the New Testament, the perfect sinless Christ gave up his life as a sacrifice for all our sins. Christ became an advocate for both you and me that we might be forgiven. He was perfect. He was the ultimate sacrificial lamb, as the Lamb of God.

One of the most special times for me is during our church Communion Service. This is a time that I feel called to confess my sins and ask for forgiveness from God. When I partake of the symbolic Body of Christ and drink the symbolic blood of Christ, I recognize his sacrifice for me. I feel guilt lifted as he forgives me. The hard part, after that, is I know he is calling me to repent and to not repeat my sin(s).

Jesus Christ followed God's will to make that sacrifice. I cannot fathom the pain and agony he went through to offer himself as a pure sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Just as the Hebrews looked to God for forgiveness as they made their animal sacrifices, Jesus advocates for you and for me to ask God to forgive us. I don't know of any other person that would take on that responsibility for me. I will be forever grateful. The hard part for me to understand is that he sacrificed himself for people who have offended me, for people who have hurt me, for people that I must forgive if I expect him to forgive me.

Remember, the next time someone cuts you off in traffic, that Jesus died for them too! Then, forgive them. We have been given the power to give that forgiveness. As Jesus Christ loves the imperfect me, I am called to love other imperfect people. It's hard to remember that sometimes, but Christ calls us to remember. Communion is one of the times that our focus is completely on him, our Savior, and at that time we are called to remember his perfect sacrifice.

Poem

My Ephod

Hebrews 5:1-3, Exodus 28:1-43

*Engrave the names of the sons of Israel
on the two stones the way a gem cutter
engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in
gold filigree settings and fasten them on
the shoulder pieces of the ephod as
memorial stones for the sons of Israel.
Aaron is to bear the names on his
shoulders as a memorial before the Lord.
Exodus 28: 11-12*

*"As High Priest like Melchizedek
My ephod heavy be
It has engraved upon each stone
Those God has given me
I've made a yoke to carry all
Names etched upon my palms
Where nails and blood have sealed their
hope
Each promise given, stands
This yoke for me is easy
This burden carried, light
For it is Love which bears the load;
Each precious in my sight*

*"With others, I have shared this task
My intercessors, they
My faithful under-shepherd ones
Whom I have taught to pray
They, too, wear ephods I have giv'n
With easy yokes from me
Well fitted for the carrying
Whate'er the burdens be
For it is I who strengthen each--
The under-shepherds' hearts--
For it is I who minister
By setting them apart*

*"With gifts of love and faithfulness
My ephod bearing priests
Anoint the frail and tend the sick
Prepare my vict'ry's feast
They suffer not the little ones
But bring them unto me
They speak the truth, despite all odds
Their rest, only in me
And one day, all these ephods borne
Will fall from shoulders strong
And be replace with golden crowns
And accolade, 'Well done!'"*



5/16/2025 - WEEK 20 DAY 5

Eternal and Perfect High Priest

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 5:4-10

Devotional

By: Kim Arnott

Let's get this out of the way – who is this guy Melchizedek and why do we care? He's only mentioned in scripture once in Genesis and described as “king of Salem” and “priest of God Most High.” He appeared to Abram after his victory in battle, offering him bread and wine. Recognizing that they worshiped the same God, Abram offered him a tithe of everything. Over time, Melchizedek became a mythical character for the Jewish people and held in high esteem. He is mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient Jewish writings. Some scholars see him as an archetype of Jesus, and his offering of bread and wine as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. For these reasons, Hebrews describes Jesus as a “priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”.

Now, for the heart of the message. Hebrews 5:4-10 offers some insight into why Jesus is superior to the Levitical high priests and ultimately our high priest forever. First, Jesus was **appointed by God** by virtue of his divine nature and special relationship as God's one and only son (John 3:16). The readers of Hebrews were living at a time when the High Priest position was inherited or chosen by the authorities. Jesus didn't take on the position in this way – he was divinely appointed. This pattern was set by the first High Priest, Aaron, who was appointed to that position by God to serve Israel.

Jesus is also qualified to be our High Priest because of **his humanity**. “He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death (Philippians 2:7-8) His humanity creates for him a special relationship with us. By becoming one of us, Jesus can sympathize with and have compassion on us as we deal with life's difficulties. He can perfectly intercede for us.

He is also the perfect High Priest by virtue of **his submission and obedience to the will of God**. Jesus was made perfect through his agony and prayer at Gethsemane, and his ultimate submission to the completion of his mission. As our eternal high priest, Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross first, which provided for his ultimate blood sacrifice on our behalf. His perfection offers us eternal salvation through him. As High Priest, he sits at the right hand of God, the Most Holy Place, and offers each of us direct access to God. And because of his divine nature, Jesus was made our ETERNAL High Priest – no other priest or human mediator would ever be necessary.

What areas of your life require deeper obedience and submission to the will of God?

Poem

Obedience, Suffering, Perfection
Hebrews 5:4-10, Psalm 110, Genesis 4

*It is only the one trained for battle
Who knows when a word from
above
Must be followed without hesitation
Obedience, borne out of love*

*It is only one fighting the battle
Where enemies' arrows do fly
Though wounded, still wields his
sword clashing
Suff'ring great pain, with deep sighs*

*It is only when tested in battle
One who remains faithful and true
Will enter God's gates with rejoicing
Perfection, with glory imbued*

*Obedience, suff'ring, perfection
This is the true course of God's Son
Who on our behalf fought the battle
Who vic'try o'er sin and death won*



5/19/2025 - WEEK 21 DAY 1

Back to Basics

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 5:11-14

Devotional By: Dan Henke

Back to basics.

This passage isn't so much about how you grow in your faith as it is about getting the foundation of your faith correct.

There is a scene in one of Tom Hanks' early movies, "The Money Pit," that I've always liked. In the movie, Tom Hanks and Shelley Long try to remodel what appears to be a very nice home, but encounter one problem after another, and are constantly reassured by the contractor that the job will only take "two weeks." The home is finished months later, and when handing over the key to the home, the contractor says: "No, this wasn't an easy one, but the foundation was good, I'll say that."

Our passage today was a direct rebuke to the early Christians reading (or hearing) it. Instead of being teachers, they needed to be taught elementary truths...again. But they weren't even trying to understand them. The actual Greek word for "elementary" as used here does not connote something basic. The word means the highest ruling principles. These principles are Holy as they come from God. That's what makes them higher and more important than anything else.

The Interlinear Bible has this to say about use of milk in this context:

"In the Greco-Roman world, milk symbolized purity and simplicity, making it an apt metaphor for the elementary teachings of Christianity. The metaphor of milk as spiritual nourishment is rooted in the understanding that just as infants require milk for growth, new believers need foundational teachings to mature in their faith."

Hebrews was not directed to new believers. It was directed to those who had believed and were at risk of falling away, which emphasizes how important it is to get the foundation right.

What is elementary, highest, and foundational in our faith? Here is a good statement:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Following Jesus can be complicated, and we can so easily mess it up. I know I do. But it all comes back to the foundation of our faith. The faith journey isn't an easy one, but if the foundation is good...

Have you checked your foundation lately?

