

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

"Discipleship is not an option. Jesus says that if anyone would come after me, he must follow me."
- Tim Keller

"Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

1. Author Jonathan Dobson's definition of a disciple can be summed up in this way: the biblical definition of a disciple is radically Jesus centered. All aspects of life come together in the gospel, which shows us a way of living wholly by faith in Jesus as Lord. "We learn the gospel, relate the gospel, and communicate the gospel in everyday life." How does discipleship move a Christian forward in life? Where does discipleship happen in your own life?

2. Read Hebrews 5:11. Have you ever attended a required professional development course (but functionally had nothing to do with your job) which was offered through a series of recorded lectures? Describe the way you listened. Read Hebrews 2:1. What are the implications for the Christian life regarding lazy listening? What are aspects of active listening for you? How is listening essential to Christian maturity?

3. Read Hebrews 5:12-13. What is the difference between childlike faith and childishness? How were the Hebrews being childish in their faith? Are the areas of your life where you feel the Holy Spirit leading you to a greater maturity? Read Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1. From verse 14 what is the benefit of "solid food"? In what areas of life can benefit you personally from "solid food"?

4. How have you responded to struggles and trials in the past? Did your response reflect confidence in Christ during it? Did you respond biblically? Is this an area where you can grow? Read Hebrews 6:3. There are two aspects of this verse to note. Pastor Bill said, "You are to make the pursuit of discipleship something that you do." What is your level of commitment to know the Scriptures? Have you taken advantage of pressing into the Scriptures with a group during the week? Read 1 Thess. 4:3. It is God's will that you grow and be sanctified. This means that you can turn to the Lord to lead you and take advantage of the solid food available in our church.

Praise to Jesus - Read Matthew 7:11. Praise the Lord for the reality that the biblical Christian life is active and growing, full of rich and incredible opportunities in trusting him! Praise the Lord that we have this message as a reminder of the perils of turning a deaf ear to God. This is a God who loves his children more that they can possibly imagine! Praise the Lord for the solid food which is offered to us each Sunday from the pulpit. Praise the Lord for the many opportunities for discipleship at First Presbyterian Church.

Repentance through Jesus- "Theology bores many of today's Christians, which is another way of saying we are bored with God himself, except as he feeds our consumer needs. The writer of Hebrews points out the price we pay for this. Perpetual infant Christians are easily led astray, unable to distinguish good from evil or between sound and dangerous, between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the age. In recent years, this has been demonstrated by vast hordes of shallow Christians who chase after one or another bizarre movements emphasizing strange experiences or quick riches, but which have no discernible connection with the teaching of righteousness that is in Jesus Christ." - Richard Phillips.
Pause and pray. Reflect for a moment about your enthusiasm for time in God's Word. How do you feel about engaging with God's people? Ask the Lord to show you if these are indicators of boredom with Him. If so, confess to the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to true repentance.

Consecration for Jesus - "When we face difficult circumstances it's like a fog of fear sets in around our heart and mind. A vision of the better Savior Jesus will pierce through the fog of fear. This vision comes through intentional and consistent growth in grace." Pastor Bill
Considering the necessity of discipleship to flourishing in the Christian life, be consecrated for Jesus to press on to maturity so that our vision of Jesus Christ will grow in our minds and in our hearts. Holding fast to that vision, move forward with gospel-confidence when struggles and trials come.

"Discipleship isn't a program or an event; it's a way of life. It's not for a limited time, but for our whole life. Discipleship isn't for beginners alone; it's for all believers for every day of their life. Discipleship isn't just one of the things the church does; it is what the church does."
- Bill Hull

“Pastoral discipleship from the pulpit for you through the week.
Each of our pastors has designed content with you in mind.”

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

If you want to connect with our family ministries, contact Pastor Ken (kenc@fpcrome.org)

1. Hebrews 5:11 describes the original audience for this letter as “dull of hearing”. Ask your children if they know what that means.
 - a. Ask them if they could learn at school without listening to the teacher. Try to have a conversation with each other without listening to each other. It doesn't work. Talk about why that is.
 - b. Pastor Bill talked about the importance of being a disciple of Jesus. This means we are a learner of the ways of Jesus and the gospel. A big part of this learning is listening to Christ. Talk with your children about the ways we can listen to Jesus this week by reading and studying the Bible at home and at church.
 - c. If your children are old enough, then talk with them about how we need help from God to truly hear and listen to Christ. Read Matthew 11:15 or 2 Corinthians 4:4.
 - d. Talk about how we hear Christ spiritually through prayer and by being guided by the Holy Spirit and God's Word.

