

DRAW NEAR

Hebrews 8-13



Term 1	Passage	Title	Preaching Date
Week 1	8:1-13	The New and Better Covenant	16 October
Week 2	9:1-28	The New and Better Sacrifice	23 October
Week 3	10:1-18	Once for all Forgiven	30 October
Week 4	10:19-39	Confidence Draw Near	6 November
Week 5	10:36-11:40	What Faith Does	13 November
Week 6	11:20-12:3	The Witnesses Who Cheer Us On	20 November
Week 7	12:4-17	Responding to Fatherly Discipline	27 November
Week 8	12:18-39	Acceptable Worship	4 December
Week 9	13:1-8	Worship and God's Family	11 December
Week 10	13:7-25	Pleasing Sacrifices	18 December
Week 11	12:1-3	Consider Christ	1 January 2023

The Bible in a Year

Week	Passage 1	Passage 2	Passage 3
1	Hebrews 8:1-13	Exodus 21, 22	Jeremiah 31
2	Hebrews 9:1-28	Exodus 23, 24	Leviticus 8
3	Hebrews 10:1-18	Exodus 25, 26	Psalms 40
4	Hebrews 10:19-39	Exodus 27, 28	Isaiah 26
5	Hebrews 11:1-19	Exodus 29, 30	Genesis 23
6	Hebrews 11:19-12:3	Exodus 31, 32	Exodus 2
7	Hebrews 12:4-17	Exodus 33, 34	Proverbs 3
8	Hebrews 12:18-39	Exodus 35, 36	Deuteronomy 31
9	Hebrews 13:1-8	Exodus 37, 38	Ecclesiastes 5
10	Hebrews 13:7-25	Exodus 39, 40	Leviticus 16

What is the goal of these notes?

The goal is to grow your ability to read the bible. Bible reading is essential to Christian growth and survival but it's a skill that develops with practice. Indeed because of the spiritual apathy that's part of our fallen nature the desire to read only grows with practice! The bible is an extraordinary book, changing people, nations and the flow of history. That's unsurprising since it's God's book, containing God's wisdom for life. Yet, bible reading in some ways, is no different to reading any other book. These notes will assist you to develop the skills to feed yourself from the bible and help others do the same.

Three ways to use these notes

1. Personal reading

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down thoughts and questions and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. Growth Groups

- Use the section at the end of each week to prepare for your Growth Group
- Take this with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study or from the members of your group.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided

3-1-1 Prayer

We all care for friends and family who don't know Jesus and this should be reflected in our prayers. List below the names of 3 such people you can be praying for once a week for one minute.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WEEK 1: HEBREWS 8:1-13

Week 1: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 8:1-13

An important clue to bible reading is the flow of the author's thought. The author begins chapter 8 by speaking of Jesus as our great high priest but he comes to a "hinge point" in v 6 where the subject becomes the priest's relationship to the "new covenant".

1. Draw a "mind map" to capture the ideas in the passage showing the "hinge" between priesthood and new covenant.

PRAY: In a very secular world it is hard for us to appreciate the significance of a great high priest and a new covenant with God. Pray that God will give you a deeper and life changing sense of these truths this term.

THE NEW AND BETTER COVERNANT

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 8:1-5

Hebrews 8:1 links us with what we saw last year. Jesus is the great high priest in the "order of Melchizedek" (7:17). His "indestructible life" means that, not only is He able to sympathise with our weaknesses but "is able to save completely...because he always lives to intercede for us".

1. List the truths you learn in these verses about Jesus as our high priest.

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2. Verse 1 emphasises a point with which this letter began. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God. (1:3; 10:12; 12:2) What is the significance of this for us in Hebrews 10:11-14?

"If we are true Christians, we shall find it essential to our comfort in religion to have clear views of Christ's priestly office and intercession. Christ lives and therefore our faith shall not fail."

J.C. Ryle

PRAY: Ryle's statement above flows from the truth about Jesus unique priesthood. It means that He can sympathise with our weaknesses and sufferings; He's offered a once for all sacrifice for our sins; He always lives to intercede for us so those who are truly His will never fall. Praise God for His goodness!

WEEK 1: HEBREWS 8:1-13

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 8:1-5

While lots has already been said about Jesus as our high priest, what the author will now add is the PLACE where He fulfils His ministry. It introduces us to an idea which will continue to be prominent in the book: typology.

1. In v 2 Jesus serves in the “true tabernacle, set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.” Where does Jesus now serve? (v 5 & 9:24)

2. The inference of these words is drawn out in v’s 4 & 5. Try to summarise the author’s point about:

a. why Moses was to take care in building the earthly temple?

b. the worship and offerings that took place in the earthly temple?

The temple or tabernacle theme is important in the bible. The garden of Eden is pictured as a sanctuary in which to enjoy God (Gen 3:8); so too is the promised land (Gen 13:10); in v 5 the true sanctuary is in heaven.

3. Given what’s said above why does Revelation say that that there is no temple in heaven? (see Revelation 21:22 and John 2:21)

PRAY: You were created for worship. You are at your best when you pray and serve God. What a revelation! Ask God to help you reflect on the significance of this.

THE NEW AND BETTER COVERNANT

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 8:6-13

There is a connection between priest and covenant. In v 6 the priest is the “mediator” of the covenant. He’s the one who represents the people to God and God to the people. And the big point? Where there is a new priest there is a new covenant!

1. In v 6 “the new covenant is established on better promises.” This can’t mean “more faithful promises” because God is always faithful, so what does it mean?

2. What do you find out about the new covenant in the following verses?

- V 6
- V 9
- V 10,11
- V 12

3. What’s new and better about this covenant?

PRAY: Did you notice the introduction to the author’s quote in v 8. “He says”. In other words, when the prophet wrote, it was God who was speaking and continues to speak. This makes bible reading an awesome exercise. Ask God to help you treasure it!

