

hebrews

A BETTER WAY TO LIVE

Hebrews 12-13 • Jan - March 2019

Overview

In light of the rich theology of Hebrews and our forerunners who lived by faith, what are the things that should characterise our lives? What are the practical implications of all that we have learned? If Jesus is the better way then there is also a better way to live in light of this.

This series acts as a great launch into the new year with all that we have ahead. It will enable us to talk practical about everyday life and shape people's perspective on their role in church community.

Outline

1. Hebrews 12:1-2
2. Hebrews 12:3-13
3. Hebrews 12:14-29
4. Hebrews 13:1-3
5. Hebrews 13:4
6. Hebrews 13:5-6
7. Hebrews 13:7-9 & 17
8. Hebrews 13:10-19
9. Hebrews 13:20-25

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Week 1 • 27th Jan 2019 • Hebrews 12:1-2

Key theme

This passage gives us the image of a runner in the stadium, inspired by those who've run before, in pursuit of their greatest hero and determined to throw off everything that holds them back.

1. What's the most memorable race you've ever seen or been a part of?
2. The cloud of witnesses are those referred to in Hebrews 11 - they surround us like a hall of fame - not cheering from the sidelines but inspiring us by their example to live by faith. Whose example from Hebrews 11 inspires you most and why?
3. Verse 1 tell us to take off anything that weighs us down or holds us back in this race. Read romans 6:10-14 together.
 - a. What instructions do we find for this in v11-12?
 - b. What promise do we have in v14?

4. The Hebrews had learned that in the death of Jesus, sin had been dealt with once and for all. Now they were to actually live like it.
 - a. What are the things that hold you back from fully running for Jesus?

 - b. Are there sins or habits that keep tripping you up?

 - c. Take the opportunity to share with one another and pray for each other. You may want to use 1 John 1:9-2:2.

5. Jesus is our ultimate example of what it looks like to live by faith - he endured the cross because of the joy before him. What could that joy be according to Jude 1:24? How does this inspire you?

6. The way we run well is to fix our eyes on Jesus - on his example, the way he lived and the things he lived for. What are the things helps you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (e.g. reading the Bible, a friendship, etc)? What can you do to pursue the things that help?

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Week 2 • 3rd Feb 2019 • Hebrews 12:3-13

Key theme

Lessons on endurance: The Hebrews are finding life following Jesus hard and are growing weary. Our writer seeks to give them a different view on their hardship showing that it is actually there to make them stronger. Rather than running away from it - he encourages them to lean into it!

1. Describe a time when you had to overcome adversity to achieve a goal (e.g. studying, training...)

2. The Hebrews were struggling with sin and also with persecution. The problem is that these things can often remove our sense of worth and identity. In what way is Proverbs 3:11-12 helpful here?

3. Have a look at verses Hebrews 12:10-11 and James 1:2-4.
 - a. What are the goals God has in allowing us to experience persecution and hardship?

 - b. What would look different in your life if these goals were closer to being achieved?

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Week 3 • 10th Feb 2019 • Hebrews 12:14-29

Key Theme

Living in light of grace: Grace doesn't mean legalism but neither does it mean liberalism. We have a glorious certain future in Christ and as such, we're to live in reverence and awe.

1. What's the most excited you've been about something that was happening in the future?

The writer of Hebrews paints a picture of a glorious future for Jesus-followers and calls us to live in light of that future hope.

2. The letter urges the reader not to fall short of grace.
 - a. What do we understand grace to be on the basis of Hebrews so far (see 2:9 and 4:16)
3. Grace is a free gift - it's not earned and so falling short of it for the Hebrews was relying on obeying the Jewish law to obtain righteousness.
 - a. How did Paul react when the Galatians did this? (Galatians 2:1-2)

- b. What are the things we can sometimes do to make ourselves feel like we're more acceptable to God?
 - c. What does grace teach about this?
4. The story of Esau - who gave up the gift of his inheritance for a single meal - shows that behaving how we want is not an acceptable response to grace either.
- a. What does Ephesians 2:9-10 teach us about the opportunity grace gives us?
5. What are the differences between the mountain in Sinai (where the law was given - see Exodus 19) versus the heavenly city pictured?
- a. What intrigues you or excites you?
 - b. If you lived life like this was your genuine destiny, what things in life would you consider more important? What things would become less important?
6. In light of our glorious and certain future hope, verse 28 tells us to live with reverence and awe.
- a. The only other use of this word 'reverence' is in Hebrews 5:7 - what does Jesus's example teach us about reverence?
 - b. What might a greater level of reverence before God look like for you?

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Week 4 • 17th Feb 2019 • Hebrews 13:1-3

Key Theme

Standing side by side with other believers in persecution. Brotherly love when it really matters.

1. Thinking about sport, board games, work, etc... Do you prefer to be part of a team or on your own?
2. We know that the church in Hebrews were suffering with persecution (10:33), struggling with sin (12:4) and had experienced imprisonment (10:34). Why do you think the writer calls for brotherly love in this context?
3. Have a look at verse 3. How did they know if they were caring in the right way? (clue - 'as if...)? How does this fit with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:12?

4. What are some of the things we can suffer or struggle with? What would be the most helpful ways that we could show brotherly (or sisterly) love to people in those moments?

5. What is the new command that Jesus gives to his followers in John 13:34-35. What do these verses show about why such a command is at the heart of what it means to be a Jesus-follower?