Poem

A Life Of Digesting God's Word Hebrews 5:11-14, Jeremiah 15:15-21

*When your words came, I ate them; they
were my joy and my heart's delight, for I
bear your name, Lord God Almighty.
Jeremiah 15:16*

*At life's dawn
My infant cry
Awakens soul
My comfort
At Spirit's breast
Rich colostrum
Essential truths
Growth factors
Protection
Nutrition
Jesus loves me
I know this
Me, and all
The little ones
Of the world
I am safe
In the arms of
My Shepherd*

*Mid-morning snack
Spirit's fruit
Eagerly gobbled
With dirty hands
From worldly play
Quick bites
Energy
Healing
For skinned ego
Fast food
Must return
To playmates
Selfish
Yet still
Dependent
Quick prayers
Rote
Routine*

*Lunchtime
Need rest
Day's labor
Hard, strong
Challenges
Need hearty stew
Cool drink
Thirsty panting
Siesta?
Duty calls
Wrestling—
Obedience
Or
Rebellion
Cheese and meat
Sandwiched
Between
White bread*

*Appetizers
Glass of wine
Realizing joy
The journey
The companionship
Taking time
Reviewing day
Examen
Breaking bread
Opened eyes
Call realized
Visions explained
Children gather
Bless
And
Anoint
Maturing
Fruit*

*Evening feast
Banquet spread
Chewing steak
Savoring rich flavor
Iron strong
Swallowing pride
Muscles sinewy
Lifting
Bearing
Carrying
Sharing wisdom
Gourmet meal
Salty love
Sucking marrow
Rich from bone
Teeth set
Lips reined
Gospel harvest*

*Bedtime snack
Worn pages
Eyes fading
Spirit strong
Words continue
Nourishment sweet
Spirit serving
Old, old story
Comfort here
No fear
Ready for sleep
Bathed clean
Wrapped in bed-
clothes
Evening prayer
Breath and sigh
Intercession
Praise
Peace*



5/20/2025 - WEEK 21 DAY 2

Moving from Elementary to Maturity

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6:1-3

Devotional By: Lisa Ellcessor

Baby Faith

Jesus Loves ME! This little light of mine, let it shine! I feel Your warm love holding ME. The BIBLE, yes that's the book for ME! I don't read your Word, but I wait for others to tell me Your stories. I drink of Your scriptures, but bore easily. I spit out anything I can't chew dropping God's nuggets of wisdom on the ground when I don't like them. I have trouble talking, but I'm learning to pray. My prayers are cute, although self-focused. Why do you care for ME so intimately? I need your reassurance every hour. Hold me! I crave security because I am afraid. I make numerous messes and throw Christian tantrums when I don't get my way. SORRRRY! I'm also sorry for being distracting in church. I'm not interested yet in listening, but I really want to be seen all finely dressed and adorable. Please, guide and hold my hand as I learn to walk with You? Amen.

Adolescent Faith

Yo! Jesus, Sup? I am eagerly taking it all in. You belong with me! Yes Lord, I walk in Your truth and trust You with my heart, soul, mind and strength because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Me and my Christian friends wait eagerly for You; Your name is renown in all the world! Thanks for the blood poured out for us on the cross. I know You're glad I come to church. My agenda has You penciled in, but "not gonna lie," I haven't made You a priority. I'm excited about missions and I'm making a difference in the world. I hope You notice and bless me. Question: Why drag me down by all Your rules? I want to be free to discover ME! Personally, there are certain scriptures I don't follow, "not my style, just sayin!" About the tithe thingy, maybe "tmr." BTW, are You noticing how strong I am? I'm learning to understand You as I search for my life purpose. Well, nice talking at You, when I need you.

Mature Faith (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Lord God Almighty, Holy is Your name. Speak as I wait, rest and listen to You. May Your will be our will. Build up the Body of Christ for works of service until "we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Help us to no longer be infants tossed back and forth by selfish waves and blown around by deceitful schemes. Instead, may we speak truth in love and in all things grow in Your Holy Fire. Amen.

What is your next step toward Christian maturity?

Poem

Give It Up!

Hebrews 6:1-3, Psalm 119:33-40

Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared.

Psalm 119:37-38

Give it up!

These petty arguments

This stubborn streak

This need for legalism

These meaningless tantrums

Have you not heard?

Have you not seen?

Have you not tasted?

Do you not know

The goodness of God?

Rid the road

Of stumbling blocks

Of tradition's ruts

Of heretical traps

Of egotistical barriers

Make straight the path

Level your pride

Lift up your drooping moods

Gird your arms

Armor your life

God is faithful

God's promises are sure

Fear God alone

You must decrease

Grow up!



5/21/2025 - WEEK 21 DAY 3

Walk Away, and Keep Walking

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6:4-6

Devotional By: Lynette Hart

I have a sweet tooth. I love dessert. Cookies and ice cream are my kryptonite. I have never met a cookie I didn't like or that I have said no to. I would even describe ice cream and cookies as a heavenly gift.

God's word is also like that cookie. Have we heard that once you have experienced it, you can't stay away. It's like the words to one of my favorite hymns from childhood Pass It On. "That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it, you spread God's love to everyone."

But if you do stray, you can never return. You can never be brought back to repentance.

What?!? Haven't we been taught that once we receive God's salvation we are good to go? We all had "low points" where we are closer to God and also times we are further from God? Life is tough and we stray, sometimes we are not as close to God as other times. When we have a low point, can we really never return?

No, true Christians do not lose their salvation. True Christians have accepted salvation. God does not abandon them. When I have my "low points", I remind myself that I may be a little "lost" but God has not lost me.

These verses are meant for, lack of a better term, "observational" Christians. Christians who are shallow in their faith. These "Christians" have talked the talk but never really walked the walk. They appear to be Christian – at church every week, observed other's Christianity but never internally accepted Christ. They have listened to the Word but they have not really heard it.

As 2 Peter 2:21 states "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them."

Accepting God's word and his salvation is eating that heavenly cookie. Sharing in the Holy Spirit helps solidify our faith. Our salvation is eternally secure. What are you? True Christian or an "observational" Christian?

Poem

Don't Look Back!

Hebrews 6:4-6, Psalm 119:129-136

*Direct my footsteps according to
your word; let no sin rule over me.
Streams of tears flow from my
eyes, for your law is not obeyed.
Psalm 119: 133, 136*

*Once you've been rescued
From Sodom and Gomorrah's
Fire and brimstone*

*Once you are freed
From prison's
Dungeon of abuse*

*Once you are running
From terror's
Threat and annihilation*

*No tears for the old rags!
Don't look back!
Don't return to the vomit!*



5/22/2025 - WEEK 21 DAY 4

Be Land that Produces Things for God

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6:7-8

Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

I always wonder what God expects from me. Hebrews 6:7-8 tells me God sends rain on both the good crops and the bad weeds. The good crops are harvested and the bad weeds are burned. Matthew 13:1-9 shares Jesus' parable of the Sower. Seed falls on good soil, bad ground and shallow soil. When I hear these parables in the Bible it causes me to take notice of the opportunities I get to share God's Word with others. It is my job to share God's word. I can't be responsible if it falls on good ears or unhearing ears. I can only be responsible to share the Word when I have the opportunity. God charges you and me to plant the seed, to share his good Word, to share stories of how He has made a difference in our lives.