WEEK 1: HEBREWS 8:1-13

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 8:7-13

The quotation in v's 8-12 is powerful. It was written to "the people of Israel and Judah" who, at the time of writing, were separated. In fact the people of Israel had been scattered to the four winds. The prophecy would be fulfilled v 8 in "the days to come".

1. Use the cross references in your bible (or google) to find out where the prophecy in v's 8-12 comes from & when this prophet wrote.

2. A covenant normally involves two parties which is why the old covenant failed. Its human participants didn't keep it. How does the prophet emphasise that our relationship with God is always His initiative?

3. The old covenant with its laws, sacrifices and temple worship is "obsolete". What has Jesus done and in v's 8-12 what does He continue to do to make the new covenant work as it should?

PRAY: Many live as if the old covenant is still in force. This creates pride and guilt and darkness and despair. Pray that God will grant you a growing sense of the goodness of His new covenant.

THE NEW AND BETTER COVENANT

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What do you learn about the new covenant in v's 6-13? (Day 4 Q 2)

2. What's new and better about the new covenant? (Day 4 Q 3)

3. The old covenant with its laws, sacrifices and temple worship is "obsolete". What has Jesus done and in v's 8-12 what does He continue to do to make it work as it should?

“Jesus is the priest of a better covenant; better because the Law is written on the hearts of God’s people; better because God has taken us to be His possession; better because “knowing the Lord” is more fully realised; better because we have actual forgiveness of sin.”

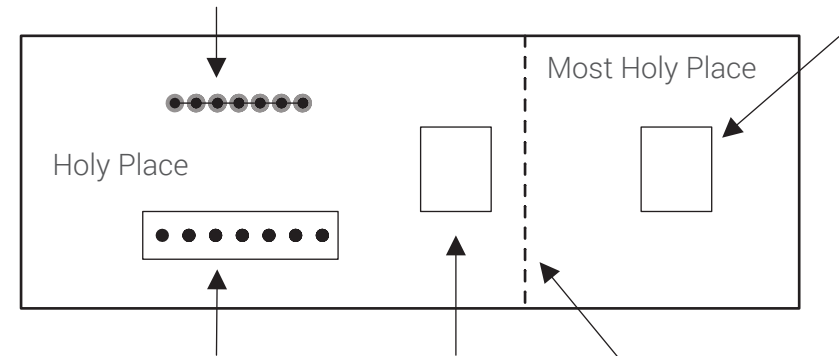
Ligon Duncan

Week 2: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 9:1-10

The OT tabernacle came with glory. It was the place where God dwelt symbolically in the midst of His people, hence the precise instructions as to how it should be constructed. Yet the true heavenly tabernacle has a far greater glory.

1. Use the plan view below to label a diagram of the tabernacle.



In reality, the altar of incense was WITHIN the Most Holy Place (Ex 30:6). However, the incense acted as a barrier to entering this so v 7 may mean that it “belonged” to the Most Holy Place even if it stood outside.

2. Verses 6 & 7 indicate that God had carefully restricted entry into His presence (ie the Most Holy Place).

a. What conclusion does the author draw from this in v’s 8-10?

b. What does v 8 teach about God’s inspiration of the scriptures?

PRAY: Verse 7 reflects the OT distinction between intentional and unintentional sins. Both are forgiven in Jesus. I’m so grateful to God for that aren’t you?

WEEK 2: HEBREWS 9:1-28

THE NEW AND BETTER SACRIFICE

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 9:11-15

Hebrews is one NT letter that majors in showing how the Old Testament shadows or “types” are fulfilled in Jesus.

1. Complete the table below to show the types & their fulfillments in these verses.

Old Covenant Type	New Covenant Type
High Priest	
Tabernacle	
Priest enters once a year	
	The blood of Jesus
Yearly redemption	
Outwardly clean	
Earthly inheritance i.e. The land	

2. When v 15 begins with the words “For this reason” it means that the author is drawing a conclusion. What conclusion is drawn from Christ’s new priesthood?

Since the cleansing Jesus secures for us is eternal (v 12) it was necessary for the offering to be made by one with an “eternal spirit”. (v 14) This could be the Holy Spirit or more likely the eternal spirit of Jesus Himself.

3. There’s a comparison in v’s 13 & 14 between outward cleanness and a clean conscience. In what way might Jesus cleanse our consciences? (v 14; 10:22; 13:18)

PRAY: Praise God for the blessing of a clean conscience asking Him for a full enjoyment of this blessing.

WEEK 2: HEBREWS 9:1-28

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 9:13-22 & EXODUS 24

As we saw yesterday, v 15 begins with the words “for this reason” or in the original, “therefore”. Jesus is “therefore” the mediator of a new covenant because as the great high priest he has entered the true “Most Holy Place” bringing the final blood of atonement- His own blood.

1. In Hebrews 9:16 the word “covenant” is replaced by the word “will”. In what ways is God’s covenant like a will?

2. In Exodus 24 why is there a need for blood? What is the significance of the tabernacle or sanctuary? (Exodus 25:9)

3. The new covenant is like a will. What blessings in Hebrews 9 form part of our inheritance?

PRAY: It is difficult for people who live constantly in the presence of sin to appreciate God’s need for total purity and therefore hard to appreciate the gift of Jesus’ death for us. Pray that God will deepen your sense of these truths.

THE NEW AND BETTER SACRIFICE

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 9:16-28

The author has been comparing two covenants- the old, which was glorious, with the new which is far more superior.

1. In the passage below, use one colour to circle or underline those things which relate to the old covenant and a different colour for those which belong to the new.

²³ It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. ²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

2. Many today in the Christian world, unwittingly live under an old covenant religion. How might this affect them? Consider especially v’s 26-28.

PRAY: Give thanks to your Heavenly Father for His goodness in granting His children such certainty of our acceptance by Him.

