

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.

1. Refer to Hebrews 2:1, 3:7, 3:15, 4:2, 4:7, 5:11. What theme do these verses share? Why (refer to the historical context)? What did the writer fear would happen to the Hebrew Christians? What does it mean to be "sluggish"? How do we tend to respond when our instructions are followed? Do we sympathize with folks who are sluggish?

2. Read Hebrews 6:4-6. Read the experiences which the writer has listed in verse 4&5. What is the warning? "An apostate is someone who's inside God's covenant community, is part of the visible Church, whose professed faith in Christ, seems to be a believer, probably partakes of the Lord's Supper and is a member of that congregation, and then later consciously and intentionally repudiates their belief in Christ and leaves the covenant community" Michael Kruger. Hebrews 6:4-6 addresses a reality that folks attend church and enjoy all the experiences of covenant fellowship, then walk away. In walking away, they not only stop attending church, but they also renounce their belief and the realities of who Jesus is and what he has done. What is the difference between an apostate and someone who is struggling with sin or doubts his salvation? What is relationship between being sluggish and growth in Christ?

3. Read Hebrews 6:7-12. We see Christians deconstructing their faith and renouncing Christ a lot these days. This is tragic. Ultimately, only Jesus knows who will be saved, whose heart is regenerated and whose is not. For one who is sluggish to obey this should cause fear, as was the goal of the writer for this passage. What the writer points to for assurance of salvation is fruit. In essence, the writer is saying in verse 9, "I'm using really hard language because you are not listening, but "beloved" this is not you." He points out the fruit that the church is producing which is evidence of salvation. What does he point to? Jesus does not intend for his children to question their salvation or doubt his love for them (See John 10: 28 & 29). If the writer of Hebrews were assuring our church of our salvation by listing the works for the kingdom that characterize our church, what would he list? If he were writing to you personally, what would he list?

4. The writer of Hebrews wants us not only to be convinced of our hope in Jesus but also the necessity to get moving! He closes out the passage with a how to kick-start growth in verse 12 "so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." To be sluggish is to delay obedience. In what areas of your life are you sluggish to obey? Are you ignoring God's call to grow in a particular way? What will it take to move you to listen & obey?

Praise to Jesus - (John 1:12-13, 1 Peter 1:3-5, Phil 3:9, Ephesians 2:8-10) We have such a hope in Christ! Beloved, praise the Lord who loves you more than you can imagine. If you are in hard place and can't fix your eyes on Jesus, cling to the promises of God and praise the Lord for them. Praise the Lord that you are not alone but have a loving and authentic church family who struggles too and longs to fight along your side. And we have such a savior in Jesus!

Repentance through Jesus- "This matter of bearing fruit is a serious one. Is your faith in Jesus Christ and your relationship with him exerting an influence upon your character, so that you find yourself thinking and responding in a way that is less worldly and more godly? In not, then you should be concerned and should turn to God for grace." Richard Phillips. Confess to the Lord the areas of your character that are out of line with God's Word and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to repentance.

Consecration for Jesus - ...he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 4:6). The writer of Hebrews is a pastor who is shepherding his flock through this sermon which is a letter he sent to them because he could not be with him. He loves them. He loves them enough to tell them hard things. His hope is that the church would persevere and press on, not relying on going through the motions of church as evidence of faith (which wasn't sustaining them through trials). Instead, he wanted them to have joy, have rest in hard things, and press on to maturity in Christ (Read Ephesians 1:15 - 23). Consecrate yourself today, to pray this prayer for yourself and your church family. Press on.

“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. This passage is another warning to the readers to be careful to persevere in the faith. Many have misunderstood this passage to think that it teaches that we can lose our salvation. Make sure to talk with your children from the outset that true believers in Christ will not lose their faith. In fact, God uses warning passages to get the attention of true believers.

- a. Read John 10:27-29 with your children and talk about the imagery of God holding us in His hand.
- b. Ask your children who is stronger, you as the parent or them as the child. Then ask which would provide more security, to be held by you as the parent or to be held by them as the child.
- c. Read Hebrews 6:9 and talk about how the author is pointing out his confidence that they would not fall away from their faith and salvation.

1.2. In the sermon we heard the imagery of a stick and a carrot as motivators for right behavior and belief. Talk with your children about different approaches to motivation and why one way might be better in one situation and why another would be better in another situation.

- a. See if your children can come up with examples where a stick or a carrot would be better, such as if someone is about to run into the road where cars are or if someone needs motivation to do chores or homework.

3. In Hebrews 6:12 we read the author warning against being “sluggish”. Ask your children if they know what it means to be sluggish and to give examples.

