

Life

APPLICATION[®] BIBLE STUDIES

Part 1:

Complete text of Hebrews with study notes and features from the *Life Application Study Bible*

Part 2:

Thirteen lessons for individual or group study

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New Living
Translation

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
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Life Application Bible Studies: Hebrews

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A NOTE TO READERS

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004 and is reflected in this edition of the New Living Translation. An additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

*The Publishers
October 2007*

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English.

To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and

language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek *a denarius*, the payment for a full day’s wage.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “the third day of the month Adar.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”
 Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.
- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home

beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.

- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.
- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within

certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names

All appearances of ‘el, ‘elohim, or ‘eloah have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name ‘adonai, which we render “Lord.” When ‘adonai and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes ‘adonai YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with ‘elohim, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread.*”

- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Proverbs 3:12; Psalms 8:2; 53:3).
- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

*The Bible Translation Committee
October 2007*

WHY THE LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE IS UNIQUE

Have you ever opened your Bible and asked the following:

- What does this passage really mean?
- How does it apply to my life?
- Why does some of the Bible seem irrelevant?
- What do these ancient cultures have to do with today?
- I love God; why can't I understand what he is saying to me through his word?
- What's going on in the lives of these Bible people?

Many Christians do not read the Bible regularly. Why? Because in the pressures of daily living they cannot find a connection between the timeless principles of Scripture and the ever-present problems of day-by-day living.

God urges us to apply his word (Isaiah 42:23; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:4), but too often we stop at accumulating Bible knowledge. This is why the *Life Application Study Bible* was developed—to show how to put into practice what we have learned.

Applying God's word is a vital part of one's relationship with God; it is the evidence that we are obeying him. The difficulty in applying the Bible is not with the Bible itself, but with the reader's inability to bridge the gap between the past and present, the conceptual and practical. When we don't or can't do this, spiritual dryness, shallowness, and indifference are the results.

The words of Scripture itself cry out to us, "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves" (James 1:22). The *Life Application Study Bible* helps us to obey God's word. Developed by an interdenominational team of pastors, scholars, family counselors, and a national organization dedicated to promoting God's word and spreading the gospel, the *Life Application Study Bible* took many years to complete. All the work was reviewed by several renowned theologians under the directorship of Dr. Kenneth Kantzer.

The *Life Application Study Bible* does what a good resource Bible should: It helps you understand the context of a passage, gives important background and historical information, explains difficult words and phrases, and helps you see the interrelationship of Scripture. But it does much more. The *Life Application Study Bible* goes deeper into God's word, helping you discover the timeless truth being communicated, see the relevance for your life, and make a personal application. While some study Bibles attempt application, over 75 percent of this Bible is application oriented. The notes answer the questions "So what?" and "What does this passage mean to me, my family, my friends, my job, my neighborhood, my church, my country?"

Imagine reading a familiar passage of Scripture and gaining fresh insight, as if it were the first time you had ever read it. How much richer your life would be if you left each Bible reading with a new perspective and a small change for the better. A small change every day adds up to a changed life—and that is the very purpose of Scripture.

WHAT IS APPLICATION?

The best way to define application is to first determine what it is *not*. Application is *not* just accumulating knowledge. Accumulating knowledge helps us discover and understand facts and concepts, but it stops there. History is filled with philosophers who knew what the Bible said but failed to apply it to their lives, keeping them from believing and changing. Many think that understanding is the end goal of Bible study, but it is really only the beginning.

Application is *not* just illustration. Illustration only tells us how someone else handled a similar situation. While we may empathize with that person, we still have little direction for our personal situation.

Application is *not* just making a passage “relevant.” Making the Bible relevant only helps us to see that the same lessons that were true in Bible times are true today; it does not show us how to apply them to the problems and pressures of our individual lives.

What, then, is application? Application begins by knowing and understanding God’s word and its timeless truths. *But you cannot stop there.* If you do, God’s word may not change your life, and it may become dull, difficult, tedious, and tiring. A good application focuses the truth of God’s word, shows the reader what to do about what is being read, and motivates the reader to respond to what God is teaching. All three are essential to application.

Application is putting into practice what we already know (see Mark 4:24 and Hebrews 5:14) and answering the question “So what?” by confronting us with the right questions and motivating us to take action (see 1 John 2:5-6 and James 2:26). Application is deeply personal—unique for each individual. It makes a relevant truth a personal truth and involves developing a strategy and action plan to live your life in harmony with the Bible. It is the biblical “how to” of life.

You may ask, “How can your application notes be relevant to my life?” Each application note has three parts: (1) an *explanation*, which ties the note directly to the Scripture passage and sets up the truth that is being taught; (2) the *bridge*, which explains the timeless truth and makes it relevant for today; (3) the *application*, which shows you how to take the timeless truth and apply it to your personal situation. No note, by itself, can apply Scripture directly to your life. It can only teach, direct, lead, guide, inspire, recommend, and urge. It can give you the resources and direction you need to apply the Bible, but only you can take these resources and put them into practice.