WEEK 2: HEBREWS 9:1-28

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 9:1-28

1. List the big points made by the author in this passage. The first two are done for you.

- The tabernacle was only a copy of heaven
- The old offerings were not able to truly cleanse the worshipper
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PRAY: Assurance of our standing before God is so important in the Christian life. Pray for yourself and those you love that they will know this assurance deeply.

THE NEW AND BETTER SACRIFICE

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. There's a comparison in v's 13 & 14 between outward cleanness and a clean conscience. In what way might Jesus cleanse our consciences? (Day 2 Q3)

2. The new covenant is like a will. What blessings in Hebrews 9 form part of our inheritance? (Day 3 Q3)

3. List the big points made by the author in this passage. (Day 5 Q1)

NOTES & PRAYER POINTS

"The whole of wrath divine; Payment God will not twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine."

Augustus Toplady

ONCE FOR ALL FORGIVEN

The shadow of an object can tell you something about it- an expensive car; a beautiful sculpture; a signpost. The shadow can tell you size, shape, perhaps something of its nature but little more. The Old Testament shadows functioned as visual aids or models by which to glimpse God's promised future, giving the criteria and categories by which to understand what was to come.

Week 3: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 10:1-4

1. The "law" in v 1 refers to the law concerning the Day of Atonement. How does the author show the inability of that law to take away the sins of the worshipper?

2. Notice the contrast of the word "repeated" v 1 with the expression "once for all" v 2. What is the danger of repeated ceremonies? Is there a way to mitigate this danger?

3. God ordained those Old Testament sacrifices even though they left the worshipper feeling guilty, Summarise His purpose in doing that.

PRAY: All faithful Old Testament believers offered their sacrifices by faith year by year, not knowing they awaited the great and final sacrifice, Jesus. They were saved by faith just like us today. Ask God to uphold your faith and that of those you love.

WEEK 3: HEBREWS 10:1-18

Day 2

READ PSALM 40:1-10 & HEBREWS 10:5-10

Psalm 40 is a Psalm of David, the king who most closely prefigured Jesus. Born in obscurity; persecuted before he was enthroned, endowed with God's Spirit, both a king and a prophet; and though sinful like all men, David had a heart to please God. The author is quoting the Greek version of the Old Testament which accounts for the God intended change in Hebrews 5:5.

1. Psalm 40 tells of one of many occasions when God rescued David from trouble. Verses 6-8 describe David's response. Try to describe it.

2. The author of Hebrews identified David with Jesus. Jesus was given a body that He might do God's will. What was God's will according to v 10?

3. Compare v's 10 & 14. What do they teach about holiness?

PRAY: We've been made holy through the sacrifice of Jesus. The word "holy" is written in what's called a "perfect tense"- something that's been completed and continues to be true. Pray for your 3-1-1 contacts, that they might know that blessing.

ONCE FOR ALL FORGIVEN

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 10:11-14

To be "holy" literally means "to be set apart" as people owned by God and who live for God. The bible encourages us to "be who we are" ie people who've been made holy.

1. In the text below highlight those expressions which emphasise the completed sacrifice of Jesus.

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

2. The expression in v 14 "being made holy" is a divine passive. How can the author be so sure that we are "being made holy"? (See Philippians 1:5 & 2:12,13)

3. What is God's part and what's ours if we are to grow in holiness? (Romans 6:12; 8:13 & the verses above)

PRAY: The "once for all" offering of Jesus, guarantees that all who receive it through the Spirit, will be continually transformed by it. Pray that this truth will keep you encouraged and active in your own Christian growth.

WEEK 3: HEBREWS 10:1-18

Day 4

READ JEREMIAH 31:31-34 & HEBREWS 10:15-18

It's good for us to take to heart the author's many references to the Holy Spirit. In this passage (v 15), He's the one who constantly speaks to us through the scriptures. In Jeremiah 31 He speaks of the new covenant.

1. In Jeremiah 31, in what ways will the new covenant be superior to the old?

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2. What does it mean to have the law written on our hearts? (see Romans 8:7; Galatians 5:16-26)

3. In the Roman Catholic Church it is important to attend mass regularly since it is thought to be a re-offering of Christ. How does this conflict with Hebrews 10:18?

PRAY: Are you conscious of God's Holy Spirit transforming your heart? Consider one area you'd like His help and ask Him to help you grow in that this year.

ONCE FOR ALL FORGIVEN

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 10:1-18

Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. The old covenant had priests who made offerings on behalf of the people. Jesus is our great high priest who offers the final once-for-all sacrifice.

1. In the space below draw two flow diagrams to represent the two covenants. Hint: your diagrams might be different shapes and your new covenant diagram will be longer since it will include a change of heart and mind.

Old Covenant

New Covenant

PRAY: Evangelism is a profoundly spiritual activity. We are asking nothing less than for God to transform people's hearts and minds. Pray now for those you long to see converted and for those who need assurance that their sins are forgiven.

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Psalm 40 tells of one of many occasions when God rescued David from trouble. Verses 6-8 describe his response. What is it? (Day 2 Q1)

2. Compare Hebrews 10:10 & 10:14. What do they teach about holiness? (Day 2 Q3)

3. What is God's part and what's ours if we are to grow in holiness? (Day 3 Q3)

"Many Christians have what we might call "cultural holiness". They adapt to the character and behaviour patterns of Christians around them...But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself"

Jerry Bridges p 25 "The Pursuit of Holiness"

WEEK 4: HEBREWS 10:19-39

Week 4: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 10:19-39

The letter to the Hebrews is a “sermon sandwich”- theology followed by a “call to action”. Last week was the theology of our forgiveness. This week is the call to action. Warning and encouragement lie side by side. Just don’t forget last week on which this week stands!

1. As you read the verses above, try to break the passage into its basic units giving each a title. You will find three or four of them.

