

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOK OF
HEBREWS

14 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

DAY 1

READ: If your Bible has introduction to the book of Hebrews, please read it.

INTRODUCTION

This is written to a people group: Hebrews. The Hebrew people are the same people as the Israelites. They are the Jews. Although typically they were not normally called Hebrews during the New Testament time period, this was still used as a way to identify them from the nations around them.

Although there is no church named, and we don't know specifically who this letter was written to, we do know a few things. The main audience was likely a Jewish congregation; a group of believers who all shared the culture, tradition, and heritage of Jesus. From the arguments and discussions in the book, it is likely some of them may have been struggling with whether or not Jesus was really God. There was faith among them, but also doubt.

In another section of this book we see they had embraced Jesus as Lord even if they hadn't fully understood how He had fulfilled the Law. They had even suffered for their faith and done well. But from the tone of the letter we can safely assume they had lost their passion. Doubts had arisen, and they no longer were pursuing holiness or faith. Sin was creeping in, along with false teaching about sin.

The writer to the Hebrews uses this letter to establish Jesus' identity so they can once again be fueled with passion and excitement as they see the Law being fulfilled in Christ. He also uses it to chastise and challenge their living and beliefs. He warns them with harsh words about the cost of continuing to go the direction in which they are going. Then he encourages them to keep on keeping on. He wants them to see the whole picture. Hebrews is a book that does a remarkable job of revealing to us the holiness and love of God, teaching us doctrine, giving us practical living advice, as well as spurring us on to keep on going and never giving up. He shows us the standard we are to live at, and then raises the bar even higher.

This dynamic book contains more nuggets and treasures in its words than what we can uncover in these fourteen days. More than that, however, we are challenged and encouraged to not just skim the surface and learn the facts, but to listen and really pay attention to the very words of God as He speaks them to us.

A good summary of the book of Hebrews would be to say it is a letter explaining the relationship between God and His people from the beginning to the end, from creation until Jesus' second coming.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God to open your spiritual eyes and ears so you can see Him and hear what He wants to say to you as you study through Hebrews. Ask Him to challenge you and encourage you.
2. Ask Jesus if you have lost some of your spiritual fervor, or to reveal to you if you are struggling with doubts. Ask Him to begin to work in those areas already so that in the next few days as we dig through His message to us, you will be refreshed, renewed, and ready to follow Him with unbridled passion.
3. Thank the Lord for a book with such depth for us to learn more about Him. Thank Him in advance for all that He'll say to you and teach you.

DAY 2**READ:** Hebrews 1

This first chapter of Hebrews is like a testimony on a witness stand in a court of law, or a document used as a piece of evidence. This chapter is proof of who Jesus is and who the angels are. When we read through the first four verses we see how God has given Jesus a special role, and given Him all that He is and has. God has kept nothing apart from Jesus. Even the very name God gave Jesus is above all other names.

If we just looked at Jesus and saw this much (that Jesus had the very nature and imprint of God, and that His very Name gave Him authority over everything) we would have enough evidence to testify that Jesus is God. Yet, much of this chapter is spent paying attention to what God Himself says about His Son.

The Jews understood that God was the final authority and Creator. He was above all things and nothing else should come between them and God. Nothing. No one. If anything did, it would be breaking the first two of the Ten Commandments. So for them to see quoted from their very own Scriptures what God has said of Jesus must have been mind-blowing. If we put ourselves in the shoes of those early believers, it is easy to understand why so many could not accept Jesus. They were diligently obeying the Law! This is why it is so important that God Himself – in His very own words – explains who Jesus is.

Jesus' identity was confirmed by what God has said about Him and to Him. Because the Jews understood that God cannot lie, and if God said these things in their well-accepted Scriptures, how could they then go against what God said? This chapter establishes the identity of Jesus based on God's relationship with Him.

Verse 9 of this chapter holds a nugget of blessing for us. It says, *"...therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."* This basically says that Jesus was anointed more than anyone else – more than people and more than angels – with joy. The fullness of joy can only be found in Jesus. There is nothing else and no one else who will bring as much joy as Jesus.

This means those who have much, or those who have little, those whose life circumstances are awful and tragic, and those for whom life seems to slide along smoothly... all have the same access to joy. Because Jesus is the fullness of joy and we all have access to Him, there is nothing that can hold us back from joy except our own unwillingness to embrace him. This is truly a blessing that can never be stripped from us!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Take a few minutes to worship Jesus for who He is. Let Him know how majestic, powerful and amazing He is. If it is helpful to you, consider turning on a worship song that helps remind you of His magnificence and sing along or use the words as launching pads for your own words of praise.
2. Are you full of joy? Ask Jesus what is holding you back from experiencing even more joy in Him. Ask Him what you need to do or know today that will raise the level of joy you are living in right now.
3. Jesus' identity came from what God said about Him. Where does your identity come from? Who does Jesus say you are? What does He say about you? Spend the next few days listening to what the Holy Spirit says about your identity.