I must admit that there are times I did have the opportunity and said nothing. I didn't want to be embarrassed or to embarrass the person I was speaking with. Later, upon reflecting, I felt guilty that I didn't share meaningful conversation with that person when I had the chance. I have since begun to call those missed opportunities "practice." When I recognize I missed the chance then, the next time I get that chance, I will take it. I also will not feel guilty if my words are not taken seriously and are ignored. The rain (the words) will fall on both good soil and bad soil. My witness will also fall on good ears and unhearing ears.

I must let God's word be shared. That's what I think God expects of me (and you).

Dear God, please help me recognize the opportunity to witness your love, your wisdom, and your caring to others when you give me the chance. Amen

Poem

May The Soil Of My Heart
Hebrews 6:7-8, Psalm 85

*Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.
Psalm 85:11-12*

*May the soil of my heart
Daily receive
Not only morning dew
But gentle rains
Allow the roots
Of Your seed
To extend deep
Finding springs from
The earth*

*May the Son of Your heart
Daily shine
Not only in my dawning
But throughout my days
Allow the chlorophyll
Of your Spirit
To feed richly
Every cell of the budding
Of fruit*



5/23/2025 - WEEK 21 DAY 5

Pursuing the Things of God

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6:9-12

Devotional By: Judith Gibson

In chapter six of Hebrews, the writer begins by addressing the “Beloved,” the word which is always used in the Bible to address Christians, not the unsaved. Because several followers were starting to leave “the doctrines of Christ” (6:1) and “fall away” from Christ’s teachings (6:6), he addresses their lack of understanding. Many were returning to their former way of life before following Christ. In fact, many were “in danger of abandoning their faith altogether” (Zondervan, *Handbook to the Bible*, 1999).

However, in verses 9-12, the writer’s tone shifts from frustration to encouragement as he exhorts these Christians to continue in their faith. He writes that “God is not unrighteous to forget” their “work and labor of love” which they did in His name and their ministry to fellow believers. Here we see that the love we display in serving other believers shows “the reality” of our love for Christ. God will remember “your work and the love you have shown him.” That is what motivates us for service. “What is done to any in the name of God shall not go unrewarded. What is done to the saints, as such, God takes as done to Himself” (*Matthew Henry Commentary*).

Jesus tells us that the world will know we are His if we love one another (John 13:35). The song “We are One in the Spirit” reminds us of this love we should show one another:

We are One in The Spirit,
We are One in The Lord...
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love...
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love. (Peter Scholte)

In Hebrews 6:11, the writer admonishes us to show diligence in serving others: “diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” Finally, in verse 12, the writer warns against sluggishness and encourages us to imitate those who have faith and patience. He writes, “be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (i.e. eternal salvation). Scripture admonishes us not to be weary in well-doing. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:7-10, KJV). Are you serving God today from an intense love and gratitude towards Him, or for the sake of appearance or duty?

Prayer: Search me, Oh God, and cleanse me from any selfish motives as I serve others. May all I do for You show my Love for You. Amen.

Poem

Instruction

Hebrews 6:9-12, Psalm 82

*Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and
the oppressed. Rescue the weak
and the needy; deliver them from
the hand of the wicked.
Psalm 82:3-4*

*Do not grow weary
Become not faint
With hands on plow
Go furrowing---
Do not look back
Learn full restraint
Lean into God’s call
Not worrying*

*Love Gospel true
Speak lovingly
Your focus on
The other---
Proclaim the Year
God’s jubilee
To sister and
To brother*



5/26/2025 - WEEK 22 DAY 1

God's Promise of Abraham's Descendants

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6:13-15

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

Abraham is considered the patriarch of the faith. Here's his bio:

Abram (his original name) was born and raised in the city of Ur in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq).

He was around 70 when he relocated to Haran (present-day Turkey) with his wife and father and nephew. The Bible says his wife "Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive" (Genesis 11:30). She was ten years younger.

He was 75 when he left his father's household and relocated to Canaan (present-day Israel) with his wife and nephew. He and Sarai were still childless, when God made this promise: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you" (Genesis 12:2).

He was between 75 and 85 when God confirmed His promise to Abraham, "a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir" (Genesis 15:4).

He was 86 when he had a son Ishmael through his wife's Egyptian slave. This was suggested by Sarai herself, as a means of her building a family through her slave (see Genesis 16).

He was 99 when God changed his name to Abraham and his wife's name to Sarah, saying, "my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year" (Genesis 17:21).

Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 when their son Isaac was born, fulfilling God's promise to the patriarch. (Genesis 21:1-5).

With this background, reflect on the words from today's reading from Hebrews 6:13-15.

¹³ When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." ¹⁵ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

Poem

It Is So Hard To Wait
Hebrews 6:13-15, Psalm 105

*Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he
pronounced, you his servants, the
descendants of Abraham, his
chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
He is the Lord our God; his
judgments are in all the earth.
Psalm 105:5-7*

*It is so hard to wait
In long line at fair
At a bus stop or airport
Or in waiting room
chair*

*So think back on the
wonders
Your God has displayed
Remember the miracles
Of former days*

*It is so hard to wait
To be called to the
game
While sitting on bench
While feeling lack's
shame*

*Remember God's
precepts
Remember God's laws
Confess, by the Spirit,
Those deep hidden
flaws*

*It is so hard to wait
For a call to a job
For relief in finances
For that "well done"
boss nod*

*Remember your place
in
God's family of Light
Remember how Jesus
has
Set all things right*

*It is so hard to wait
For the love of your life
--
Then forgiveness and
love
To still marriage's strife*

*Remember your future
God's promised to you
And vanquish life's
blindness
With heaven in view*

*It is so hard to wait
For an answer to
prayer
When you cry on your
pillow
Or at ceiling do stare*

*Remember your Savior
How he bore the sin
Grab hold, while you're
waiting,
To deep peace within*

*It is so hard to wait
For God's promise
revealing
While emotions and
grieving
Your joy and hope
stealing*

*Embrace all the waiting
Know in God's due time
God's best, He's
creating
His glory to shine*

*But waiting is part
Of the faithful one's day
To remember God's
promise
And in Him to stay*

*A great revelation!
Beyond all that is
known
A great celebration!
God's faithfulness
shown*



5/27/2025 - WEEK 22 DAY 2

God's Solemn Promises

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6:16-20

Devotional By: Dan Henke

"Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" In court, every witness who approaches the witness stand must answer this question in the affirmative before they get asked any other question. It is the oath every witness must take. I don't have to read this from a card, I have it committed to memory.

What is an oath? An oath is a solemn promise. Today, it is usually a promise to tell the truth. For those who hold public office, the oath is required to hold office as a promise to faithfully execute the duties of that office. It is required of the President of the United States all the way down to City Court judges. But for most of our society, it's not considered an essential part of our daily lives.