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2. Which verses provide the foundation on which this call to action stands?

3. List the verses which trouble you most in the passage (if any) and explain why.

PRAY: Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the truth of this week’s passage, to create hope, clarity and resolve.

CONFIDENCE TO DRAW NEAR

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 10:19-25

This passage rests on 3 things Jesus has accomplished for us in order to encourage us to take 3 actions.

1. What are the 3 things Jesus has accomplished for us?

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2. Look for the repeated language to identify 3 actions we need to take.

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3. What would it mean for you to draw near to God? (Hint: see the other 3 occasions in the letter when this expression is used)

PRAY: God gives us every confidence to draw near to Him. Pray that He will move you to draw near and find the grace and mercy you need.

WEEK 4: HEBREWS 10:19-39

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 10:19-25

Yesterday we considered that first call to action. "Draw near." Today we consider the second two.

1. Try to paraphrase v 23. If you're stuck, look up another version like the Amplified.

2. Verses 24 and 25 suggest an attitude to church which involves both forethought and resolution.

a. What is the forethought?

b. What are the resolutions?

3. All this is advice for struggling Christians. In your own words, what should a struggling Christian do?

PRAY: Take a moment to think of any Christian brothers or sisters who are struggling. Is there an opportunity to encourage them? Pray that God will enable you to help.

CONFIDENCE TO DRAW NEAR

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 10:26-31

One important clue in bible reading is to pick up on comparisons made in the text. The author has been comparing the greatness of the new covenant with the old. But that greatness has another consequence!

1. What comparison is contained in these verses?

2. Many are fearful at the statement in v 26 but it is important to notice the nature of the sin warned against here. What can you find out about it in v 29

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As we saw back in Hebrews 6:4,6, this is no ordinary kind of sin. This should be apparent from the statement in v 26 that "no sacrifice for sins is left." Only one kind of sin could leave us beyond the death of Jesus to cover.

3. Collecting the common elements of these three together try to reconstruct what this sin might have been. (consider Matthew 12:30 in context & 1 John 5:16)

PRAY: It's possible to sin in such a way that whether through persistence or willful stubbornness, we put ourselves beyond the capacity to repent. Do you know anyone in danger of doing that? Pray for them urgently now.

WEEK 4: HEBREWS 10:19-39

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 10:32-39

Some of the author's original readers were in danger of giving up on Christ forever. But they had not always been so.

1. What can you find out about the early experience of these professing Christians?

2. How is this both encouraging and sobering for you?

3. The call to "persevere" in v 36 meant "Don't give up on Jesus." If you had a friend who was tempted to give up, how would you encourage them?

PRAY: We learned from Jesus in John 10:27-29 that God will never allow any of His sheep to be lost. But we show ourselves to be truly His sheep by hearing and heeding His voice. Pray that God will enable you to remain softhearted toward his word.

CONFIDENCE TO DRAW NEAR

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In Hebrews 10:19-25, what are the 3 things Jesus has done for us and the 3 actions we're to take in response? (Day 2 Q1)

2. What resolutions are we encouraged to make in Hebrews 10: 24,25? (Day 3 Q2)

3. The call to "persevere" in v 36 meant "Don't give up on Jesus." If you had a friend who was tempted to give up, how would you encourage them? (Day 5 Q3)

NOTES & PRAYER POINTS

"The greatest need of the moment is that light-hearted, superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God, high and exalted."

A.W. Tozer

WHAT FAITH DOES

Week 5: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 10:36-11:7

As you will recall, the first readers of this letter were strongly tempted to give up on Jesus. They needed the faith to persevere.

1. In this passage, what do you learn about faith, what it does and what it doesn't do?

2. How might these people have been tempted to "shrink back"?

3. Hebrews 11:1 doesn't give a definition of faith but a general statement about it. How would you define faith? In what circumstances is your faith most strongly tested?

PRAY: Facts, faith, feelings. That's the bible's order. Faith grows out of gospel facts and feelings properly speaking should be instructed by our faith. Pray therefore that God will grow in you a resilient faith, grounded in the facts of the gospel.

WEEK 5: HEBREWS 10:36-11:19

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 11:1-7

In v 3, faith produces a response in us. It affects our “understanding” of creation because we trust (ie we have faith) in God’s word to instruct and correct all other authorities. There are 3 typical alternative authorities which we’re tempted to place above God’s word. Tradition, reason and experience.

1. In v 3, for the genuine 21st century Christian, which of the 3 alternative authorities above does God’s word trump?

2. Can you think of an issue about which people are tempted to trust their experience or feelings instead?

3. On Day 1 you saw the impact of faith on believers like Abel, Enoch and Noah. In which of these are we told that their faith produced an impact on God?

PRAY: There is no faith without the word of God since by the Spirit, the word tells us how to respond and creates the response intended. Pray that God will make you a faithful believer, giving you a hunger for His word

WHAT FAITH DOES

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 11:1-7

The implication of v 6 is clear. Faith pleases God and faithlessness displeases Him. This makes the challenge of Christian life very clear. We live to please God, even if we’re tempted to please others.

1. Faith is necessary in order to please God (v 6). Why is faithlessness insulting to Him?

2. Consider Abel and Noah. What wrong attitudes could have caused them to choose an unfaithful response?

3. Verse 13 is an application of v 1. In what respect is v 13 true of us? What have we received to this point?

PRAY: We are saved by faith not by works but genuine faith is never without works. Rather genuine faith produces the works of a godly character. Pray that this will be true of yourself, your growth group, your family and your Christian friends.

WEEK 5: HEBREWS 10:36-11:19

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 11:8-12 & 17-19

It appears that Abraham came from a wealthy family and lived in a well established and comfortable city in Ur before setting out for the land of promise.