DAY 3**READ:** Hebrews 2

In chapter one God made it very clear Jesus was to be treated with the same respect and obedience they gave to Him. It was easy for many to drift away from God because they didn't believe in Jesus. Today our situation is almost opposite: People want Jesus without God. They want the 'love' but not the 'holiness'.

Many Jews would not believe in Jesus because they were mistaken about what God said about Jesus. This is what the writer of Hebrews is warning them of: Don't lose your salvation and drift away because you don't believe what God said! Today many people are willing to drift away from salvation because they want to separate the Old Testament God from the New Testament Jesus. They say with their words that Jesus is God, but with their actions they disobey. After reading chapter one we have no good excuse! Jesus is God... and if that is true we had better be very careful to obey and live according to that truth!

The second thing the writer of Hebrews really wanted the believers to understand is the fact that Jesus suffered and experienced what we suffer, including death.

The writer of Hebrews also made a very clear distinction between man and God. Man was made lower than the angels. This doesn't mean angels were made at a higher altitude! It means they have high aptitudes and abilities. They have some authority, even though God has all the authority.

Humans on the other hand were created with less ability and aptitude than the angels. Yet... the story gets interesting here... God ordained that it would be man who would have authority over Creation! Everything would be under the authority of humans, not angels. Of course, God is the ultimate authority, and is completely sovereign. Yet under God, humans have authority, and in eternity will continue to have, authority over all things.

Jesus existed from before the Creation of the world. John 1:1 tells us Jesus was the Word, the Word *was* God and was *with* God. Majestic. All-powerful. Incredible God. Jesus was above ALL in authority and power. He was IT! But then, out of love and a plan to crush death, Jesus became a man. He willingly gave up all that and became lower than angels. If He had come as King, at least He would have had some authority and power! But no! Not our God of love. He came as the lowest of all humanity – a baby, weak and powerless, born in an animal shelter, being totally dependent on those who had so little power themselves.

Wow! What love!

It is for this reason Jesus did it: to show us His love and so we could never say to Him that He doesn't understand us. He has suffered, He has lost, He has died.

One day – and this chapter reminds us this hasn't happened yet – all of creation will once again be under Jesus' authority, and we too will be given authority and the ability to rule with justice and love. Because of Christ's sinless death on the cross and His resurrection to the right hand side of the Father, we will be given the authority God has always intended for us to have. So much to look forward to!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord to speak to you about any lies you believe about Him that might be causing you to drift away from Him. Write down what He shows you. Ask Him where these lies come from. Then ask Him to smash them with a new word, thought or picture of the truth. Write down what He says. Finally, ask Him if there are any steps you need to take to ground yourself in this new truth or to set up a barrier from slipping again. Journal what He shows you.

2. Spend a few minutes meditating on the sacrifice God made to become human and to demonstrate for you that He understands what you are going through. Think about the glory of heaven, the authority and power He had. Then compare it to all He suffered and gave up. Ask Him to really make this sink into your heart. Spend time in thankful worship.
3. What has God been saying to you about your identity in Christ? Look back to what He told you for question 3 in Day Two, and think on what He said today in question 1. Ask God to give you an even fuller picture of your identity in Him.

DAY 4

 **READ:** Hebrews 3

Chapter three is a warning chapter. The first warning comes in a very practical picture. The Jews have always revered Moses. Moses was the 'Big Deal' in their eyes. And rightly so because he had been mightily used by God. However, now that Jesus had come, not as a prophet or leader but as the High Priest, many were not giving Him the same credit and respect they were giving to Moses. The warning they are given about this is in the form of a construction picture.

The writer is saying if there is a beautiful house should the house get the honour? Or should the builder get the honour? This is a good question even for us today. Many times we look at things (houses, pieces of art, a gourmet meal, etc.) and we become enamoured with the item in front of us. We don't step back and say, 'This creation is amazing! The creator who came up with this must be *even more* amazing!' We know in our heads that the creator should get the honour. But that means turning away from the beautiful to search Him out.

Practically speaking, some people are enamored with great music, and enjoy a rousing emotional experience. And although there is nothing wrong with that, if we don't move beyond that to worship the One who gave the music and to whom the words are directed, are we just like these Jews? Some are enamored with their church, the way things are done, the preacher they like, and the building and programs. Again, there is nothing wrong with loving the church we attend! We should! But if our love of our local church does not cause us to love and worship and stand in awe of the One who created the Church, died for Her, and is coming back for, have we not fallen into the same trap?

The second warning is about hardening our hearts. The writer makes it clear this was a problem for the Israelites as they tromped through forty years of desert living. According to this chapter there was a clear progression:

1. We hear His voice.
2. We harden our hearts.
3. We test God to see... how far can we go before we pay consequences for our sin?
4. The consequence always comes.

The Holy Spirit is speaking today. We must listen. Then we must obey. If we know what is right and do not do it, we are hardening our hearts. If we know what not to do, but do it still, we are hardening our hearts. This is how we test God: We think, 'If I do this just one more time will God still forgive me? Will I lose my salvation?'