- a. Maybe find videos of a sloth or watch that scene from the movie, Zootopia, where the main characters of the movie interact with Flash the sloth in the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office.
- b. Talk about what it means to be sluggish spiritually. You can tie it in to last week’s discussion of being “dull of hearing”. Talk with your children about why it is important to get in the regular habit of attending church and studying the Bible with other Christians such as your family.

Theologian Tremper Longman says, “The Jewish Christians to whom this letter was sent were in the author’s view in serious spiritual danger...the striking sequence of warning passages, combined with the repeated exhortations to persevere suggests their continued allegiance to Christ was in doubt, and the author was seriously worried they might give up their Christian profession altogether.” EBC, 23-25

Big Idea

Listen, for the sluggish disaster awaits. Take heart, Jesus earnestly endured suffering; we can persevere.

Outline

1. Gospel Warning

2. Gospel Assurance

3. Response

Scriptures for further study:

Philippians 1:6

Colossians 2:6-7

Colossians 3:1-4

Hebrews 6:4-12 ESV

4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, **5** and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6** and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. **7** For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. **8** But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. **9** Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things--things that belong to salvation. **10** For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. **11** And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, **12** so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Historical Context

"For many Jewish Christians things were not easy. Many of their Jewish family members, friends and neighbors had not accepted Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah." N.T. Wright. The traditional Jews in the Roman Empire thought these new Jewish Christians were not only heretics, but they are dangerous, and disloyal to all that God said earlier. There were all sorts of pressure to give up their Christian beliefs and go back to living under the Laws given by Moses.

Also, to be a Christian in the Roman Empire was to be a traitor to Caesar who insisted everyone worship him. Romans wouldn't do business with Christians. The Hebrew Christians were looking away from Jesus and were looking back to Jewish traditions to try to blend in in the hopes that they would find relief.

FOR STUDENTS

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

1. Why do you think God takes apostasy so seriously?
2. When you look at the fruit in your life, where are you encouraged that God is at work? Where are you discouraged?
3. What are some practical ways you can be "earnest" in faith in the year to come?
4. Of what does the author feel sure (6:9)? Why is the author so sure (6:10)?
5. What things "belong to salvation"? (Think specifically of 6:7-8).
6. What is desired of each of us (6:11)? Why should we not become "sluggish" (6:12)?

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Hebrews for You by Michael J. Kruger and Hebrews: How Jesus speaks into everything by John D. Barry.*

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:33-39

Psalms 121:1-8

Psalms 91:14-16

John 3:36

Psalms 79:9

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

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

1. This is certainly no easy passage to understand. But one thing needs to be made absolutely clear: if you are truly saved, then you cannot lose your salvation. As R. C. Sproul puts it: "If you have it, you never lose it; if you lose it, you never had it." This passage in Hebrews must be understood in conjunction with numerous passages which speak to the security of our salvation. For further reflection, read: 2 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 1:6; John 10:27-29; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Hebrews 10:14; Romans 8:33-39. See also those passages which speak of the guaranteeing of our salvation through the sealing of the Holy Spirit: 2 Timothy 2:19; Ephesians 1:14; Romans 8:23.

2. At the same time, we do need to take seriously the warnings in this passage. Look again at the phrases in Hebrews 4:4-5. In my opinion, while I do not think this is referring to believers, it also seems apparent that these are people who have had some very real exposure, understanding, and experience of Christianity. Indeed, they would very likely call themselves Christians. The sobering truth is that we can know much about the gospel, and even have some taste of God's goodness, without actually and truly believing and being born again through genuine repentance and faith. Be careful to distinguish between mere intellectual knowledge or religious practice, versus personal belief in Christ that results in salvation.

3. In Hebrews 6:9, by way of contrast, the author now seems to be addressing people who are actual believers, hence the phrase "dear friends," or "beloved." In their case, the writer is confident of their salvation, and wants to encourage them to persevere. This raises a question: so how do you know that you are among those who are actually saved? And how can you make your "hope sure" (verse 11)? Part of the answer is that there will be certain "things that accompany salvation" (verse 9). The writer goes on to explain (verse 10) that those who are saved will do works of love and service to others, as opposed to being "sluggish" or "lazy" (verse 12). The Bible elsewhere adds that our assurance of salvation also comes from: our trust in the promises of God's word (external); the witness of the Holy Spirit (internal) convincing us of our right standing with God and our sense of being a child of God; the ways in which we are growing spiritually and more and more bearing the likeness of Christ; and the faith-confirming experience of obedience to the Lord. Our passage in Hebrews should elicit some deep reflection on whether we are seeing these evidences of the grace of God in our lives.

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.

4. The word "diligence" (verse 11) probably implies "eagerness" or "haste." The writer may very well be making a plea for the unbelieving Jews among them to come to Christ immediately. Salvation should never be postponed. Today is always the best day to receive the gift of salvation!

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***

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Hebrews 6:3-12 ESV