1. What temptations would Abraham have faced to return home, refuse to sacrifice Isaac and reject God's promises?

2. Material ease for ourselves and security for our families is a great temptation to 21st century Australian Christians. In what ways does a desire for these impact you?

The "city with foundations" (v 10) is heaven. Its population "as numerous as the stars in the sky" is created by means of the work done by God through His people.

3. How can you be useful in building the citizens of heaven?

PRAY: Consider question 3 above. Ask God to enable you to play your part in building His people.

WHAT FAITH DOES

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 11:13-16

The Jewish Christians to whom this letter or exhortation was written, were tempted to turn back from following Jesus, in order to avoid the hardship and persecution which comes with living for Him?.

1. What encouragement and challenge would these verses have held out to those first Christians?

2. "Did not receive the things promised"; "foreigners and strangers"; "opportunity to return". What challenges do these things hold for you?

3. It is taught by many sincere Christians that Jewish believers will inherit the earth, while gentiles will inherit heaven. In this passage, where does the author say that the land theme reaches its fulfilment?

PRAY: To live by faith in the promises of God is what we're called to. What a miracle of grace this requires to survive every day. Pray that God will continue to strengthen and uphold you.

WEEK 5: HEBREWS 10:36-11:19

NOTES & PRAYER POINTS

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In Hebrews 10:36-11:7, what do you learn about faith, what it does and what it doesn't do? (Day 1 Q1)

2. In Hebrews 11:3, faith affects our "understanding". Can you think of an issue about which people are tempted to trust their experience or feelings instead? (Day 2 Q2)

3. Faith is necessary in order to please God (v 6). Why is faithlessness insulting to Him? (Day 3 Q1)

"As we mention faith alone, we are not thinking of a dead faith, which produces no love...It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone..."

John Calvin

WEEK 6: HEBREWS 11:20-12:3

Week 6: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 11:20-31

1. Faith is always future looking. How is this shown in the lives of the following men and women?

Person of faith	The future for which they trusted God
Isaac	
Jacob	
Joseph	
Moses' parents	
Moses	
People of Israel	
Joshua's army	
Rahab	

2. Are there immediate actions in your own life for which you need to trust God?

PRAY: Those who please God, know and trust His promises. Ask Him to help you grow in your depth and appreciation of these.

THE WITNESSES WHO CHEER US

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 11:32-38

1. Try to match the person with the act of faith.

Person	Triumph of faith
Gideon, Barak, etc	Conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised
	shut the mouths of lions (Daniel 6)
Daniel's friends	quenched the fury of the flames (Daniel 3)
	Routed foreign armies (Judges 4:14ff; Judges 7:1-8;)
	received back their dead (2 Kings 4:8ff)
	torture, jeers, flogging, imprisonment (Jer 20:1-9)
Isaiah	sawn in two by king Manasseh (tradition)
	Went about in sheepskins, destitute, persecuted (2 Kings 1:7,8)

2. As you consider these heroes of faith, try to summarise the message for you about the life of faith. (consider in your answer v's 38-40)

PRAY: The life of faith requires great perseverance and perseverance is the evidence of that God-given faith. Are you struggling? Do you know any who are? Pray for their perseverance.

WEEK 6: HEBREWS 11:20-12:3

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 11:20-40

In order to apply this chapter properly, we need to remember the context into which the author is writing. These were Jewish Christians tempted to give up on Jesus and return to Judaism.

1. In light of the context above, what other attributes does faith produce?

2. What does v 40 teach about the make-up of the “church”? (See also Eph 2:11-22)

3. In v's 38ff the world was not worthy of these heroes but their faith was pleasing to God. What unworthy motives could influence our Christian lives?

PRAY: Remember Paul's words to Timothy? “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Pray that God will give you the desire to single-mindedly emulate Paul in this.

THE WITNESSES WHO CHEER US

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 11:39-12:3

There's a question about the witnesses in v 1. Were they witnesses in their lifetime or are they witnesses who watch our efforts now? If it is the second, this is probably the only place in the scriptures where this idea appears. That of course doesn't make it wrong, just unique!

1. Imagine the witnesses are watching our progress now. What impact should this thought have on us?

2. Hebrews 11:40 urges us to consider our solidarity with these witnesses. Why should this encourage you?

3. In what various ways might sin entangle our ability to run the race?

PRAY: Self discipline is required in running the race and this never comes easily. It is conviction about the joy set before us that enables us to develop self discipline. Ask God to deepen these things in you.

WEEK 6: HEBREWS 11:20-12:3

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 12:1-3

Jesus is the man of faith par excellence. What can we learn from Him about how to run the race? That's what we consider today.

1. List the various ways in which faith was a feature of Jesus' earthly life?

2. Jesus was motivated in His mission by "the joy set before Him." What did this joy consist of? To what extent (out of 10) does this motivate you?

3. The need to run *with perseverance* implies effort and intentionality. What would most help you to persevere?

PRAY: A sure and vivid assurance of heaven is crucial to running the race. So too is the need to "number our days". (Psalm 90:12) Ask God to help you develop in both.

THE WITNESSES WHO CHEER US

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Faith is always future looking. How is this shown in the lives of the men and women in Hebrews 11:20-31 (Day 1 Q1)

2. What other attributes does faith produce? (Day 3 Q1)

3. The need to run *with perseverance* implies effort and intentionality. What would most help you to do this? (Day 5 Q3)

NOTES & PRAYER POINTS

"What a living, creative, active, powerful thing is faith... Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active. Whoever doesn't do such works is without faith..."

Martin Luther - Preface to Romans

RESPONDING TO FATHERLY DISCIPLINE

In a highly individualistic age it's good to recall that Christian life is a community life in which no part reaches maturity (or perfection) without the rest (Hebrews 11:40). As we leave chapter 11 with its great cloud of "heroes", we're reminded that every true child of God requires God's Fatherly discipline in order to run the race to its conclusion.