How much more joy would we live in if we stopped the progression before it started! If we quickly obeyed – no matter the cost to us – we would never have to wonder if we were testing the Lord. We would never question our salvation, or fear the consequences. This is freedom! True freedom comes when we listen to the voice of God and obey. In this chapter, this freedom is called rest. True rest. When we are no longer striving, and racing, and working hard at everything except the one thing He asks: To listen and obey.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord Jesus to expose anything in your life that you revere or love, but you haven't even noticed that you aren't looking beyond to worship the Creator. If there is something, confess it as sin. Ask Him to show you His magnificence as the Creator of what you love. Spend some time in worship.
2. Ask the Lord to show you if there's something you've heard Him say, but you haven't obeyed. If there is, confess it. Ask the Lord for forgiveness and to give you grace to obey now, and immediately from this point on. If he brings nothing to mind, ask Him to keep your heart soft, and immediately obedient. Thank Him for the freedom you have experienced through obedience to His voice.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about your identity and how you worship Him, and how listening to His voice and immediate obedience will continue to define who you are in Christ. Thank Him for His continued work and patience in your life.

DAY 5



READ: Hebrews 4

This chapter gives a long and beautiful explanation of God's rest. The writer explains that God worked six days and then He rested. Rested. No work. The Rest of God is all about God and nothing else. The seventh day of Creation was a day of rest. The author explains that God talked about that day, but that day is over so God must be talking about a *different* day of rest. He explains that the *different* day of rest is actually... today.

How is it possible that today is the day we can enter God's rest? The Sabbath rest, or God's rest, is very simply this: When we hear the voice of God and obey. This is how we enter into God's rest! It's not complicated. So whatever day we listen and obey is the day we enter God's rest... and we can do it again, and again, and again.

The writer talks about us resting from our works so we can enter into God's rest. Many times we are busy doing, doing, doing things for the Lord that are genuinely good things. We are working, working, working for the Lord. The trouble is this: the key to entering God's rest is **not** to get your work done! It's quite simply to hear the voice of God and obey. Put aside the striving, and put on the listening – that's true Sabbath rest.

This aligns perfectly with what we read in Matthew 7:21-23. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”* We can be confident as we draw near to God, listen to His voice and obey, that we are living today in God's rest, and that one day soon we will enter God's eternal rest as well.

In verse 11 the writer seems to contradict himself because he tells us there is actually something we should strive for. If we are to work at something in the Kingdom of Heaven it is this: to enter God's rest.

We are encouraged and challenged in verse 12 and 13. It might be easy to feel overwhelmed at listening to God and obeying, but God doesn't leave us stranded! He says His Word (the very thing we are to listen for) is living, active and sharper than a sword. It is moving and doing and being. It is exposing our hearts and discerning our motives. God's Word is a dynamic Person – living, breathing, and real! John 1:1 tells us that Jesus is Himself the Word of God! Even as we read the Scriptures, listen to Him in prayer, and live our lives in obedience He is right there with us, revealing, teaching, exposing and directing.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord how you are doing in regards to doing mighty works for God instead of entering into God's rest each day. Ask Him what area of life you are tempted to be works-driven instead of rest-driven. Ask the Lord to give you a picture of what your life would be like if you were living each day striving to enter God's rest in every single area. Ask Him to help you live more and more like this as you grow in character and faith.
2. Some of us find listening to God is not easy. We have a hard time knowing what is from God and what is not. Ask God to give you a word, thought, or picture right now about how HE is the Word of God who is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword and how you can learn to recognize Him even more quickly in your day-to-day living. Thank Him for the Scriptures that help reveal Him to us. Ask Him to open your heart to hear His voice each time you open the Bible to read.
3. Take a few minutes now to pray for your church leaders or pastors. Ask the Lord to give them rest from working, working, working and to give them grace to enter His Rest today. Pray a blessing over them and pray for any needs you know they have.

DAY 6



READ: Hebrews 5:1 - 10

This letter was written to Jews. They are used to offering sacrifices, and having a high priest offer certain sacrifices for them. This idea of needing the death of one life so that another might live was just part of their everyday living. Every person needed to have the high priest sacrifice an animal on their behalf in order for their sins to be forgiven. Without this, forgiveness was not possible.

The high priest had to do it. It couldn't be done by just anyone. There was never a 'job opening' for the position of high priest and no one could volunteer for the job either. A high priest could only be a high priest if God appointed him. This is why it is so important for the new believers – Jewish believers – to know what God said about Jesus. The writer is showing them that God Himself appointed Jesus as the High Priest.

There are many similarities and also many differences between all the other high priests and Jesus as High Priest. The biggest difference is that Jesus Himself was the sacrifice. All the other priests had to first sacrifice for their own sin before they could sacrifice for the sins of the people. But because Jesus became the sacrifice, His new life is the on-going sacrifice for our sin.