In the ancient world, however, oaths were considered far more important. It was considered a solemn vow made before God ("with God as my witness..."). It was considered a very serious commitment to speak truthfully, and to act upon a promise. Breaking an oath had very serious consequences as it was an affront not just to man but to God himself.

The curious aspect of this passage is why did God take an oath, when there is no power above Him? It's because He didn't have to, He chose to. God is perfect in all that He does, and His love for us is steadfast and never changing. This is God's way of reassuring us that His solemn promise to us will be kept.

In the Old Testament, God promised to send Jesus as our High Priest, our Savior, our Advocate. That promise is fulfilled in the New Testament. The word Testament means "proof or evidence that something exists or is true." The Bible is God's sworn and true statement of His promises to our world.

God always keeps His Word to us.

Poem

It Is Good To Know
Hebrews 6:16-20, Psalm 100

*For the Lord is good and his love
endures forever; his faithful-
ness continues through all
generations.
Psalm 100:5*

*In this ever-changing world
With the earth's crust
Rising and sinking
Along its faults
With the sky's canvas
Hurling and black-holing
In the darkness
With the sea's waves
Crashing and eroding
Constant washing*

*In this ever-changing time
With politician's decisions
Shaking and molding
Our future's views
With death's grasp
Taking and rotting
Beloved souls in flesh
With calendar's days
Marching and leaving
Tasks done and undone*

It is good to know

*The goodness
The steadfastness
The enduring
The faithfulness
The anchor
The hope
The love
The unchanging
The firm
The security*

*Of our sovereign God
And His Christ*



5/28/2025 - WEEK 22 DAY 3

Who is Melchizedek? SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 7:1-10

Devotional By: Lisa Ellcessor

Who is Melchizedek? Why is he mentioned in the Old Testament, Psalm 110 and the New Testament book of Hebrews? Think back to a time when you were exhausted from the battles of life, worked hard to rescue someone or needed to recover from personal loss. Who was there for you in these difficult times? Who blessed you? Did you find peace in the Lord Most High?

Today's New Testament Hebrews' reading takes us back to the OT book of Genesis (14:18-20). Melchizedek visits Abram (later known as Abraham) in the valley after an intense battle of 4 kings against 5 kings. Here, Melchizedek brings Abram bread, wine and a blessing. Exhaustion is replaced by peace as Abram communes with this mysterious priest of "God Most High" at the table of righteousness. Then, Abram brings a tithe to Melchizedek! This gift of 10% from Abram clues us to the spiritual importance of asking "so who is Melchizedek?" Shortly after this encounter with Melchizedek, the word of the Lord comes to Abram in a vision and a covenant is established. So, who is Melchizedek?

Mysterious priest of God Most High "without father, mother, genealogy, beginning of days or end of life" (Heb. 7:3)

Enters on our behalf. Jesus is the high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek "did not trace his descent from Levi;" He was before Levi. (Heb. 6:20 & 7:6)

Lesser person (Abram & his ancestors) is blessed by the greater" (High Priest to God) all because of Abram's tithe. (Gen. 14:20) (Heb. 7:6-9)

Christ's symbolic representation in the Old Testament or possibly Christ himself.

High Priest forever (Psalm 110:4) (Heb. 5:6)

I Incarnation of Christ. Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness" (Heb 7:2)

Zeal for blessing Abram and blessing God. (Gen. 14:19-20)

Eucharist-first communion in OT using bread and wine (Gen. 14:18)

Deliverer of peace after battles. Melchizedek differs from patriarchs, judges, kings and prophets that dealt with conflict and war as empires grew. (Gen. 14:20) (Heb. 7:1)

Eternal elements are demonstrated: victory, communion, blessings and tithe.

King of Salem (now called Jerusalem) and "king of peace." (Heb. 7:2) (Gen. 14:18)

The mystery of "who is Melchizedek?" still exists, but there is no doubt his Biblical description reflects Jesus.

Poem

O You!

Hebrew 7:1-10, Psalm 104

*All creatures look to you to give them
their food at the proper time. When
you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are
satisfied with good things.*

Psalm 104: 27-28

O You!

*Who has not withheld
Your goodness
Your provision
Your protection
Your design
Your bounty*

*From each parcel of land
From each seed-bearing plant
From each winged-one on its nest
From each swimming beast in the waters
From each crawling thing above and below
From each roaming beast traversing the
sphere
From each molecule, ion, atom, minute being
unseen
From each rhythm, dance, timed element in
the depths and heights
From me, even me, whom You have loved and
sacrificed for my salvation*

How could I

*Not praise
Not give
Not extend
Not embrace
Not believe
Not see
Not hear
Not delight
Not be awed
By Your love and grace?*

Here.

*A small
An insignificant
An offering
A tithe
To bless You
Which blesses me
In the giving
In the sharing
In the joy of*

O You!



5/29/2025 - WEEK 22 DAY 4

A Better Hope

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 7:11-19

Devotional By: Judith Gibson

Most people do not like change. They like to keep the status quo probably because it is known to them, and they are comfortable with it. Several years ago when our little doggie Sophie was alive, we would take multiple walks around the neighborhood, but we would always go the same way. One time I remember wanting to go another way, but Sophie decided she did not want to go that way. She stopped and wouldn't budge. After a little "coaching" from me, she changed her mind and walked beside me on our new route. Eventually, she grew accustomed to the new walk, and she learned it was really a better way after all with new territory to explore and sniff.

In chapter seven we learn that the Hebrew Christians needed to change their old way of thinking about the Levitical Priesthood. Tasked with trying to convince the Christian Jews that the Levitical order was now obsolete, the writer teaches them of the better "New Covenant and priesthood of Jesus" (Bible.org). He reminds them that the Law was weak and made nothing perfect (18, 19). The writer doesn't want the Christians to return to their former way because Jesus has provided "a better hope" (19).

Since Jesus was "made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (6:20, 7:11), this new Priesthood of Jesus would not only provide a better hope, but a way in which we could draw nearer to God (19). In this new Priesthood, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, and Jesus opened the new and living way for us to enter boldly into the Holiest of Holies by His blood (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Jesus was chosen, ordained, and glorified as our great High Priest; He is one with the Father; and all things are done by Him (Charles H. Spurgeon). Scripture teaches us that Jesus continues forever and has an unchangeable priesthood. Praise the Lord that we now have a better hope and an eternal High Priest Who intercedes for us!

What areas of your life need changing so that you can draw nearer to God?

Prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Poem

All The Things You Are...
Hebrews 7:11-19, Psalm 71

*In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let
me never be put to shame!*
Psalm 71:1

*My shelter
My cover
My deliverer
My rescuer
My listener
My savior
My rock
My advocate
My fortress
My strong arm
My trust
My brace
My birth
My constant
My faithful
My closest
My righteousness
My might
My increaser
My comforter
My redeemer
My best hope*



5/30/2025 - WEEK 22 DAY 5

Christ is Better

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 7:20-28

Devotional By: Doug Bromm

I love the deep dive we are doing, but sometimes it is easy to lose the overall context when you are concentrating on just a few verses. Today's reading is the culmination of prior chapters:

In Hebrews Chapter 5 the writer brings up an obscure Old Testament character named Melchizedek as High Priest and King so he can show how we need Jesus as a better one.