Week 7: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 12:4-17

Starting with the heading "Responding to Discipline" try to create a mind map or similar diagram to capture the ideas in this passage about that subject.

List any questions raised by the passage for which you feel you need more information.

PRAY: Is there some action you should take to better help you run the race? Ask God for His grace now to help you do that

WEEK 7: HEBREWS 12:4-17

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 12:4-6

1. Use your footnotes or google to find out the cross reference in this passage.

2. When you've found the cross reference above, read v's 1-12 of the passage. Pick 3 of these commands which we're most likely to forget when under pressure.

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3. How might we "make light" of the Lord's discipline? (Heb 12:5) Is there a time when you've done this?

PRAY: God is a loving Father who binds Himself to His children to do them good. Pray that in times of pressure, you won't "lean on your own understanding".

RESPONDING TO FATHERLY DISCIPLINE

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 12:4-13

1. What do you learn about God's discipline in these verses?

2. What is the goal of God's discipline? (See also James 1:2-4)

3. What forms might God's discipline take in our experience of life? What examples are suggested in v's 14-17?

PRAY: As the writer says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time." Pray that God will help you recognise discipline when it comes and respond to it well.

Day 4

READ JOHN 15:1-8

1. What do you learn about God's pruning in these verses?

God never punishes His children. He's done that already in His Son Jesus. But He does prune and discipline. All discipline is pruning but not all pruning is discipline.

2. How are pruning and discipline similar? How are they different?

3. What seems to be the key to pruning in this passage?

PRAY: Give thanks to God for his Fatherly goodness. Ask Him to help you trust Him when times of pruning and discipline come.

Day 5

READ 2 HEBREWS 12:14-17

In encouraging his readers to "run the race", the author concluded v 13 by encouraging them to "make level paths for your feet." Now he tells them what this will look like. The instructions in these verses can be largely grouped into two categories. Relational godliness & moral godliness.

1. The "bitter root" is an expression from Deuteronomy 27:16-18. What is it and how does it affect others?

2. The blessing of the family birth right, placed a person in a special covenant relationship with God. What attitude lay at the heart of Esau's decision to sell his birthright? (see Genesis 25:29-34)

3. What might constitute a godly response to each of the trials in v's 14-17?

- V 14
- V 15
- V 16a
- V 16b

PRAY: Our relationship with God is the foundation for the way we relate to others. Pray that this term will deepen your relationships in both areas.

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What do you learn about God's discipline in Hebrews 12:4-11? (Day 1 Q1)

2. What forms might God's discipline take in our experience of life? What examples are suggested in v's 14-17? (Day 3 Q3)

3. How might we "make light" of the Lord's discipline? (v 5) Is there a time when you've done this?

"There is many a thing which the world calls disappointment; but there is no such thing in the dictionary of faith. What to others are disappointments are to believers intimations of the will of God."

John Newton

WEEK 8: HEBREWS 12:18-39

Week 8: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 12:18-21 & EXODUS 19:1-25

In Exodus 19, Israel arrived at Mount Sinai to formalise their covenant relationship with God. This is the background to this week's passage.

1. What elements of this passage speak of the absolute holiness of God?

2. What aspects of this experience would have been terrifying to the people?

3. What is the impact on a genuine Christian of a deep sense of God's holiness?

PRAY: It's difficult for people who live every day in the midst of a sinful world to sufficiently appreciate the awesome holiness of God, yet it is so important! Ask God to deepen this sense in you.

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 12:18-24 & ISAIAH 2:1-5

Mount Sinai in Egypt, was the place where Israel entered into the old covenant with God. Mount Zion in Jerusalem, is the site on which the temple was built. But in the author's usage, these two literal mountains were symbolic of something greater.

1. Two mountains that symbolise two covenants. List the words which capture the essence of each covenant.

2. In light of Hebrews 12:22-24, how does a person today experience the fulfilment of Isaiah 2 when the nations will come to Mount Zion?

3. "The old covenant was frightening. The new covenant is comforting." Is this the author's point? Explain.

PRAY: Fulfilment and certainty have come in Jesus and we are the beneficiaries! Give thanks to God that He has included you in the hope of the ages!

WEEK 8: HEBREWS 12:18-39

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 12:18-24

Shadow and reality are themes which the author has patiently elaborated throughout his letter. And why not! These are crucial themes for understanding the Old Testament and Jesus' superiority over all that has come before.

1. In the following, try to collect together the various "shadows" and their corresponding realities which you've seen throughout the letter.

	Shadow	Reality
Greater Servant	(Hebrews 3:5,6)	Jesus
The rest giver	(Hebrews 4:8,9)	Jesus
High Priest	(Hebrews 7:20)	Jesus
Sanctuary	The Tabernacle	(Hebrews 8:5)
Covenant Mediator	Moses -old covenant	(Hebrews 8:6)
Atoning Sacrifice	(Hebrews 10:1)	Jesus
Meeting Place of God	(Hebrews 12:22)	Jesus

PRAY: Jesus is the reality and fulfilment of all the Old Testament shadows. Praise God for His extraordinary word and His faithfulness in fulfilling it!

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 12:25-29

How do we help people run the race? Encouragement and warning lie side by side in this letter, urging us to respond appropriately to the gospel hope we have received. The warning in v 25 is designed to encourage the reader to take action.

1. The author uses a "less to greater" argument to persuade his readers ie "If they didn't escape then surely we won't." To whom is he comparing his current readers and what two "less to greater" arguments does he use?

2. God shook the earth at Mount Sinai but in His final judgement he will shake the whole cosmos. How is this an encouragement to seek first God and His kingdom?

3. What attribute of God is in mind in v 29? What attitude to Him does it create in you?

PRAY: There is an appropriate fear of God which needs to be held alongside His profound love. It refuses to trifle with Him. It weighs both privilege and responsibility. Pray that God will grant you this.

