



HEBREWS DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to ‘follow’ Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids’** environments, **men’s/women’s** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

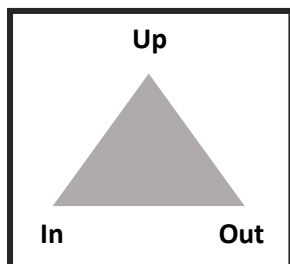
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS

Before you study a book, it is always good to ask some questions regarding it. Questions like “Who wrote it?”, “To whom was it written?”, “When was it written?”, “What is the theme or context?”. The strange thing about Hebrews is that we are not told who the author is, and so we are left to surmise. Obviously, God in His greater wisdom deemed it not important that we know or He would have told us. I like what I read some years ago (not sure where): “The book of the Hebrews was most likely written by a Hebrew to warn the Hebrews to stop acting like Hebrews.”

These believers had grown complacent about their salvation. Some were considering renouncing their faith and returning to Judaism, probably because of persecution. The book of Hebrews warns these believers of the danger of drifting away from Christ into old ways that weren't of God. The key word in this book is “superior” or “better”, which occurs throughout. It's a book of “better” things. You can highlight these words found in the following references: 1:4 / 6:9 / 7:7,19,22 / 8:6 / 9:23 / 10:34 / 11:16,35,40 / 12:24.

I hope and trust you enjoy.

Phil

Read

Hebrews 1

Live

Slipping away from God's original design and plan is as age old as the Garden of Eden. It is so easy to slip back, so when we come to faith in Christ, we must continually work out this great salvation. The writer to the Hebrews is unknown but I love how someone wiser than me put it: *"The book of Hebrews was most likely written by a Hebrew to warn the Hebrews to stop acting like Hebrews."* So funny, but true. These people were continually drifting back into old Hebrew beliefs and systems. That's why right at the opening of the book he is reminding them how great Jesus really is. There is so much in this beautiful chapter about Christ the man and Christ the Son of God. You can get captivated by the dignity and honour heaven places on Jesus.

Let me take you to the last verse to think about the ministry of angels. These are the unseen attendants of the people of God. Psalm 91:12 reminds us that they will bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot on a stone. These ministers of heaven's riches are deeply loyal to their Lord and thus take a deep interest in the children of His love. They welcome home the prodigal and rejoice every time someone trusts in Jesus. If you want to read more about angels, there is a great story in 2 Kings 6:8-23. Remember, you are not alone. All of heaven watches you, cheers you on, and is at your disposal to fight and encourage. Remember how angels appeared in the Garden of Gethsemane; when men failed Jesus, they came and comforted Him.

Pray

Father, I love that the Bible continually reminds me how beautiful and wonderful Jesus is. The Bible is definitely a 'HIM book' because it is all about Him. Today I come to You knowing that all of heaven's riches are at my disposal, even the wonderful angelic attendants. Please help me to not be afraid to ask You to release those ministering angels to minister to me today – to my family, my finances and my future. In the book of Daniel we are reminded that there are also warring angels who fight on our behalf. I love this and I love the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The theme of this chapter is a warning to believers not to neglect our salvation. In the ESV, it starts by warning us to, *“pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it.”* Oh how easy it is to drift in life. The passion and fervour you once had ebbs somewhat. The fire of evangelism that once raged now just flickers. Have you ever wondered why? We learn a lot about spiritual things through downright practical things, like, *‘If you move away from the fire, you’re going to cool down’*. Could it be you have moved from the fire? Or maybe even moved the goal posts? Things you once thought you would never do, are they now sort of okay? Relationships never break down in one big event; it’s usually a drifting from what was once important. That’s why it’s vital to have daily disciplines in your life and spending time with your eternal Father is the most important of all.

In chapter 1 we saw the importance of angels. Now the writer goes on to show us the superior role Jesus has over angels, how He took upon Himself humanity, not an angelic role, but the seed of Abraham. We see how Jesus became a *‘tempted, suffering’* Saviour so He could well understand when you and I are tempted and suffer. Verse 14 shows how He broke the power of death and verse 17 shows us how He became like us in every way so one day we could be like Him.

Pray

Father, thank You today for Your amazing forgiveness which comes to me over and over again. Your Word reminds me in both Isaiah 42:3 and Matthew 12:20 that a bruised reed You will not break and a smouldering wick You will not snuff out. I hold on to these passages so dearly because life’s circumstances sometimes make me feel bruised and smouldering. I often feel that if modern society had its way, I would be quickly snuffed out. May I never neglect the gift of salvation which can be received so freely and yet cost You everything. Jesus became like me so I could become like Him. Help me not to drift away from You but to soar in the heavenly places You designed me to reach. In Jesus’ strong name I pray. Amen.