This sacrifice was not easy. Jesus did it willingly, but it was not easy. We read in verses 7-8 how Jesus suffered. He wept and cried out loud – because it was hard! Jesus also had to learn obedience. Verse 8 is one of the most encouraging verses in all of Scripture because if Jesus, who is God, had to learn obedience, and even struggled with it to the point of tears and loud wailing, is it any wonder that we also have to learn it? This does not give us permission to stop learning, or to be lenient on our sin and failure. However, it does motivate us to grab a hold of the hope Christ offers because, not only did He experience it Himself, He offers to walk through it again by our sides. What an awesome God He is!




JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Spend some time meditating on the truth that in order for you to have your sins forgiven and enter into God's rest... someone had to die. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice. Spend some time in humble worship.

2. What's an area of obedience you've been struggling in lately? Ask the Lord to speak to you about what it is exactly that is holding you back from complete and immediate obedience. Ask Him to give you encouragement about continuing to learn and even suffer while you learn to be obedient just like He had to. Thank Him for His faithfulness to persevere to the end.
3. Take a few minutes to pray for an unbelieving friend, co-worker or family member. Ask the Lord to open their eyes to their need for forgiveness. Ask the Holy Spirit for direction on how to pray and then obey.

DAY 7

 **READ:** Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20

In the very first few verses of today's passage the writer makes a bold and potentially offending statement to the readers. He calls them 'dull of hearing' and immature or ... babies. He reminds them that the only reason these things are hard for them to understand is because they are not growing up spiritually. He reminds them they need to practice in order to grow to spiritual maturity. As offensive as this might be, it is also a reason for hope and encouragement. For those of us who seem 'stuck' in the baby-Christian phase, or who have a hard time catching on to some of the harder doctrines or even hearing the voice of God, the answer is so simple: Practice!

By the time we get to chapter 6 though, if we thought that last part was bold and offensive, this is much bolder and much, much more scary. First he tells them not to go back to doing those works again and having to repent of it again! Don't go back there! That's old news... it's time to grow up and move on. For those who consider themselves mature in the Lord, the writer of Hebrews gives us a little checklist:

- Grow in faith toward God, (Hmmm... not too hard.)
- Baptisms, (okay... this one is a little more difficult)
- Laying on of hands, (maybe...maybe in the right group at the right time for the right thing... maybe)
- Resurrection of the dead, (yeah, many know this is coming, but how many think about it?)
- And teaching of eternal judgment or heaven and hell.

He doesn't hold back, does he?

But that's not even the toughest he gets. He says clearly that those who have tasted the heavenly gift of salvation, and received the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of God's word and experienced His power but then leave the faith (or fall away) are at risk of forever being separated from God. This is why Chapter 2 was so important. Because the readers would have heard the whole book read to them in one sitting because it was a letter, they would still have fresh in their minds the reminder that Jesus is God. They would recall having their memories jogged about the fact that although God saved the Israelites from Egypt he never let them enter His rest because they heard His voice and hardened their hearts. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. When Jesus judges us, it will be the same way God judged the Israelites. This is not an easy teaching and one that is often overlooked, or watered down.

The writer realizes his words are tough. So in verse 9 he reminds them that although this is the truth, it is also true that God is not unjust and will take all things into consideration. He is a God who longs for relationship so He will extend patience and grace and mercy.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take a few minutes and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you regarding your maturity level. Ask Him what 2 or 3 things He wants you to do to grow to the next level of maturity. Make a commitment to grow and become spiritually mature.
2. Spend a few minutes thinking about whether or not your attitude toward sin (especially little or private sins) and disobedience is drawing you closer to God, or causing you to slowly slip away. Ask God to speak to you about lies you may have believed about never being able to fall away from the Lord, and to reveal truth to your heart. Ask Him to give you a burning passion to draw closer and closer to the Lord for every day that you live.
3. Take several minutes to thank the Lord for this chapter of warning and challenge. Thank Him for His patience, His mercy and His grace. Thank Him for giving you another day to choose Him and grow in maturity.

DAY 8



READ: Hebrews 7

As we have already noted, this book was written to a congregation of believers who were all Jews. Most of them would have known the Law thoroughly. The Law was the basis for their government, their relationships, their education, and every aspect of life. They studied it and knew it well. It is to their credit that they loved the Law, respected it, and saw it as a way to understand God. So when it came to the way they practice their religion, the Law was paramount again. Every little detail had to be obeyed! Detailed genealogies and histories were kept so that even the tiniest aspect of the Law would be kept. They were sticklers for detail – every single thing had to line up with the Law - **every single thing** – or it was not accepted.

This is why the writer of Hebrews takes so much time to explain how and why Jesus is the perfect High Priest. If even one question or detail was missing, it would give Jews good reason to discount Jesus as our High Priest. It's incredible to see how carefully God planned out every detail so that every nuance of the Law was fulfilled in Christ!

Because of Christ's complete perfection and His appointment as High Priest, the salvation He offers is literally of the highest quality as well. The ESV talks of this salvation in verse 25 as being "save[d] to the uttermost". The NIV says "to save completely". The NLT translates it to say "once and forever, to save". The power of the salvation of Christ will not run out.