WEEK 8: HEBREWS 12:18-39

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 12:18-29

An important bible reading skill is to be able to summarise an author's point. That's the skill to practise as we come to the end of this week. Key ideas are: the shadow, the better fulfilment and how the better affects our response.

1. Using the clues above, try to summarise Hebrews 12:18-29

2. Verse 28 finishes with an encouragement to worship. Worship is more than singing or praying. It is joyfully serving God in a way that indicates His worth to us. How would you evaluate your current worship?

PRAY: Pray that we as a church will grow in our worship to better reflect the goodness of the God who saved us.

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Hebrews 12:18-22 speaks of two mountains that symbolise two covenants. What attributes of God are implied by what is said about each? (Day 2 Q1)

2. In light of Hebrews 12:22-24, how does a person today experience the fulfilment of Isaiah 2 when the nations will come to Mount Zion? (Day 2 Q2)

3. God shook the earth at Mount Sinai but in His final judgement he will shake the whole cosmos. How is this an encouragement to seek first God and His kingdom? (Day 4 Q2)

"The one who kneels before God can stand before men. The fear of God always displaces the fear of man..."

Steven Lawson

There's only one appropriate response to God's salvation which brings us to Jesus as the true Mount Zion and that's to worship. We gave a definition of worship last week. In the original language it is "to bow down to God" in service. It is to give God His worth. Yet as the author continues to pick up a number of applications of worship, the ones he mentions have to do with continuing to love the brothers and sisters. (Hebrews 13:1)

Week 9: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 12:28-13:8

What can you find out about true worship in 12:28-13:8?

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-
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In 13:1-7, what words stress the need for perseverance and diligence in our worship?

What part do these play in caring for the household of Christians?

-
-
-
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PRAY: God's family are dear to Him. Ask Him to show you if there's a way in which you can grow in your love for them.

WEEK 9: HEBREWS 13:1-8

Day 2

READ GENESIS 18:1-33

Genesis 18 is a strange but powerful passage. It is almost certainly what the author had in mind when he wrote Hebrews 13:2.

1. What are the indications in the passage that the three men entertained by Abraham are really the Lord Himself?

2. Consider the following: What do they add to the picture of biblical hospitality? (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Peter 4:9)

3. Why is ungrudging hospitality appropriate for those who are members of God's family?

PRAY: Thank God for His kindness and generosity in welcoming us into His family. Pray that grace will expand and deepen your expression of love for your Christian family.

WORSHIP AND GOD'S FAMILY

Day 3

READ EPHESIANS 5:21-33

Ephesians 5 is the preeminent New Testament passage on the special nature of marriage which has an important role in our worship and our love for others.

1. According to Ephesians 5, why does marriage matter so much to God?

2. It is obvious that to be faithful to our spouse is to love them but in what sense does it love our brothers and sisters?

PRAY: One of God's foremost characteristics is His faithfulness which is why our own faithfulness matters so much. Pray for marriage among Christians, especially your own..

WEEK 9: HEBREWS 13:1-8

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 13:5,6

1. What basis do the Old Testament passages quoted give for keeping our lives free from the love of money?

2. What factors make contentment difficult in our society?

3. Do you feel that you're content with what you have? What clues does this passage give about how to grow in contentment?

PRAY: Ask God to grow your contentment so you can honour Him in your generosity.

WORSHIP AND GOD'S FAMILY

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 13:7

1. Judging by this verse and those which follow, what are some of the responsibilities of leaders? (Philippians 4:9; 1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:23-26; Titus 1:13,14)

2. Considering the challenges involved in shepherding God's people how can you love your leaders?

3. Consider the significance of the statement in v 8. How might it affect your worship this week?

PRAY: Consider those who lead you in the Lord and those from the past for whom you're grateful. Give thanks to God for them and pray for the ministries of those who still serve.

WEEK 9: HEBREWS 13:1-8

NOTES & PRAYER POINTS

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What can you find out about true worship in 12:28-13:8? (Day 1 Q1)

2. In 13:1-7, which repeated words or ideas stress the need for perseverance and diligence in our worship? (Day 1 Q2)

3. Do you feel that you're content with what you have? What clues does this passage give about how to grow in contentment? (Day 4 Q3)

"Worship is what we were created for. This is the final end of all existence-the worship of God...The church needs to build a common vision of what worship is and what she is gathered to do on Sunday morning and scattered to do on Monday morning."

John Piper

WEEK 10: HEBREWS 13:8-25

PLEASING SACRIFICES

The conclusion to many new testament letters has a similar structure. A whole bunch of last words, made up of “imperatives” (make sure you do this) and “indicatives” (here’s why you do this). In simple language “must do’s” and “reasons or supportive statements”. Not every “must do” comes with a supportive statement or every statement with a “must do”. The value of these conclusions of course is that they give insight into the author’s heart for those to whom he is writing.

Week 10: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 13:8-25

Try to fill in the table below listing imperatives on the left and indicatives on the right.

Verse	Imperatives (Must do's)	Indicatives (Reasons or Statements)
9-10	Beware of false teaching	Be strengthened by grace not ceremony
11-14		We live for the heavenly city
15		
16		
17		
18,19		
20, 21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

PRAY: Look at the list you’ve made above. Is there one pressing action for you to take or a statement of fact that needs your prayerful consideration?

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 13:8-14

1. Grace is a theme that permeates this passage. Try to describe how it holds together today’s verses.

2. In v’s 11-13 the author emphasises that in some sense we Christians emulate Jesus’ experience of being “outside”. In what sense are we “outside”?

3. In what ways do you feel the challenge of being outside? How does the author seek to encourage us?

PRAY: In many ways the Christian is set apart from the world. That can be difficult of so ask God to deepen your love for Him and for the “city to come”.