2. A main theme of this passage is Christian maturity.
 - a. Ask your children if they know what it means to mature as a person. The example in our passage is how we mature in the foods we eat (milk vs solid foods).
 - b. Then ask them what it might mean to mature as a Christian. Take time to tell them about your Christian journey and different ways that you knew that you were maturing.
 - c. Talk about Hebrews 5:14 that mentions the ability “to distinguish good from evil” as a sign of Christian maturity.
 - d. Pray together that each of you will mature in your faith this week by deepening your knowledge of Jesus and the gospel. You could use Ephesians 3:14-20 as a prayer guide.

Big Idea

Discipleship is the wind that fills the sails of the ship of perseverance and the context for a propelling and purposeful faith when the fog of fear sets in.

Outline

1. The Problem

2. The Solution

3. The Response

“Cultivate a deep confidence in the love and power of God day by day. Develop daily disciplines of communion with Christ so that you grow steadily. Grow so that when a crisis comes your roots will be sunk deep in grace and the fiber in your tree will be solid...then you won't be as fragile as so many Christians seem to be when crisis comes. Good times tend to lull us into sleep and spiritual indifference as though our faith will just take care of itself when the crisis comes, which simply isn't the case... but that is why so many Christians, instead of casting themselves on the Lord with a deep and quiet confidence in the midst of crisis, shake their fists in God's face and say 'Where are you?' They haven't come to know that God is sovereign, loving, and caring in the hard times as well as the good.” -John Piper

Scriptures for further study:

John 15:5

Philippians 3:7-11

Ephesians 3:14-20

Colossians 1:27-28

“GOSPEL POISE”

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 ESV

11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. **12** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **13** for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. **14** But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

6 1 Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, **2** and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3** And this we will do if God permits.

Historical Context

The writer of the book of Hebrews expresses the hope and gaze of home in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The struggle to give up or turn back was very real for the audience. Most scholars believe the original audience was Jewish Christians who were facing persecution. It would have been a struggle for them to keep moving forward in their profession of Jesus Christ because with that profession came pain and hardship. They struggled with fear.

The writer of Hebrews often reminds his audience “to listen”. Though our fears may be unique to this cultural moment for Christians, we still struggle with fear. The hardest thing to do in a moment of fear is to listen.

“The sluggishness of the Hebrews is specified in dullness of hearing. This is serious, for throughout the letter hearing the Word of God is of vital importance (2:1-4; 3:7-19; 4:12-13) ...their difficulty is not simply mental laziness but spiritual resistance. They are no unwilling to work out the deeper implications of the Gospel in their lives.” – Peter Obrien

FOR STUDENTS

If you want to connect with our student ministries, contact Pastor Jimmy (jimmyl@fpcrome.org)

1. Do you know people in your life who have apostatized? How did that impact your own spiritual life?
2. Honestly appraise your own spiritual maturity. In what ways are you still like a toddler and need to grow? In what ways do your areas of immaturity make you vulnerable to attack?
3. What do mature Christians, who eat solid spiritual food, possess (5:14)? Do these things come easily? What is the ultimate result of living on solid food?
4. What does the speaker wish for Christians to do (6:1)? What are five things the author lists as elementary doctrines in 6:1-2?
5. What are some concrete steps you can take to move forward in your growth as a follower of Jesus?

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Hebrews for you by Michael J. Kruger.*

Scriptures for further study:

1 Thess. 4:1

Ephesians 4:14-15

Romans 8:29

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

If you want to know more about Jesus and Christianity, contact Pastor Jonathan (jonathans@fpcrome.org)

1. This passage is not addressing people who are simply having a hard time understanding the Bible. If you are one of those people, take heart. The Bible is often difficult to read and interpret. Even the Apostle Peter said of the Apostle Paul's writing that some of his letters were hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16). You aren't the only one who struggles! But make sure you apply yourself to read and study the Bible under the direction of Christian teachers who can help you learn.

2. Hebrews 6:1 refers to "elementary teachings," or what we might call the A.B.C.'s of the Christian faith. If you are not yet a believer, or you have just recently become a believer, take note of some of the elementary or foundational things you must grasp: repentance and faith (6:1), baptism and spiritual gifts (6:2), the death and resurrection of Christ (6:2), and the last things, or the eternal state (6:2). If pressed, could you articulate what the Bible says about these matters?