REFLECT

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Live

The first word in Hebrews 3 is *“Therefore”*. Remember, when we see the word ‘therefore’ we should look to see what it’s ‘there for’! It is drawing a conclusion based on previous statements. Chapter 2 explained that Jesus became a human so He could save us humans. Because He was a human, He is qualified to be our high priest and intercessor. He suffered, so He knows the struggles we go through. He can sympathise with our weakness, so He is able to help us in our temptations.

Some modern versions call Jesus *“Messenger and High Priest”* in verse one. The true rendering of *“Messenger”* is *“Apostle”*. This is the only place in the Bible where Jesus is called an Apostle. The word means ‘one who is sent’, and if anyone was ever sent, it was Jesus. Also, the book of Hebrews is the only book in the Bible that calls Jesus our High Priest. As an Apostle, He speaks to humanity on behalf of God. As a High Priest, He speaks to God on behalf of humanity. He is our ONE mediator, who bridges the gap between us and God. That’s why we need to look to Him.

There are warnings given in chapter 3, drawing comparisons with the children of Israel. In verse 12 we are challenged to not have an unbelieving heart, which will pull you away from God. Verse 13 says we are to exhort one another every single day. This reminds me that I can’t do this on my own. I desperately need the fellowship of my church family. We live in a day of God channels at the flick of a remote control, but this can never compensate for true encouragement and fellowship with a church family. Ask God today to fill you with a fresh belief in Him and His ways.

Pray

Father, how amazing that Jesus is both Apostle and High Priest. He stands astride heaven and earth, having vested Himself in both. How could I not want to give my all to someone as beautiful as that? Please help me to guard my heart against unbelief and hardness as the last verse today shows me the destruction it brings. Thank You for my church family and friends who help me keep my heart and life on track. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The letter to the Hebrews weaves theology with practical application. After each doctrinal section, it urges the readers to do something as a result. This often takes the form of *'Therefore, let us do such and such'*.

This chapter is in two parts; the first carries on from the previous chapter, but it's the second part I want us to focus on today, verses 12-16. The Word of God, what a tremendous tool we have at our disposal! It is alive and cuts keenly in all directions. It divides, so it not only gives life, but also slays flesh if we start to live by it. It pierces, which means it enters even to the fountain of life itself. And it's a discerner, laying bare every thought and intention. While the Bible is the written Word, we are reminded in verse 13 that Jesus is the Living Word and we can hide nothing from Him. Verse 14 reminds us that Jesus our High Priest has passed through the heavens for us and verse 15 says He became tempted in every way we are, yet He did not sin. This Saviour understands and is touched by our pains, weaknesses, and disappointments.

The last verse gives us confidence to draw near to His throne, knowing He is both willing and able to help in a time of need. What do you need today? Take some time and present it to God with a fresh confidence that He not only hears but is able to help in your time of need. Walk in this new-found truth today that YOU, yes, YOU, can draw near to the throne of God with confidence that you will find mercy, grace and acceptance. Amazing or what?

Pray

Father, how profound, beautiful and almost unbelievable this story seems to be – that Your only Son Jesus would become our High Priest and would pass through the heavens for us and become tempted in every way that we are, yet He did not sin. That leaves me speechless and breathless. I am reminded of the old hymn: *'I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner, condemned, unclean ... He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own; He bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone ... How marvellous! How wonderful is my Saviour's love to me!'* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The theme of this chapter is the qualifications of a high priest. When you read Hebrews, the key word is *'better'*. It's a book of better things to come. The next four chapters (5 to 8) all are based around Jesus as our High Priest. This suggests the author thought this topic was at the very root of the problem his readers had. They were struggling in their faith and struggling in their commitment to Christ because they did not understand His role as High Priest; He was the key link in their connection with God. They knew Him as Messiah but there seemed to be a failure after that. So this chapter compares an earthly high priest with Jesus, with a view to bring out the differences rather than the similarities. A question you might ask yourself today is, 'What does it mean to have Jesus as our High Priest?' Not only does it give us confidence that God wants us to come to Him, it also affects the way we worship. Hebrews is the only book in the Bible that calls Jesus a High Priest.

Another great thought to ponder today is how Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered. Jesus did not use His position to benefit Himself, rather, He willingly placed Himself in the circumstances all humans experience. Although He had always been obedient to the Father, He experienced what it is like to be obedient even in situations of suffering. As a human, He grew in His relationship with God (Luke 2:52 tells us this). He can relate to the struggles other people have, so He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since He Himself was subject to weakness.