WEEK 10: HEBREWS 13:8-25

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 13:15-19

The one sacrifice for sins has been offered by Jesus. Nothing more is required for our forgiveness. We respond to God's goodness instead, by freely offering the sacrifices of our love, our loot, our lives and our lips. See some of these in the passage this week.

1. Our sacrifices are acceptable to God only "through Jesus". What are the sacrifices in v's 15 & 16 and what motivates them?

2. What factors should motivate the way we respond to and pray for those who lead us?

3. Australians don't always warm to their leaders. We like to chop down "tall poppies". How can we cultivate an attitude that's not shaped by the world in this?

PRAY: Praise God that Jesus has offered the one sacrifice for sins. Ask Him to fill your heart with gratitude and joy to honour Him with your worship.

PLEASING SACRIFICES

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 13:20,21

1. It is God's gracious work, in and through the Holy Spirit, that empowers all of Christian life. In these verses, what things can we trust Him to accomplish in us?

2. "May he work in us what is pleasing to Him..." try to put this expression into your own words.

The concluding expression, "through Jesus Christ" reminds us again that Jesus is our priest who mediates to us all the blessings of God.

3. The fourth century Christian leader Augustine once wrote, "O Lord, command what you will and give what you command". How do these verses support Augustine's prayer?

PRAY: Praise God for His goodness. He "works in us what is pleasing to Him." Pray that He will keep doing that in you so that more and more you'll grow up into the fullness of His Son.

WEEK 10: HEBREWS 13:8-25

Day 5

READ HEBREWS 13:22-25 & 8

The Christian gospel is a complete world view. All its blessings and commands come from the mind of the one God who is consistent in all He says and does; all He loves and calls us to.

1. What truths about Christian life are implied by the content of these last verses?

2. What element is v 8 intended to add to the list of instructions in this whole chapter?

3. Do the commands in these verses remind you of any areas in which you need to repent, grow or take action?

PRAY: Christians are called into God's family. We need each other. We need exhortation, encouragement, warning, challenge, compassion and care. Pray that this term will help you develop in your love of God's family and especially your church family.

PLEASING SACRIFICES

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Grace is a theme that permeates this passage. Try to describe how it holds it all together. (Day 2 Q1)

2. In what ways do you feel the challenge of being outside? How does the author seek to encourage us? (Day 2 Q3)

3. "May he work in us what is pleasing to Him..." try to put this expression into your own words. (Day 4 Q2)

NOTES & PRAYER POINTS

"It is well that there is one person who is the same...one stable rock amidst the changing billows of this sea of life...The sun itself must soon grow dim with age... the changing of the heavens and the earth has certainly begun. They shall perish; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; but for ever blessed be him who is the same, and of whose years there is no end...the same in His person; the same to His people; the same in His promises...The same yesterday, today and forever..."

C.H. Spurgeon

CONSIDER CHRIST

Week 11: Day 1

READ HEBREWS 12:1-3

1. What various encouragements does this passage give us to "run the race"?

2. What is implied by calling those mentioned in Hebrews 11 'witnesses'?

3. No bible passage sets out to give us exhaustive knowledge of a particular topic but this one seems to suggest that we should be mindful of two audiences as we run. Is this a sufficient statement? If not, how would you add to it?

PRAY: Ask God to help you remain mindful of those who look on as you run the race.

WEEK 11: HEBREWS 12:1-3

Day 2

READ HEBREWS 12:1-3

1. What are our various hindrances in running the race?
2. How might sin entangle us in such a way as to prevent us from reaching the end?
3. An athlete intent on finishing the race minimises all obstacles. Are there obstacles which you need to minimise? How could you do it?

PRAY: Psalm 139:23,24 says *“Search me, God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”* This is a good prayer for all who run the race.

CONSIDER CHRIST

Day 3

READ HEBREWS 12:2

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus” implies a single-minded gaze, that chooses to look away from other things in order to focus on Him.

1. In what sense is Jesus the “pioneer” of our faith? (See Hebrews 2:10; Acts 3:15) Was he the pioneer for those in chapter 11?

The writer calls Jesus the “perfecter” of our faith. It’s an expression that occurs only here in the new testament although we’ve seen something of the idea before in this letter.

2. It’s likely that Jesus as the “perfecter of our faith” means that He’s the one in whom faith reaches its greatest expression. In what ways would we have seen this in His life?

3. Jesus who was made like us in every way (Hebrews 2:17) has already run the race and arrived at the destination. In what ways is this truth and encouragement?

PRAY: It is possible to live the Christian life for the sake of the way we appear to others. Such an approach will never survive the difficult circumstances of life. Ask God to help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

WEEK 11: HEBREWS 12:1-3

Day 4

READ HEBREWS 12:2,3

No race is run without sufficient motivation. The more challenging the race the more necessary the right motivation. Consider Jesus' motivation in the race.

1. Since Jesus had lived forever as the Son of God, try to imagine what feelings would have been involved in the shame and isolation of the cross.

2. What was the "joy" set before Jesus? The following might help: John 15:11; John 17:13; Hebrews 2:11-14)

3. What is your greatest source of joy in the Christian life?

PRAY: God intends us for joy. Pray that He will deepen your anticipation of this and your confidence in its fulfilment.

CONSIDER CHRIST

Day 5

READ JOHN 17:1-26

1. Make a list of the requests Jesus makes of His Father in this passage.

One of Jesus' prayers for us is for unity (17:11, 21-23) This is not a prayer that God will end all Christian denominations. If that were so then Jesus' prayer has not been answered.

2. In what sense does Jesus want us to be unified? (see v 21-23)

3. The goal of Jesus' prayer is arguably in v's 24-26. Why is it so important for us to "see his glory"? (see 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2)

4. What insight does this need of glory give you for how to grow in your joy and love for God?

PRAY: In all of life we have no greater need than to see more fully the glory of God. Pray that God will enable this to take place in you.