Most of us know some "cultural Christians" who profess Christian values, without really being Christians in any meaningful sense. I know that the author was addressing a group of persecuted Jews, but I often wonder if he was also addressing a similar group of "cultural Jews" because he kind of goes on a rant about their spiritual maturity at the end of Chapter 5 and on through Chapter 6.

In Chapter 7, in the verses right before our passage today, Melchizedek gets brought up again but this time because he was not a Levite. The point is about how the priestly class become priests by virtue of their birth into the right tribe. But even they still have to atone for their own sins, and they all eventually die too. That means that they are insufficient to bring us lasting forgiveness. They, unlike Jesus, are inadequate to really atone for our sins.

The author has been building up to his big point which is that "Christ is better." And He is! Only Jesus has a "permanent priesthood," and is able to "save completely." That was important news to the Jewish audience who were asking themselves why they needed this Jesus guy instead of just going along like they always had.

Apparently, this argument worked. If it hadn't, it would not have been passed down to us as Biblical canon today. Speaking of today, do you ever wonder why an argument about Jesus' superiority to a Hebrew audience nearly 2000 years ago is still relevant?

I think that we, like that audience, are swimming in a culture that gives lip service to Jesus by celebrating Christmas and Easter all while celebrating a "live for the moment" lifestyle, prioritizing looks and popularity over character and integrity and looking out for number one.

If you are anything like me, I need that daily reminder that I was made for so much more. I feel so blessed to help write some of these devotionals because they are one of the things that helps me combat that kind of worldly thinking by being a daily reminder that Christ is better. So, stick with Him!

Poem

Glorious Things Are Spoken
Hebrews 7:20-28, Psalm 87

*Glorious things of you are spoken,
O city of God. Selah!
Psalm 87: 3*

*From out of Zion
Glory streams
A river of life
From Eden's tree
Glorious things are spoken*

*From out of Zion
New birth streams
A parade of saints
From Calvary's tree
Glorious things are spoken*

*From out of Zion
Christ's blood streams
A fountain of covenant
From Eternal Life's tree
Glorious things are spoken*



6/2/2025 - WEEK 23 DAY 1

Jesus is the True Tabernacle

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 8:1-2

Devotional By: Nancy Foust

In the Old Testament we see a tabernacle as a large tent, symbolizing God's presence and the center of Israel's worship life. Moving into the New Testament we believe our Lord's tabernacle, created by God, is a place for the highest authority, the King of Peace, who blesses obedient followers of God, and one who is morally perfect. HEAVEN.

Today, I imagine the tabernacle is the place where Christians come together to worship, sing, pray, and partake in Holy Communion. It can be anywhere Our Lord is, as stated in Hebrews 8; 2 "the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not be a mere human being."

Therefore, is it possible a simple tent set up for a revival is a tabernacle? Sure, but it is not the tent that is the tabernacle, it is realizing our Lord is overseeing the activities of the revival from His majestic place, HEAVEN.

Keeping in mind that a true tabernacle, as stated in Hebrews, is a place set up by the Lord, "not by mere human beings". Heaven is my best description of a tabernacle for me, to really understand this concept. A place for perfection, highest of all priests, and the highest moral authority. It is Our Lord's resting place. A place where He sees us always and walks along our path to guide us in the right direction, even when we sway the wrong way. A comfortable place we can look up to God when we need Him.

I must admit this tabernacle idea is a very difficult idea to process but I have given my opinion so now it is your turn. What does your tabernacle look like?

Poem

Jesus, My Tabernacle
Hebrews 8:1-2, Exodus 40

*"Set up the tabernacle, the tent of meeting,.."
Exodus 40: 2a*

*O, Law within the veiling
Your Ark, my cov'nant be
O, Word of God incarnate
Your Body, giv'n for me*

*O, Table set for feasting
Despite my foes be strong
O, Shepherd, one who guards me
With Your sufficient arm*

*O, Lampstand, who in darkness
Shines light upon my way
O, Glory, ever burning
On narrow path to stay*

*O, Altar burning Incense
My Intercessor true
O, One who tore the Veil for me
My entrance unto You*

*O, Sacrificial Altar
Your Blood shed there for me
O, Water cleansing basin
From sin, You've set me free*

*O, Oil of Consecration
Which sets me in my place
Anointed, You have claimed me
And called me from disgrace*

*O, High Priest dressed in raiment
My name carved in your palm
To You, my off'ring's altar,
May I raise up my psalm*

*O, You, my Cloud of Cov'ring
God's glory presence known
O, You, my Tabernacle
My dwelling place, my home*



6/3/2025 - WEEK 23 DAY 2

A Shadow of What is in Heaven

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 8:3-6

Devotional By: Dan Henke

Back in the old days before we had photocopiers, documents had to be laboriously copied by hand. In the legal and business professions, the job of copying routine documents was performed by the “scrivener.” As you can imagine, it was a mind-numbingly soul-crushing job. It’s also no surprise that to cope, the scriveners tended to consume copious amounts of alcohol. Thus, copies made in the late afternoon weren’t all that reliable if they were even legible. In the legal profession, only the original document was considered admissible evidence. (Fortunately, greater care was given to important documents like the Bible).

While not knowing of this analogy, the writer’s point in this passage is that a copy is not as good as the real thing. The tabernacle was to be built on the “pattern” shown by God as described in Exodus 39-40. However, the tabernacle, and the Old Testament covenants, were only a “shadow” or copy of what was to come. As an example of how much better these new promises of Jesus’ ministry were, in Exodus 40 God dwelt as a cloud within the tabernacle, and later behind the curtain in the Holiest of the Holies in the temple. But the new covenant provides that God does not live in a tent, God lives everywhere. We have access to Him through our mediator Jesus and the Holy Spirit wherever we are.

All the works of man can only be a pale imitation of God’s perfect Kingdom. Just as a cover band is never as good as the original, or a knock off Gucci purse isn’t the real thing, the ministry of priests can never equal the ministry of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect ministry of fulfillment of God’s promises. The priests had to make repeated sacrifices; Jesus only made one. But it was a big one, enough to save all of mankind.

Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and through His ministry, his Word in the Gospels, and His sacrifice, we are saved. Accept no substitutes.

Poem

Mirrors, Shadows, Reflects
Hebrews 8:3-6, Psalm 24

*The earth is the Lord's, and
everything in it, the world, and all
who live in it;..
Psalm 24:1*

*The basis of production
All of the music
All of the art
All of the construction
All of the science
All of the words
Mirrors
Shadows
Reflects
The inner heart
Of its maker
Each a statement
Embodied
Constructed
Displayed
Every part for good or ill
Everything seen and heard
Every part of the composition
Every used medium*

*The whole of the earth
Each created particle
Each majestic mountain
Each animated creature
Each vein of ore
Each planted seed bearer
Mirrors
Shadows
Reflects
The glory
Of its Creator
Each a masterpiece
Commissioned
Designed
Brought forth
Every part is the LORD's
Everything seen and unseen
Every part of the world
Every life-bearing persona*



6/4/2025 - WEEK 23 DAY 3

The New Covenant in Jesus

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 8:7-13

Devotional By: Kim Arnott

*"To everything turn, turn, turn,
There is a season turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose under Heaven"*

Tell me you didn't just sing those familiar words? The lyrics are based on Ecclesiastes 3 and point us to an idea that is reflected in today's passage – that, in Jesus, there is a new season, a time for a new covenant under heaven.