Pray

Father, thank You for verse 9 – Jesus is the Author of salvation. The reason I am a Christian is because Jesus suffered and died for my sin. I realise that You don't want me to be a spiritual baby eating baby food, but to seek meaty nourishment in the Word. May this be the day I start to eat more substantial spiritual food. Lord, help me to stay around those who are more mature in Christ that they may encourage me in my spiritual disciplines. It is amazing to think that while Jesus was truly God, He was also truly man and suffered temptation like I do. He chose to live for You and even in all His suffering He did not sin. I love that and I love Jesus, in whose name I stand. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today the writer continues the encouragement he began in chapter 5. I love how he suggests they leave the elementary stuff behind and go on to the deeper things of God. Repentance is mentioned as the first foundation principle. Faith toward God is second in the list of fundamental doctrines. Repentance and faith are so familiar to New Testament readers that we don't need to say much concerning them. It looks as if these believers had stumbled and they put Christ to open shame by not dealing with their stumblings in the right way before God. In the case of the Hebrews, they were either doing nothing about it or going back to the Temple to offer a sin offering, which was no longer acceptable by God (Galatians 5:1-6; Hebrews 10:18-26). Instead, God wants us to deal with our stumblings by repenting, confessing, and doing what He wants us to do (James 1:16-25).

A couple of good questions to mull over ... Are you grounded in the principles of Biblical doctrine? Do you have an established routine of studying God's Word, praying, and participating in the activities of a good local church? They are the first steps in Christian living, without which no progress can be made in our approach toward God. As you go through today, walk in the fact that things are BETTER than you ever imagined. You are forgiven of all your sin, you are blood bought, you are constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, that should lighten your step!

Pray

Father, thank You for the peace, freedom, and joy I have through Jesus. Thank You that You are accomplishing in me a much better thing. My focus is now on Jesus, where it should be, and not on the things of the world or on old laws and systems devised by man and tradition. May Your grace have even greater effect – in me and through me in every single thing I do and place I go. I know more today than ever before the truth of James 1:17 *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”* Increase my hunger, I pray, for Your Holy Spirit to quicken and fill me afresh. Come, Holy Spirit, come. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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Live

In chapter 1 the writer presented Christ as God. In chapter 2 he showed that Christ was also a man. In chapter 3 he compared Moses with Christ and showed that Christ is superior. In chapter 4 he stressed the fact that while Joshua brought the children of Israel into the land, he did not bring them into God's rest, something Jesus would do. In chapter 5 the writer began a discussion of the qualifications of Christ for the office of high priest, but halted a moment to scold his hearers and exhort them to take solid food. He continued this in chapter 6, where he warned them to beware of falling away from the faith. Now, in chapter 7, he shows how Christ and His priesthood are superior to Melchizedek and his priesthood.

All we know historically of Melchizedek is contained in three verses in Genesis and one verse in Psalms (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4). Of Melchizedek's origin, we know nothing. We are introduced to him as king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. Abraham had just rescued Lot and on the way home he met Melchizedek, who blessed him. There has been much discussion as to who Melchizedek was. There are some who believe that he was Christ. But if it were important for us to know, God would have told us. In the absence of any such information it is best to leave speculation and accept him as one of the contemporaries of Abraham. There is so much in this incredible chapter today, folks. I think the writer wanted to stress the point that all the greatness of man cannot compare to the One who inhabits your soul. YOU are a carrier and a container of God. WOW.

Pray

Father, today I am captivated by just how great You are. Your love and mercy are overwhelming, and I thank You for the High Priest who intercedes for me. Such incredible love. John in his little epistle reminds me, *"See what great love the Father has lavished on me, that I should be called a child of God!"* John further reminds me that when Christ appears, I shall be like him, for I shall see Him as He is. And then John tops it all by endorsing that all who have this hope in Him should purify themselves, just as He is pure. May that be my quest today, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

Two covenants are presented today, an old and a new one. God announces He will make a new covenant based on better promises. He will write the law in the heart, not on stone as before, and their sins He will remember no more. He is the mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises. *'Mediator'* (one version refers to an *'umpire'*) is defined as a *'go between'*. A mediator must understand both parties of the controversy, the rights and claims of each, and must have their confidence if he is to be successful. Of the six times the word *'mediator'* occurs in the New Testament, four times it refers to Jesus. He is the Mediator between God and man and can lay His hands on both. As God, He understands God and can speak for Him. As man, He understands man and can speak for man with God. Only Jesus can do this as only He understands both.