6. Brotherly love is about spiritual brothers and sisters while hospitality is more about strangers. Should there be a difference in how we care for people depending on whether they are believers or not? Why? Why not?



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Week 5 • 3rd March 2019 • Hebrews 13:4

Key Theme

God calls all people to treat marriage as something very precious.

1. Martin Luther wrote - “marriage is God’s best way of explaining himself.” To what extent do you agree with this statement and why?
2. Have a look at the definition of marriage in Genesis 2:24 - how does it compare to the way sexuality is often expressed in our society? What are some of the consequences of this?
3. This week’s verse says that marriage should be ‘honoured’ - it’s the same Greek word that is translated as ‘precious’ in 1 Peter 1:19. Given this, what do you think it looks like for all people to honour marriage like this?

4. On Sunday, we talked about singleness - how can the church also be a rich and vibrant community for people who remain single in order to honour marriage?

5. Several Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) speak very strongly about sexual immorality along with other sin.
 - a. With this in mind, what does 1 Corinthians 6:11 show about the restorative power of the gospel?

 - b. To what extent is our church community a safe place for people to be restored from all sorts of backgrounds? What might need to change in you or in your group?

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Week 6 • 10th March 2019 • Hebrews 13:5-6

Key Theme

The importance of being content.

1. If you could own a house anywhere in the world, where would it be?
2. The idea behind the phrase 'love of money' is actually much wider - it's like saying keep your life free from 'desiring what other people have.' What are some of the things that this could include?
3. "In our Western culture in particular, where materialism is king, it's much easier to think of something we want but don't have than to be grateful for what we do have." To what extent is the following quote challenging for you?

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Week 7 • 17th March 2019 • Hebrews 13:7-9

Key theme

Imitating godly leaders and testing errant doctrine.

1. As a child, what did you aspire to be? Was this influenced by anyone else?

2. As you consider the outcome of their lives, who inspires you in following Jesus and why? It could be someone famous or someone close to you.

3. Paul charges Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12) to be someone who sets an example.
 - a. Why is it important that we set an example for one another?

 - b. If someone were to imitate your life, to what extent do you think that would be a good thing?

4. The fact that Jesus Christ, the word of God, is eternally unchanging (13:8) is set against new teachings the Hebrews had heard about the importance of Jewish laws and traditions.
 - a. What does your rhythm of reading Scripture look like?

 - b. In Acts 17:11, the Bereans were commended for testing what they heard against the Scriptures every day. To what extent do you feel equipped to test what is being taught against the Scriptures?

5. Grace (see 13:9) is the way God works in your life from beginning to end as a free gift.
 - a. How does this contrast with the food regulations they had been taught to go back to?

 - b. With what you know about grace, (see also Ephesians 2:8-10 & Romans 3:23-25) why is it good for your hearts to be established by grace?

N.B. There are a number of really good and cost effective resources available to help people grow in their understanding of God and his word. Here's a couple you may want to check out.

1. *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* by Wayne Grudem
2. *The Bible Project* - The Youtube Channel has short videos with more detail and discussion in their podcast.
3. www.biblicaltraining.org. This free website includes training resources from foundational to seminary level and a range of seminar content.

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Week 8 • 24th March 2019 • Hebrews 13:10-19

Key theme

Praise, good works and persecution are part and parcel of following Jesus.

1. What nicknames were you called as a child?

2. Jesus being sacrificed outside the camp was a sign of him being rejected by the Jews - his own people - and here, we are called to go to him outside the camp.
 - a. What has or could it cost you to fully associate yourself with Jesus - what rejection might it bring?

 - b. How does this affect the importance of church community for you?

3. While Jesus clearly warned that his followers will face persecution, the Hebrew readers are encouraged to focus on the glory of an eternal future. (see 11:24-26, 12:2 & 13:14)
 - a. How does it change your perception of rejection or loss because of Jesus?

- b. How would a greater consciousness of the eternity to come shape your decision making today?

- 4. Like Hebrews 13:15, Psalm 71:15 tells us that praise is the natural response to salvation. However, the Psalm shows us that there's always more to discover.
 - a. Have you learned something new about Jesus recently? why not share it with the group.

 - b. What is it about knowing Jesus that you are grateful for today?

- 5. While doing good never earns favour with God, God is pleased with Jesus-followers doing good and sharing (13:16).
 - a. What is the similar lesson we find in Proverbs 3:27-28?

 - b. What is one way you could put this into practice this week?

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Week 9 • 31st March 2019 • Hebrews 13:20-25

Key theme

Closing prayer.

1. What comes to mind when you think about peace? How is the word used in our society?

2. The letter closes with the declaration that God is the God of peace (13:20).
 - a. What do we learn about peace from these verses? (Ephesians 2:14-15 & Revelation 5:9)

 - b. What are the areas of life and our world where you notice a lack of peace? Why not pray about these things now.

3. For the first and only time in Hebrews, Jesus is described as the great shepherd of the sheep (13:20). Have a look at one of the following passages about this (Psalm 23 or John 10:11-18). How does it shape your understanding of the work that Jesus is doing in the church and in your life?

4. In line with 13:21, have a look at Colossians 1:29 and Philippians 2:12-13.
 - a. How have you seen God at work in your life to produce what is pleasing to him?

 - b. What is the relationship between God's work and our effort?

5. As this series comes to a close, what will your main takeaway be?