Unlike a warranty that expires in a year, or ten years, the salvation Jesus offers us through His position as our High Priest will never, ever wear out. It won't get old. It won't come to an end. The salvation Christ offers us is eternal – as long as Christ exists He is the security of our salvation! Since Christ is God He will always exist!

The salvation is also complete. We are saved 'to the uttermost'. That leaves no room for sins too big for God. There is no wiggle room for God to come back to us later and say, "oh, but that one thing... I don't forgive that". No way! The salvation God extends to us through Christ is over and above what is necessary. When we take a moment to think about our salvation we often think about what we feel guilty of, or what has cost us the most. Really though, when we think of salvation we should be drawn to the truth that Jesus has poured out salvation over us like a tsunami which completely changes the fabric of our being and saves us to the maximum ability of a perfect God. Incredible!

There is nothing... nothing... **nothing** Christ's sacrifice excludes. We are truly saved... to the uttermost when we submit to Him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take some time to ask God to show you a few things in your life that He has coordinated and lined up with perfect timing and detail to bring about spiritual growth or revelation in your life. Thank Him for how He took care of making sure every detail of Christ's lineage and appointment to High Priest meets every requirement of the Law. Thank Him for this kind of involvement in your life.
2. Ask the Lord to search the deepest part of your heart and mind and reveal to you anything you believe or worry might nullify His salvation. Ask Him to speak to you about His "uttermost" salvation. Thank Him for the truth that His salvation covers everything.
3. Today there are many Jews who have not submitted to Jesus Christ. Many of them don't believe Jesus could be God, or our High Priest. Spend a few moments praying for any Jews you know (if you don't know any, pray for the Jewish nation in general) that they would have their eyes opened by the Holy Spirit to see the truth of Jesus' identity.

DAY 9



READ: Hebrews 8

Every book of the Bible reveals God's heart and passion: to be in intimate relationship with His people. Hebrews is no different, and this chapter exposes it again.

First, the fact that God gave us a High Priest who could forgive us of our sin points to the truth of His desire to bridge the gap between us and restore our broken relationship. Secondly, God set up a covenant with the Israelites and then had a Tabernacle built among them because He wanted to live with them and be part of their lives. He wanted an active and up-close-and-personal relationship with them. The third piece of evidence that God truly longs for intimacy with us, and that He'll go to great lengths to achieve it, is found in the new covenant.

In this new covenant God doesn't just want a 'house' among all the other houses. He says in verse 10 that His home will be right inside them. He doesn't want to be side-lined or brushed aside. God is serious about going to great lengths to be in a close and intimate relationship with us. Everything He does is because he loves us so much.

However, God isn't a weakling who is so desperate for love and relationship that He allows us to walk all over Him. He wants a healthy, free-will love relationship with us. This is why He wants to be sure we understand that He will not put up with or ignore our sinful actions against Him. He wants *relationship* not dictatorship!

We must be careful to understand that God has gone to great lengths to shower His love over us and draw us into relationship with Him. The Bible says in James 4:8, "*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*" However, we cannot buy the lie that God will **always** forgive us. Yes... it is true ... He always will forgive if we have repentant hearts! He has gone over and above what we can imagine in order to offer that forgiveness and relationship. The cost to Him was not cheap. This is why He offers it to us. He doesn't force it on us. He paid the most exorbitant price and then holds it out to us. But when we dishonor His gift, and when we continue in our sin without remorse or repentance, the offer still stands, but the gift is withheld.

Hebrews 8 makes it clear God's covenant with the Israelites, and now also with us, is just that – a covenant. A covenant is a promise two parties make with each other. Both sides have a promise to keep, or a job to fulfill. If one side does not keep their side of the covenant, the covenant is broken. God is always faithful to keep His covenant. It's

people who fail it. The day is coming, though, when we will dwell with Him in perfect unity without the ability to break the covenant we have chosen to enter into with Him. Our choice will have been made in this lifetime and He will honor that in eternity! What a glorious thought!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord if there is anything in your heart or life getting in your way of living in an intimate relationship with Him. If there is, confess it, and commit to living in His will in this area with His help from now on. If there are habitual issues you sense God is bringing up in your mind, make a commitment to take all the steps He shows you and that you know of, to make a plan to live with a repentant heart. (Personal ministry, accountability, cutting off the things that trigger this, etc.) Ask Him to speak to your heart about the sincerity of your repentance and His willingness to forgive you again and again and again.
2. Spend a few minutes thanking God for wanting a relationship with you instead of forcing you to simply obey a set of rules.
3. Ask the Lord to speak to you about how much He loves you and wants a relationship with you. Ask Him for a word, thought, or picture that will settle this deep into your heart. Ask Him to bring this to mind when you are tempted to break the relationship by sinning and to give you grace to choose Him in the moment.