The first covenant was established to teach and guide the Israelites in the ways of God – how to live, how to treat others and how to follow and worship the one, true God. God was leading them, "by the hand", as parents lead and teach their children. However, the Israelites weren't faithful to God. They failed to live up to their end of the covenant. So, God *"turned away from them"*, which in Hebrew means to neglect or ignore them. Notice, however, God never left them.

But the first covenant was not God's ultimate plan for His people. Rather, it was something that pointed to an even greater plan. The author quotes the prophet Jeremiah, showing that, through Scripture, it was always God's plan to establish a "new and improved" covenant. Keep in mind that Jeremiah was promising a new COVENANT, not a new LAW.

While the first covenant was between God and Israel, because of Jesus, the new covenant is offered to ALL people. It's offered through grace. John Wesley said, *"the covenant of grace doth not require us to do anything at all . . . (for) justification but only to believe in him"* (WJW, 1:207) Believing in Jesus as our High Priest, all people have direct access to God. We are offered a personal and intimate relationship with God.

The new covenant offers total transformation. We are made brand new. *"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* (2 Corinthians 5:17) And because we are made new, we will carry God's covenant in our hearts and minds, not written in stone. It will become part of our innermost being, shaping our emotions, our longings and our behaviors.

The old system of continual sacrifice is no longer necessary. Jesus has offered the once and for all sacrifice and has paid the debt for our sins. And best of all *"(God) will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* (Jeremiah 31:34b) Not only will God forgive us, but God will no longer remember our transgressions. Hallelujah!

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:19)

Poem

I Will, I Will, I Will

Hebrews 8:7-13, Jeremiah 31: 31-34

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
Jeremiah 31:33b-34

The Greater to the Lesser

"I will, I will, I will..."

*Vows, promises, full guarantees
New covenant fulfill*

The Lesser hears the Greater

"I will, I will, I will..."

*Unable to match faithfulness
The best response—be still*



6/5/2025 - WEEK 23 DAY 4

The Earthly Tabernacle

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:1-5

Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

When I read Hebrews 9:1-5 and Exodus 26:30 they both were telling the Hebrews to set up a tabernacle according to God's plan. The tabernacle was to have blue, purple & scarlet yarn and cherubim woven into the linen by a skilled worker. I'm thinking "what does that have to do with me?"

I think God is telling us that we are His Tabernacle. God doesn't make mistakes. He made us to be able to choose to do his will. Every little thing about us is perfect in His eyes. Our language, our thought processes, our wisdom, everything about us, can be used to reach other potential followers of God. We can become his disciples. We can be the tools that Jesus uses to reach the lost, the undecided, the misdirected. We can be part of God's tabernacle as we already know Jesus lives within us, God lives within us and the Holy Spirit lives within us. We are that tabernacle that is perfect for God to use to reach others.

There have been times in my life where words that came from my mouth were not any words I would normally share. They made a difference, at that time, in the conversation I was having with another. Afterwards I thought to myself, "where did that come from?" and I can only recognize that was the Holy Spirit talking through me.

Dear God, my Savior and my Salvation, please use me to reach others. I recognize that I'm far from being perfect, but I recognize that my life experiences can reach others who may be experiencing similar challenges. Lord, help me to allow you to speak to them through me. Amen

Poem

Lekol

Hebrews 9:1-5, Exodus 36

*"...do the work LEKOL as
the Lord has commanded."
Exodus 36: 1b*

*The astrophysicist, precise
Trajectory exact
To calculate e'en minor flaw
Leads to deadly impact*

*The architect, blueprints detailed
Each bearing full mapped out
Allows tall skyscrapers to stand
'Spite weather, without doubt*

*The surgeon with precision blade
Must laser focused be
Each cut reined in, correct and sure
For healing guarantee*

*Disciples, then, obedience find
Lekol as God commands
Success of work God gives to you
Christ placed within your hands*



6/6/2025 - WEEK 23 DAY 5

The High Priest and the Inner Room

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:6-10

Devotional By: Peggy Cooke

What would be your Most Holy Place? Would it be your house, your church, or someplace else? Might it be the ocean, the woods, the mountains? The Most Holy Place was a chamber within the tabernacle that contained the Ark of the Covenant. The scripture says only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place with blood and only once a year. He would offer up the sins that had been committed in ignorance by himself and by the people. Wait! Say what? What about all the other sins people commit? It was assumed that known sins would be taken care of through the regular sin offerings and daily sacrifices. At that time, one could only approach God with a blood sacrifice. There was no direct access to God for the majority of the people.

The High Priest had to take blood to procure forgiveness of sins, not for fellowship. Access to the Holy Most Place was severely restricted. Even when somebody could enter, it wasn't for fellowship with God. Since God sent his only son, Christ, the perfect sacrifice, we can now go directly to God and we can be in His presence. With Jesus dying for us, the cross is sufficient to atone for both the sins we do in ignorance and sins that we commit intentionally. Even sins we do unintentionally matter and we still need to be forgiven for them. Our salvation rests on the blood of Jesus.

Their gifts and sacrifices could not clear their consciences to be fully, finally, and forever cleansed of the power of guilt that was the result of sin. So, the average Joe could never rest easy. With the coming of Christ, the old way of relating to God has been replaced. The new reformation is where Christ himself replaces the High Priest, the temple, the blood sacrifices and the food and drink rituals. Praise God!

Some things never change, which includes the problems of life. The circumstances change but not the basic problems. We are human, and we have a conscience that witnesses to our sinfulness with the testimonies of real guilt. We know what keeps us away from God is not our soiled hands, soiled clothes, or the distance from an altar. What keeps us away from God is real sin echoing in a condemning conscience. Thank God today for the new reformation!

How is your conscience these days? (A Heavenly Sanctuary -Grace Still Amazes)

Poem

Inner Room Of Purity
Hebrews 9: 6-10, Isaiah 6

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Isaiah 6:5

*An honored task assigned to few
Can be misrepresented
If one assigned believes within
'Tis self-glory intended
For though the outer frame is cleansed
The heart still hides great sin
Only the glory of the LORD
Reveals the filth within
Then "Woe is me!" the only words
From unclean lips are muttered
Then falling to the floor in fear
With no excuse to utter
This inner room of purity,
There, very few will seek
But those who wait upon the LORD
Will hear the Holy speak*



6/9/2025 - WEEK 24 DAY 1

Christ Entered with His Own Blood

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:11-14

Devotional By: Doug Bromm

The book of Hebrews is by an author trying to convince his Jewish audience that Jesus and Christianity are a fulfillment of the scriptures and, therefore, a better way to God. The author has made many arguments to that end in previous chapters but, in our reading today, we find him addressing the most important day of the Jewish year: Yom Kippur, the day of atonement.