Jesus is the mediator of the better covenant. The word *'better'* suggests that the first covenant was not as good as the second and that it needed replaced. We need to ask, in what respect is the new covenant better than the old? The answer is suggested by the fact that the new was established on better promises. But again, another question – better promises by whom? By God? By man? Or both? Something to think and chat about. (Hopefully I'm whetting your appetite to study!) The word *'covenant'* occurs nearly three hundred times in the Old Testament. As you go into today, think about how you can live out this incredible fact – a New Testament saint, saved by grace, washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus and living under a covenant no power of earth or hell can break. I love this!

Pray

Father, thank You that today I get to be a recipient of a new and better covenant. Sometimes I think if I lived under the old covenant I would never have survived. Thank You, Father, for Jesus. Thank You that HE and HE alone paid the price for my redemption. He became my mediator, my go-between. The hymn writer got it right ... *'There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.'* Jesus, I love You and I stand redeemed in Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

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Live

Today the author is reaching the climax in his argument concerning Jesus as high priest. After a synopsis of the tabernacle built by Moses, he then proceeds to contrast the earthly tabernacle with the heavenly, showing that the earthly was only a figure for the present time. Jesus is the greater and more perfect tabernacle; He has entered into the holy place with His own blood and obtained eternal redemption for us. Jesus is mediator of the new covenant which became effective at His death. Death also took place at the dedication of the first covenant, though it was only the death of animals.

Always remember that the blood of the animal sacrifices only covered up sin. That's why repetition was needed. Jesus' blood took our sin away – forever. This is where the writer shows how much better it is what Jesus has done, by shedding His own blood for us at Calvary. Jesus has entered the holy place in heaven to appear before the face of God for us. Each person dies for their own sins, but Jesus died for others. Each person will face judgment for their sins, but Jesus will be the judge. His death took away their sins and when He appears again, He will not be bringing their sins against them, rather, He will be bringing eternal salvation for all who trust in Him. Walk today and keep saying these phrases to yourself, out loud, if necessary. *'I'm forgiven; I'm redeemed; I'm the child of a King and not just any king, but the King of kings.'*

Pray

Father, I want to thank You that my sins, which are many, are not just covered up but dealt with forever. My sins – past, present and future – are all forgiven. Thank You for even going a step further and refusing to remember them anymore. I pray with the psalmist today... *"Teach me, LORD, the way of Your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep Your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward Your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to Your word. Fulfil Your promise to your servant, so that You may be feared."* (Psalm 119:33-37) In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

The writer continues the discussion of how ineffective the law was to make us perfect. He tries to get us to see that if the law really made people perfect, sin offerings could cease. Having proved this point, the writer goes on to show that Christ, through the offering of Himself once for all, has perfected forever those who are sanctified. For these people, there is no more offering for sin. In our last chapter we reminded ourselves that the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices could never have redeemed us back to God. The Hebrew word for 'atonement' is 'kophar', which literally means 'to cover'. That's all animal sacrifices did – cover; they could never take away sins. Only Jesus, the perfect sacrifice of the New Covenant, takes sins away. Where there is remission of sins, there can be boldness before God. It is possible with Christ as the forerunner to enter into the holies by the power and virtue of His blood.

The rest of the chapter gives us encouragement to hold fast the faith without wavering and exhorts us to encourage one another in view of the fact that the great day of God is approaching. *"In a little while He that shall come will come and will not tarry."* Take a moment today to think of verse 38 that convicted Martin Luther 500 years ago, *"the just shall live by faith"*. How's your faith? I'm always stirred by the little statement that follows in that verse, *"and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him"*. So, no shrinking back! Let's forge our way forward and see the kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Pray

Father, today I acknowledge Your soon return. That one thought challenges my perception of life and I look through this lens at life with fresh eyes. I thank You Lord that not only can I go into Your presence, but that You invite me in and desperately want relationship with me. I'm overawed by this, God. Help me to live for You like never before and never shrink back. I realise that I have a massive part to play in personal sanctification. The choices I make today can, and will, affect my life, so, Lord, bestow on me liberal amounts of wisdom, I pray. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

This is the great chapter of heroes of faith. The previous chapters presented a very high standard to which the Christian must attain. Some may think it so high that it is impossible to reach. How can a sinful person ever attain to holiness? How can we ever expect to enter the holy places by the new and living way that Christ has opened for us? Great questions to ask, and today's chapter answers them. Here we see ordinary men and women who *"all died in the faith"* and *"obtained a good report"*. Some of them were good people, as we count goodness. Some were not so good, and I may even say, bad. In the list are people who broke the commandments, women who lived in sin, men of little faith, one murderer, and a compilation of others that one would deem unfit for the kingdom. Yet we are reminded that they ALL died in faith as God worked despite their inadequacies.