DAY 10



READ: Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18

The writer of Hebrews gives us a clear picture in this chapter of what our world and our lives really are. He calls them copies. This world, and all the religious symbols God put into the plan of salvation, and the execution of that plan, are copies of the **real** thing. He made the Law to require a death to cover sins – that’s why the Jews had to kill animals and bring the blood in as proof that a death had happened. But the death of those animals didn’t really offer forgiveness. It was just a copy of what was in heaven. Jesus would be the **real** deal. Jesus’ death, and His blood, replaced the need for the copy.

God used the Law and the sacrificial system, the copy to help us understand our need for Him. Some people are great at visualizing things. Others are not. Some can look at an empty field and imagine it full of houses with yards with shrubs and gardens, and happy children playing in the park. They can see how it all fits together and can spend money on that plot of land because they see what’s not there yet. Others look at that same field and see... a field. They leave thinking that land has nothing to offer except as a place where a farmer can plant another crop just like the one that’s there now.

So architects build little models to scale for their clients. We can hold it in our hand, or walk around it, and look at it from all angles. We can see how it all fits together, and as the construction workers begin to dig, and build, we can compare it to what the model showed. In the end, when the project is done, the real thing is magnificent! It’s functioning and perfect. The model can be thrown away because the real deal can be viewed, touched, experienced.

The sacrificial system God created for the Jews was to show them this model. It was a copy. Now the real thing has arrived: Jesus! The final sacrifice has been made. Now we can look back at the copy and see how much more perfect and amazing Jesus really is. We can contrast the temporary nature of the yearly sacrifices to Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice

and give Him praise. We can compare the copy and the fullness of it in Jesus and see even more benefit and blessing that we might have previously missed.

According to the last verse of this chapter we are living partly in the copy and partly in the final reality. The day will come soon where the plan is fully complete – from beginning to the end. Our redemption won't be just a hope but our actual experience. It's like we are living in between then and now.

If we were standing on the edge of the field seeing the real houses being built and the shrubs and gardens planted, an excitement would grow within us to move in! We'd keep checking back to the model to see how much more until it's done! Our eyes would be less and less on the model and more and more on the actuality. Verse 28 tells us Jesus is coming soon for those who are ready. They believed the model would be beautiful, but now they are standing with their hearts ready and their eyes open, eagerly waiting for Jesus to come back and say, 'Come on in, the wait is over!'



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Think about some of the symbols or pictures God put in the sacrificial system so that we could get a glimpse of Jesus. Ask Jesus to help you see them (eg. Blood, death, a priest, etc.) Ask Jesus to show you something new today about how Jesus is the fulfillment of the copy.
2. Ask Jesus if your eyes are on Him and if you are eagerly awaiting His return. Ask Him what you can do, or what steps you could take, to grow the anticipation of His return. Ask God to open your eyes as you read Scripture from now on, to see how beautifully the model He gave us revealed Jesus.
3. Spend time thanking God for the promise of His return and the fulfillment of the copy.

DAY 11



READ: Hebrews 10:19-39

This section of scripture has three distinct parts to it. The first part is very practical regarding how to live in the faith.

- Draw near to God.
- Don't let go.
- Purposely build up others and encourage them to do good works.
- Get together with other believers regularly.
- Make a point to keep your thoughts on Jesus' return.

The writer wanted the Jewish believers to have direction and practical guidance. They were being persecuted for their faith. When stress comes into our lives it is easy to get distracted to the point that even our habits and routines are thrown off. We might even forget to do some of the most basic things. He reminds them this is no time to get distracted – stay on course!

The second aspect of this passage is a dire warning. This is a warning about sin. It seemed some had been sold a lie, and they bought it, hook, line and sinker. It's a lie that lives today: *It doesn't matter if you sin, God already forgave you, and what Jesus did on the cross is finished, so once you are a Christian your sin is not held against you anymore.* It's not true! The writer of Hebrews actually says the consequences for sin are worse for us after we understand the gospel than what they were for those who were stoned to death for breaking the Old Testament Laws. We rouse the anger of a mighty, holy, and just God

when we keep on habitually and intentionally sinning after we've already been forgiven. He warns us that this judgment will be awful. His warning should strike fear into the heart of every believer and should drive us to obedience: *"The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" (verse 30b-31)

Encouragement is the third part to this passage. The writer reminds these believers that right from the start things were hard but they showed love and did what was right because they knew their real possessions and prize were in heaven. Their hope for heaven and firm belief that God would keep His promise toward them motivated them to care for those who persecuted them and kept them going. He says to them, "Don't give up!" What they need now is not forgiveness, or healing, or deliverance, or joy, or even understanding. Their need is endurance. Endurance is the ability to hang on past the point of pain and to keep hanging on when everything in us wants to let go. We cannot endure if there is no reward. So he reminds them that Jesus is coming back soon and He WILL keep His promise to reward them. He cheers them on and lets them know they can do it!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take a look at the five bullet points above. Ask the Lord to tell you how you are doing in each area, if you are doing well or need to improve. If He says you need to improve ask Him what steps you should take. If you are doing well ask Him to direct you on how to do this even more passionately.
2. Ask God to speak to you about your attitude toward sin. Ask Him to evaluate whether or not you hate sin enough, and desire His holiness enough. Ask the Holy Spirit for a clear picture, word, or thought that will help you despise your own sin so you will not be tempted to walk back into bondage.
3. Do you endure or give up? Ask God to show you a time when you have given up and a time when you have endured. Ask Him to help you put an end to giving up and to create in you a new identity as one who endures to the very end. Ask Him to give you a deep longing for Jesus' return and to hear Him say, "Well done my good and faithful servant."