Leviticus 16 gives us God's instructions about what should happen on Yom Kippur. In the Temple there were two rooms. One was the Holy Place, which was full of priests doing priestly things every day of the year. Beyond that, there was another room called the Holy of Holies. It only had one piece of furniture, the Ark of the Covenant (think Raiders of the Lost Ark) and it was closed off by a thick veil. Only the high priest could enter that room and, even then, he could only enter it one day a year to make atonement to God for Israel's sins.

That is where today's reading picks up, "But when Christ came as high priest... he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands..."

Prior to Yom Kippur, the priest would be put in seclusion all week. Then he bathed behind a thin screen right in front of everyone in the temple. They watched him intently making sure he did everything just right, lest one small mistake cause Israel to be unforgiven for another year. Then the priest had to dress in brand new linens and make three sacrifices. First, he made atonement for himself. Then, he could make atonement for the other priests. Only then could he make atonement for all of Israel.

The Hebrew readers understood this long and complicated process, so imagine their surprise when the author talks about a new high priest who can waltz right into the Holy of Holies any time He wants and who doesn't require three sacrifices, because He was the sacrifice. What's more is that His forgiveness is not just for one year, but eternally. Minds blown!

"He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption."

This same curtain that closed off the Holy of Holies is the one that was torn in two as Jesus "gave up His spirit" on the cross (Matt. 27:51). That curtain was torn to give YOU direct access to the Holy of Holies. Think about that!

What better time to enter directly into God's presence than in prayer than right now?

Poem

How Much More?
Hebrews 9:11-14, Psalm 38

*Lord, do not forsake me; do not be
far from me, my God. Come
quickly to help me, my Lord and
my Savior.
Psalm 38: 21-22*

*When God removes the fig leaves we
use covering our souls
Exposing shame, exposing sin,
exposing lies we hold
We cannot help but shrink in fear
We cannot deal with filth so near
We beg God, "How much more of
guilt
Can I be asked to bear?"*

*The "How much more?"—its great
display, a gifting, form of grace
To see dark soul, as it is, a true
mirrored face to face
Though hard to bear, "much" love
can't grow
Until "much" of God's mercy know
For then we run to God and say
"How much more grace for me
today!"*

*For shadowed were the temple rites
upon the altar laid
The blood of goats and cows and
sheep there on display
'Twas not enough to cleanse the
heart
'Twas not enough, sin to depart
But "How much more?" Christ's
precious blood
Poured out to cover us in love!*



6/10/2025 - WEEK 24 DAY 2

Christ Died to Set Us Free

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:15

Devotional By: Elyce Meador

This single verse captures the profound transition from our past relationship with God, formed by his covenant with Moses, to the new covenant mediated through Jesus. Living under the Mosaic covenant, man could only be forgiven through sacrifice and strict adherence to religious law. Since humanity is imperfect, these sacrifices were also imperfect. Christ's death removed the barrier of human imperfection as He became the perfect sacrifice for our sins, allowing us to receive God's forgiveness unconditionally.

The original Mosaic covenant required the spilling of blood as payment for the forgiveness of sin. Death, therefore, was the consequence of sin. However, these sacrifices did not open the door to God. Only the High Priest had access to the temple's Most Holy Place on the annual Day of Atonement, when he made special sacrifices meant to close the gap between God and the people of Israel. But humanity, as a whole, was still separated from God. The way to Him was mysterious, and the sacrifices of food and animals were ceremonies standing in for the closer relationship to come.

Christ's death was the ultimate sacrifice, as the blood of Christ cleanses humanity as no other sacrifice could. His death purchased eternal redemption, allowing us to make a new covenant with God and move forward into a life filled with serving Him. Such intimacy with God and the promise of endless absolution were revolutionary for people who lived under the law of sacrifices, as they often are for people who have not known Jesus and God. Through his death, Christ opened the way to God for each of us.

Sin and forgiveness are inherently painful, particularly to the heart, and sin is costly both to us and to God. Forgiveness does not mitigate this cost nor simply erase the wounds of the heart that sin causes. Rather, it opens the door to a new relationship. Imagine that someone you love commits a sin against you. Your heart is broken. When they ask for your forgiveness, would you have them sacrifice something? Or would you sacrifice something precious to show them how much you loved them still? That is what God did for us, because He loves us that much. Christ, in his death, became the bridge to a relationship with God even after we sin against Him.

Think about what you are willing to sacrifice for others, then think about what God has sacrificed for you. The gift of grace calls for a lifetime of grateful response. Does your life reflect your response? If not, what changes are you willing to make?

Poem

Love Of Jesus
Hebrews 9:15, Psalm 36

Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, Lord, preserve both people and animals. How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
Psalm 36:5-7

*O, the glorious love of Jesus
O, its grace, its shing forth
O, that every thought I pondered
Had as Jesus its fount source*

*O, the startl'ng love of Jesus
O, the welcoming embrace
O, the length of arms encircling
Broken sinners of our race*

*O, the gentle love of Jesus
O, its pow'r to woo the lost
Coaxing e'en most timid sinner
Willing to expend the cost*

*O, the thought, the love of Jesus
Full extended e'en to me
I, His portion, His inher'tance
To with Him forever be!*

*O, the wondrous love of Jesus
O, its height, its breadth, its width
O, that my love swelled to torrents
Flooding forth and matching His!*



6/11/2025 - WEEK 24 DAY 3

Without the Shedding of Blood

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:16-22

Devotional

By: Judith Gibson

Many years ago, I lived in Israel for a summer with some of my college students. We were assigned to three northern kibbutzim close to the Jordan River; during weekends, we toured many historical and religious sites. It was here that I developed a love for the Jewish culture and its people. On my kibbutz, we learned Jewish songs, watched several bar and bat mitzvahs, ate Shabbat meals, and attended worship services. Years afterward, I was able to continue my love for this Jewish culture by singing in several "High Holy Day" services at Hebrew congregations in Indianapolis. From these wonderful experiences, I learned more about Jewish teachings, especially on sin atonement from the Old Testament.

In today's passage, the writer reminds us that the first testament (Levitical Order of the Priesthood) was made through the blood of "calves and goats" when the Priest would enter the Holiest of Holies and atone for the sins of the people by sprinkling this blood on the altar. Doing so, the Priest would tell them, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep" (20). In Jewish services today, they do not sacrifice animals on any altar, but they still blow the Shofar (long horn from ram) as a reminder of this call to repent of sins.

For Christians, though, a physical blood sacrifice is no longer needed because of the New Covenant or Testament. "The blood of Jesus Christ is the blood of the everlasting Covenant" (C.H. Spurgeon). It displayed the supreme love of God to us and confirms His faithfulness. "There can be nothing lacking for a soul redeemed by Christ between here and heaven; for He that spared not his own Son" (Spurgeon).

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 9:22). In the Old Testament, it was the physical blood of animals that was used to "make an atonement for the soul" (Lev 17:11). However, in the New Covenant, to commune with God, we must be atoned of our sins, and that atonement must be made by [Jesus'] blood (Spurgeon).