Sometimes we view faith as something away in the future, or for heaven; however, the writer describes it as a substance which is not just for the future or for far-off visions. Faith makes it possible for us as believers to not only claim promised blessings, but have and enjoy them now. The Spirit-filled Bible notes on this are great; they suggest faith as a connection to the reality of God's Word. Faith allows us to see the promises of God coming true before they actually happen. Hebrews 11 calls faith *'evidence'*. It is like entering another dimension in time and space where you see the things prayed for ahead of time. As you go about today, think about what you really believe in. Consider your faith and try to quantify it a little; is it weak or strong or somewhere in between?

Pray

Father, how weak and small my faith is at times, and yet Your Word says if I could only have faith like a tiny mustard seed I could move mountains. Help my faith today, Lord, to believe that You can do anything and that You love me implicitly. I often think I am like the person who said to Jesus, *"I do believe but will You help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:24) God, You are more than capable of using anyone, anytime, anywhere, so I lay my all before You today and cry, Lord use me. I love You, and I love the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

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Live

Our theme today is the race of faith, followed by encouragement to stay constant in our faith. The writer uses the illustration of discipline, which initially is not pleasant but afterward brings us a good reward. We are not to think that discipline is proof that the Lord does not love us. Quite the opposite actually, discipline is evidence that we are His children. In view of this discipline we are to be of good courage and not fail the grace of God, as Esau did. For a bowl of stew he sold his birth right and was rejected.

Next, we hear the story of how the first covenant came about. At Sinai the mountain burned with fire and there was blackness and darkness and a tempest. The sight was so terrible that even Moses trembled. The writer contrasts this with the making of the second and BETTER covenant which takes place at Mount Zion, the city of the living God. The contrast between the two occasions is marked and profound. God spoke once from heaven and He will speak once more. In view of this, we are warned not to refuse Him who speaks. At Sinai, God revealed Himself in fire, and those who were not prepared and came too close were consumed. I have often wondered how Moses could come near and was not consumed. He not only touched the mountain, but went up it and talked with God face to face. Oh, I love this man Moses. I suggest that it was in mercy that God warned Israel not to come near because they were sinful and could not stand His presence. The writer of this New Testament book warns that God is still the same. He is still a consuming fire. Worth a study!

Pray

Father, help me today to lay aside every weight that holds me back. Help me to deal with all the little things that suppress my walk with You. May I look to Jesus today and see Him afresh as my Author and Finisher of my faith. The Word today reminds me that the one God loves He disciplines. Discipline is a mark of love in my life that sometimes I might reject, but that would not be good for me. Verse 12 talks about strengthening the hands that hang down and the feeble knees. May the Word quicken my soul today and compel me to walk in newness. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today the writer of this magnificent book gives some parting counsel. He has finished his work. He has presented Christ as our Apostle and High Priest and has instructed his hearers about the work Jesus is doing for them in Glory. It is now up to them to follow Christ, *'going with Him outside the gate, suffering His reproach'*. They would experience this in a very real way, for they would soon have to flee Jerusalem and be scattered to all arts and parts of the world. But whatever happened, they must not forget their Christianity; they must always imitate their Master. The parting sermon is a very powerful and beautiful one in which the writer once again calls their attention to the everlasting covenant.

This last chapter contains much practical instruction. *"Let brotherly love continue,"* he writes. Brotherly love was not common among the Gentiles in those days but appears to have been a special virtue among the Christians. I often think, what if the writer finished the epistle with chapter 10 where he warns us how dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God? But then he pens chapter 11, that hopeful and encouraging chapter on faith. How could anyone who had known Jacob think he had any hope of ever reaching the kingdom? And what about David, and Samson, and Rahab, and all the others? And their number is not yet complete, for they *"only together with us would be made perfect"* (11:40). I love this. So, let us all take courage. God is waiting for the remnant to join those heroes who *"obtained a good report through faith."* There is room for us all. May God give us all who study this an abundant entrance into His kingdom. Walk today as one of God's elect. Shoulders back, head up ... YOU are the child of a King.

Pray

Father, thank You for this incredible book. There is so much hope and comfort in these pages that allow me to number myself with many of the heroes of faith. I pray the words of the psalmist, *"LORD, I trust in You; let me never be disgraced. Save me because You do what is right. Listen to me and save me quickly ... For the good of Your name, lead me and guide me ... I give You my life."* (Psalm 31) In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