3. You might say that there are those Christians who are spiritually anemic, and those Christians who are spiritually obese. The first are those who do not know very much in the way of Christian beliefs and could desperately use more nourishment from God's word. They are referred to here as "slow to learn," or those who are still drinking "milk" (5:11-13). The second are those who have plenty of knowledge but desperately need a spiritual workout. Hebrews 5:13 speaks of those who are not so much ignorant as they are untried or lacking in practice. In which of these two camps do you find yourself? Or in which camp do you at least tend to lean?

4. Think about all the things you are good at. Are you good at sports, music, certain job skills, hobbies, etc.? Now ask yourself how you got to be so good at these things: through training and practice, right? Well, the same is true when it comes to spiritual maturity and living a life of wisdom (5:14). It comes by practice, by habit, by steady application of spiritual discipline. I wish I could offer you an easier solution. But there is no substitute for the time, effort, and grace-driven discipline you will need if you are going to grow into full maturity. Are you prepared?

Like Christina. But even more so...we need something to fix our gaze upon...we need a home to pull us forward...and according to Hebrews, that is Jesus Christ...like the home on the hill in the painting, Jesus is the pinnacle of God's plan of redemption...so considering this painting and background, here these words afresh from Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1-2:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

And so, church, let's begin this journey in Hebrews together...which is not disconnected from our humanity and our struggles...for we to live in Christina's world...a world of suffering, pain, and hardship...but we are in a relationship with the savior, Jesus, who has overcome the world...and because of His supremacy, calls us to fix our eyes on Him in order that we might persevere in faith. -Tremper Longman, EBC, 23-25

About the artwork

Andrew Wyeth is perhaps the most famous American artist of the 20th century. He, along with John Singer Sargent, are the only two American artists invited into the Academy of Fine Art in Paris, France. President Kennedy awarded Wyeth the presidential medal of freedom, the only visual artist to receive such an award. He was also awarded presidential medals from George H Bush and George W Bush.

His art is connected to his humanity. He was a man that experienced loss and grief in this broken and fallen world and often expressed his pain in visual form through art.

His most famous work, and the one that best expresses his struggle with pain and grief, is a painting called Christina's World (1948). Christina is a friend of Wyeth and had a disease that left her unable to walk. Instead of choosing a wheelchair, she preferred to crawl using her arms. The painting is a picture of her struggle...but it is also a picture of her hope...in the painting her hands are gripped to the ground portraying her daily suffering, yet her body is leaning towards the farmhouse, which was her home. Life was a struggle, but her gaze and hope were on her home, which kept her moving forward and not giving up.

The book of Hebrews has a very similar theme...the writer expresses the hope and gaze of home in the person and work of Jesus Christ...the struggle to give up or turn back was very real for the audience...most scholars believe the original audience was Jewish Christians who were facing persecution...it would have been a struggle for them to keep moving forward in the profession of Jesus Christ because with that profession came pain and hardship.

5. I think what the author of Hebrews is trying to communicate to his audience is simply this: grow up! Is this you? Will you heed the warning and accept the challenge to grow and mature? Especially if you have been a believer for any length of time, when are you going to put down the baby bottle and start eating steak?

ADDITIONAL NOTES



What is Pulpit Driven Discipleship?

Discipleship from the pulpit to communities therein pressed into the head, heart and hands of image bearers of God every day.

Pulpit Driven Discipleship is the name of a process of discipleship. Discipleship begins on Sunday with the sermon faithfully preached by our pastors then the message of sermon is digested and pressed into the heart throughout the week through prayer reflection and discussion in the home or in smaller discussion groups. It is in this context that life transformation and growth occur.

The pastoral leadership team and the Adult Discipleship Ministry Team are excited to walk together through the Book of Hebrews. Please prayerfully consider incorporating PDD as your primary means of discipleship. We believe that PDD is appropriate for individuals, couples, families, and groups of all kinds. This great resource can be found in the bulletin on Sunday, and will be available on-line and via email each week.

Director of Adult Discipleship Rob Davis welcomes discussion, questions, and comments of all kinds. Rob Davis 706-252-5216, RobD@fpcrome.org

PULPIT DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP



Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World, 1948 ;

Perseverance by Promise ***A Study of the Sermon to the Hebrews***

March 27, 2022
Hebrews 5:11-6:3