DAY 12



READ: Hebrews 11

This chapter has often been called "The Faith Chapter". The first verse tells us what faith is: Faith is the absolute belief in something we can't see, so much so that it affects and changes our behavior.

Many times we read the definition of faith and feel inadequate. We feel like we *want* to have faith like all these mighty Bible characters, but we don't think we have that kind of faith. We think, "I could never do what those Bible characters did." We look at some Christians around us who are living victoriously, with faith, through very difficult circumstances and we think, "I do not have faith like that person." We need to notice a very important detail in this chapter.

Abel's faith allowed him to give God an acceptable gift. Some of us have this kind of faith, and we practice it every payday, or every week, when we put our tithes and offering into the basket as it comes by. Abraham had enough faith to nearly sacrifice his son on an altar! It would be easy to look at Abraham and run in fear because we don't have that kind of faith. Jacob's faith allowed him to give a blessing to Joseph's sons before he died. Moses, by faith, gave up luxurious palace living to lead a nation of slaves.

Take note that Abel was not asked to sacrifice a child; and Jacob didn't lead a nation through a desert for 40 years. Yet God didn't allow Abraham to get by with just giving tithes and offerings, and Moses couldn't get away with saying a few blessings over the Hebrews in Egypt. God required of each of them according to the measure of faith they had!

Abraham's journey of faith took him from leaving a modern city, to living in tents, to believing God would give him a son, to sacrificing that son. Faith grows as we live in obedience to what God asks of us. Notice that Abel is in this chapter that talks about the heroes of the faith and his most heroic act of faith was tithing!

Our measure of faith is based on who we have faith in. All these heroes were commended for their faith not because what they did was so amazing, but because they chose to believe God even when it made no sense and they couldn't see a good outcome.

This gives us much hope! We can have heroic faith today if we fix our eyes on Jesus so our hearts learn to believe the truth of God and the eternity that awaits us in heaven. Today when we choose to live as if heaven and its glorious reward will truly be given to us, we join the ranks of the Hebrews 11 Heroes. Tomorrow, when the stakes are just a little higher, we choose to live that way again. We teach our hearts to yearn for heaven. We grow SO in love with heaven and the promise of being with God and enjoying His reward that it becomes easier and easier to go through difficult times with great faith.

Verses 15-16a explain how these heroes grew their faith. They trained their thoughts on the right place. *"If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one."* They chose not to think about what they were giving up but what they were gaining. Many times we fall back into sin, or end up giving up, and losing faith simply because we were concentrating on the pain, the suffering, the loss, the difficulty, rather than what we will experience if we overcome just this once! And then just this once... one more time. And again. And again.

Heroes of the faith have their eyes on the promise of God. Verse 6 says we can't have faith if we don't draw near to God, believe He exists, and that He loves us so much He will keep His promise to reward us. This is why it's important to make time with God a priority. When we draw near to Him, experience His love and hear Him confirm the promise, we will grow in faith.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to remind you of a few things you've done out of faith. Thank Him for the practice you've had to live in faith. Ask the Lord to remind you of something you did or didn't do out of a lack of faith. Confess this to the Lord and ask Him to give you a word or promise today that you can hold onto for the next time you need faith.
2. Take time to evaluate how you're doing with the steps of growing your faith, ask for the Holy Spirit's input:
 - a. Spending time with God.
 - b. Believing He exists.
 - c. Experiencing His love.
 - d. Hearing His promise.
 - e. Thinking about heaven instead of circumstances.
3. Thank God for making it possible to be a hero of the faith today. Spend time thinking about heaven. Ask Him to give you a word, thought, or picture to motivate you and remind you to keep your eyes on heaven.

DAY 13**READ:** Hebrews 12

The writer of Hebrews is concerned the believers will give up. Following Jesus hasn't been easy for them and he knew he couldn't give a promise of "it'll be okay". We are often too quick to soothe those in difficult situations instead of building them up with courage. This author didn't make that mistake! He showed them how even the difficult things they encountered were actually evidences of God's love.

He speaks to them of discipline. Discipline, he says, is painful in the moment, and none of us enjoys it. The discipline is for our own good because it shows us we are truly children of God. He says we must endure the discipline because it will make us more like Christ; we'll grow to be holy like He is holy. The discipline is a training ground. We will get good at living in holiness because of it!

Verse 12 could be summed up as exercise. Lift your arms! Strengthen your knees! Make straight paths! Get strong! Living the Christian life is not for the spiritual couch potato, but for the disciplined. This is encouragement for those who are weak to get going. The writer does not mince words! He makes it as plain as day that this is going to be hard work, but the prize will be to see the Lord.