Robert Lowry, the 19th century Baptist preacher and hymn writer, penned these words which we still sing today: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Hallelujah! Jesus' blood fulfilled God's sacrificial requirement once for all! How are you showing your love and gratitude to God in your service for Him?

Prayer: Thank You, Dear Lord, for Your precious blood which You spilt on the cross for my salvation, and now I have a future in Heaven forever with You. Amen.

Poem

Last Will And Testament Hebrews 9:16-22, Exodus 24

*"...they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed..."
Exodus 24:5b*

The doctor said,
"The cancer's back"
Her posture straight
I catch her eye
"Now it's okay,
I thought it so"
With smile on face
She bravely waves,
We hold each other
To the door
And tuck ourselves
Inside the car
She looks at me
"Are you okay?"
I take her hand
We drive away
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me

The nausea comes
The taste buds fade
Her mouth is dry
Her legs are weak
She clings to me
And sings her love
She makes a joke
We laugh then cry
I change her bed
I wash her face
She sleeps a lot
I wait for what
I know will come
She calls my name
I lift her head
She strokes my face.
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me

The sleep is short
She's restless now
She asks, "How long?"
I know not how
To truly share
The burden she
Alone must bear

She shares her faith
She speaks her doubts
Sometimes she's clear
Sometimes a cloud
Gives shelter in
These desert days
And she flies back
To yesteryears
Of youth and song
Of dance and love
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me

One night I snuggle
Up to her
Her breathing's rough
I hold her close
I whisper in
Her nearest ear
"I love you so,
I'll miss you more."
Though through the day
No hint of knowing
Her hand moves up
To touch my hair
And memory takes me
To the days of
Brushing, curling and
Caressing
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me

She stays alive
'Til morning dawns
Giving me the rest
I'll need for
Future chores
Of caskets, flowers
Greetings and tears
Of memories
Of all my years
Of all she alone
Could tell
Now silenced

Carried in her breast
We sing a song
My sister and I
We hail the day
Our Mother died
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me

Decisions she
Took on for me
And spared my
Energy; So now
The grave is dug
I throw the dirt
A place of solace
On the hill.
I sit and thus
Receive her care
In music, hymn
And every word
Becomes a
Ministry of grace
From Mother's heart
Into my soul
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me

We clean her house
The will is read
Her precious items
She gives away
Freely, freely
We are rich
With land and treasures
Telling stories past.
I walk the land
Up to the hill
Her stone is etched
With dates. Untold
Her love for me
Her tender care
I'll pull the weeds
'Til I lie there
I'm taking care of Mother
She's taking care of me



6/12/2025 - WEEK 24 DAY 4

Christ's Sacrifice Conquered Sin

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:23-26

Devotional By: Judith Gibson

Paul Bliss, an 18th century American, is one of most famous Christian song writers in history. He wrote over 300 songs, and his "Once for All" compliments today's message in Hebrews and reminds us that Jesus is now in the presence of Heaven to intercede for us.

*Free from the law, oh, happy condition!
Jesus has bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Christ has redeemed us once for all.*

In the Old Testament, the High Priest would make atonement for the sins of the people once a year with the blood of sacrificed animals. The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) is a sacred and holy day for most Jews today. In Biblical times they considered it to be a day to atone for sins of the past year. It was a day set aside for fasting and was devoted entirely to confession, repentance, and prayer. On this day only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, taking the sin offering with him.

But now, Jesus "has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26). Since the high priest went into the Holy of Holies once a year, it signified "that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning" (9:8). Jesus, however, was the "High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle..." (9:11). His constant presence before the Father guarantees the believer eternal access into the heavenly Holy of Holies (Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*).

In the Hebrew passage today, we learn that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. "He was better than the prophets, heir of all things, creator of the universe... brightness of God's glory, express image of His person, sustainer of the world, and the One seated beside the Father" (Gromacki). The Levitical priests offered their sacrifices once a year (9:25), but Jesus offered Himself once for all (9:28). The priest's sacrifices were just a shadow of the very image, the sacrifice of Jesus. The former sacrifices could never remove the guilt of sin; otherwise, they would not have been repeated. Jesus, however, "secured the positional sanctification of the believer through the offering of His body once for all" (Gromacki). The priests' work had to be repeated yearly, but Jesus' work was finished with His sacrifice on the cross (John 19:30). **"Christ has redeemed us once for all!"**

What can we do daily to show our gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?

Poem

Once, For All
Hebrews 9:23-26, Psalm 13

*But I trust in your unfailing love; my
heart rejoices in your salvation. I will
sing the Lord's praise, for he has been
good to me.
Psalm 13:5-6*

*Though my faith is most often fickle
Reminders constantly needed
When each trial seems a new challenge
As though faith has retreated
Why do I need reminders, Lord?
Why is my memory lacking?
I seem to need You with each breath
At times I think You slacking
"Do You remember me, O Lord?
Are You Your face me hiding?
When You are silent can I trust
That You are still abiding?"
Lord, build my trust in Your great love
Escape death's dark retracing--
Help me believe Your 'once, for all'
Your risen life embracing*



6/13/2025 - WEEK 24 DAY 5

Christ Will Come Again to Bring Salvation

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 9:27-28

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

At the end of a game, there is one question that matters most: did I win or lose?

At the end of twelfth grade, the question is: did I graduate or am I stuck here another year?

At the end of college: do I have a job or do I move back in with my parents?

All of us face that same kind of dual option query at the end of life: am I going to heaven or hell?

But the answer to this question is more final than the others. There's always another game. Play harder. You can always repeat twelfth grade again. Study harder. If you don't get one job, there are a dozen more to apply for. Try harder. But this final judgment has forever consequences: do I have eternal salvation or eternal condemnation? And there are no do-overs.

Whether we die or Jesus returns first, we will face judgment. Only Christ's sacrifice on the cross takes away our sins and brings us salvation. Glory be to God! If you would like to receive His offer of eternal salvation, pray a prayer like this one:

Dear God, I admit that I am a sinner. I'm sorry for the ways I have disobeyed you and lived for myself. I repent of my sins. I believe that you sent your only Son, Jesus, to live a perfect, sinless life of ministry on earth. And I know that He became the perfect sacrifice to take away my sins. I believe in you Jesus, and I accept your offer of salvation. I surrender my life to you. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Teach me, guide me, and help me to do your will on earth. I am yours, O God. Amen.

Poem

Things To Do While In God's Waiting Room

Hebrews 9:27-28, Psalm 42

*Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.
Psalm 42:5*

*I'm sitting in God's waiting room
How shall I spend my time?*

*I will get up and go to the fountain
I will get a deep drink from the river of life*

*I will schedule an appointment to meet my God
I will mark it in my calendar*

*I will silence the phone of negative messaging
I will remember the promises of God*

*I will pour out all my anxieties into my Kleenex
I will get up and dispose it in the trash*

*I will hum the tune of a Psalm of praise
I will let the Holy Spirit whisper to me*

*I will joyfully walk over to a fellow wait-er
I will hold their hand with God's comfort*

*I will block any downcast thoughts
I will put my hope in God*

*I will look at the door of my soul
I will wait for Jesus' salvation knock*



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