Verse 25 is a stern warning. *"See that you do not refuse him who is speaking."* When Moses was God's mouthpiece, telling the people what God said, they still disobeyed God. They had seen with their eyes that Moses had been with God, yet they disobeyed. Now, however, God speaks to us directly through His Spirit. This firm warning must be taken seriously. We run a serious risk when we discount the voice of God in our lives. We must learn to live with our ears tuned to God's voice because the other option is to face His fire and fury.

This is, at the same time, something to be thankful for. Because God does speak to us, we can walk in holiness; we can live in peace; we can withstand the pain of discipline. Every warning this writer gives us comes with evidence of God's love. He disciplines us because he loves us. He wants us to exercise our faith and grow strong so we can be healed. He wants us to hear His voice and obey so we will not be destroyed by his devouring fire. This is love.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord if any difficulty you are going through right now is discipline from Him to grow you in holiness. If it is, thank Him for treating you as His very own dear child. If not, ask Him to grow in you a willingness to be disciplined by Him.
2. Ask God what kind of spiritual exercise you need to do to continue to grow and get stronger in your faith. Ask Him to speak to you about these spiritual disciplines or exercises:

a. Solitude & Silence	f. Prayer
b. Fasting	g. Meditation
c. Submission	h. Service
d. Bible Reading	i. Fellowship
e. Worship	
3. Thank the Lord for being a God who speaks to His people. Spend some time now listening to Him. Ask Him one or more of these questions:
 - a. What do you want to say to me today?
 - b. How can I bless you today Jesus?
 - c. A question of your own.

DAY 14**READ:** Hebrews 13

When we read chapter 12 we learned about God's discipline and our spiritual exercise. We learned the 'why' behind it. In Chapter 13 we are told about the 'how'.

The author lists many things we need to do to exercise our faith. Love, show hospitality, care for prisoners and those who are abused, honour marriage, stay sexually pure, don't love money and be content. Sometimes, after reading something like the Faith Chapter (chp. 11) it is easy for us to want to grow our faith by doing big things. Yet, the writer of Hebrews shows us in this passage that living with a disciplined life in the day-to-day matters is also a matter of faith.

Let's look at the matter of money and being content with what we have. He says we should do this because of what God *said*. God promised never to leave us or forsake us. So our practice of faith would be to *believe* it, and live accordingly. If we have less than we'd like, or even feel we need, one example of living in faith would be to rejoice and be glad, not worrying at all, because God has promised to supply all we need. We could practice this by keeping our eyes on the prize of heaven, remembering that in heaven we will have an abundance of all good things. We can put our eyes on Jesus and believe that He is growing in us a dependency on Him and purifying our lives of things that don't matter.

He also talks about submission to spiritual leaders. He reminds us that our spiritual leaders will actually have to give an account for us. They have a heavy burden, so they will not likely ask you to do things God hasn't told them first. Otherwise their consequences and discipline would be that much heavier. But he doesn't just say to do what we're told. He goes above and beyond that and instructs us to submit so well and so willingly that leading us would be a joy to them.

Verses 20 and 21 are a beautiful prayer. It is a pray of faith and equipping. This prayer is one many of us could use prayed over us. We all need God to work in us, to equip us, and to help us please Him. In this way we can also bless others by praying these very words of scripture over others. In this short prayer of blessing he summarizes much of what we have learned through this book. He anoints us with this blessing as well so that we don't have to leave this mighty book of faith and fail in our sin again. He blesses us and prays for our equipping so that we might, in fact, rise up in the power of God to become men and women of great faith.

[Bonus: For another example of how the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a copy which we learned about on Day Ten, and how Jesus was it's fulfillment, reread verses 11 and 12.]

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Re-read the list of things we were warned about in the first five verses of this chapter. Ask the Lord to highlight any of these that He wants you to become more disciplined in. If none of these stand out to you ask Him to give you another area of day-to-day living, or even an area of struggle, that He wants you to grow in discipline. Thank Him for using these mundane struggles to grow your faith and holiness.
2. Ask the Lord to speak to you about how submissive you are to your spiritual leaders. Be honest with yourself and the Lord regarding this, and humbly accept what He says. Do you bring your leaders joy or are do you make leadership difficult for them? Thank the Lord for His willingness to forgive our sin, and to help us learn submission through discipline. Make a commitment to honour the Lord by submitting to your spiritual leaders.
3. Take a few minutes now to pray a blessing for your spiritual leaders. Thank God for them. Ask God if there is something specific He wants you to do today to bless them. Pray verses 20 and 21 for them.

The Book of Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews helps us understand the Deity of Jesus, reveals His everlasting desire to be in relationship with us, and explains the completeness of our salvation. This book is not soft on sin, but at the same time is full of hope and grace. As we progress through the chapters we are shown what it is to be men and women of great faith. From mighty acts of faith to the difficulties we will face as believers, Hebrews is a book of teaching and encouragement we all can use.

Hebrews 3:14 (NIV)

“For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.”