A good note, therefore should not only give you knowledge and understanding but point you to application. Before you buy any kind of resource study Bible, you should evaluate the notes and ask the following questions: (1) Does the note contain enough information to help me understand the point of the Scripture passage? (2) Does the note assume I know more than I do? (3) Does the note avoid denominational bias? (4) Do the notes touch most of life’s experiences? (5) Does the note help me apply God’s word?

FEATURES OF THE LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE

NOTES

In addition to providing the reader with many application notes, the *Life Application Study Bible* also offers several kinds of explanatory notes, which help the reader understand culture, history, context, difficult-to-understand passages, background, places, theological concepts, and the relationship of various passages in Scripture to other passages.

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Each book introduction is divided into several easy-to-find parts:

Timeline. A guide that puts the Bible book into its historical setting. It lists the key events and the dates when they occurred.

Vital Statistics. A list of straight facts about the book—those pieces of information you need to know at a glance.

Overview. A summary of the book with general lessons and applications that can be learned from the book as a whole.

Blueprint. The outline of the book. It is printed in easy-to-understand language and is designed for easy memorization. To the right of each main heading is a key lesson that is taught in that particular section.

Megathemes. A section that gives the main themes of the Bible book, explains their significance, and then tells you why they are still important for us today.

Map. If included, this shows the key places found in that book and retells the story of the book from a geographical point of view.

OUTLINE

The *Life Application Study Bible* has a new, custom-made outline that was designed specifically from an application point of view. Several unique features should be noted:

1. To avoid confusion and to aid memory work, the book outline has only three levels for headings. Main outline heads are marked with a capital letter. Subheads are marked by a number. Minor explanatory heads have no letter or number.
2. Each main outline head marked by a letter also has a brief paragraph below it summarizing the Bible text and offering a general application.
3. Parallel passages are listed where they apply.

PERSONALITY PROFILES

Among the unique features of this Bible are the profiles of key Bible people, including their strengths and weaknesses, greatest accomplishments and mistakes, and key lessons from their lives.

MAPS

The *Life Application Study Bible* has a thorough and comprehensive Bible atlas built right into the book. There are two kinds of maps: a book-introduction map, telling the story of the book, and thumbnail maps in the notes, plotting most geographic movements.

CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS

Many charts and diagrams are included to help the reader better visualize difficult concepts or relationships. Most charts not only present the needed information but show the significance of the information as well.

CROSS-REFERENCES

An updated, exhaustive cross-reference system in the margins of the Bible text helps the reader find related passages quickly.

TEXTUAL NOTES

Directly related to the text of the New Living Translation, the textual notes provide explanations on certain wording in the translation, alternate translations, and information about readings in the ancient manuscripts.

HIGHLIGHTED NOTES

In each Bible study lesson, you will be asked to read specific notes as part of your preparation. These notes have each been highlighted by a bullet (•) so that you can find them easily.

HEBREWS

HEBREWS



CONSCIENTIOUS consumers shop for value, the best products for the money. Wise parents desire only the best for their children, nourishing their growing bodies, minds, and spirits. Individuals with integrity seek the best investment of time, talents, and treasures. In every area, to settle for less would be wasteful, foolish, and irresponsible. Yet it is a natural pull to move toward what is convenient and comfortable.

Judaism was not second-rate or easy. Divinely designed, it was the best religion, expressing true worship and devotion to God. The commandments, the rituals, and the prophets described God's promises and revealed the way to forgiveness and salvation. But Christ came, fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, conquering sin, shattering all barriers to God, freely providing eternal life.

This message was difficult for Jews to accept. Although they had sought the Messiah for centuries, they were entrenched in thinking and worshiping in traditional forms. Following Jesus seemed to repudiate their marvelous heritage and Scriptures. With caution and questions they listened to the gospel, but many rejected it and sought to eliminate this "heresy." Those who did accept Jesus as the Messiah often found themselves slipping back into familiar routines, trying to live a hybrid faith.

Hebrews is a masterful document written to Jews who were evaluating Jesus or struggling with this new faith. The message of Hebrews is that Jesus is better, Christianity is superior, Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation.

Hebrews begins by emphasizing that the old (Judaism) and the new (Christianity) are both religions revealed by God (1:1–3). In the doctrinal section that follows (1:4–10:18), the writer shows how Jesus is superior to angels (1:4–2:18), superior to their leaders (3:1–4:13), and superior to their priests (4:14–7:28). Christianity surpasses Judaism because it has a better covenant (8:1–13), a better sanctuary (9:1–10), and a more sufficient sacrifice for sins (9:11–10:18).

Having established the superiority of Christianity, the writer moves on to the practical implications of following Christ. The readers are exhorted to hold on to their new faith, encourage each other, and look forward to Christ's return (10:19–25). They are warned about the consequences of rejecting Christ's sacrifice (10:26–31) and reminded of the rewards for faithfulness (10:32–39). Then the author explains how to live by faith, giving illustrations of the faithful men and women in Israel's history (11:1–40) and giving encouragement and exhortation for daily living (12:1–17). This section ends by comparing the old covenant with the new (12:18–29). The writer concludes with moral exhortations (13:1–17), a request for prayer (13:18, 19), and a benediction and greetings (13:20–25).

Whatever you are considering as the focus of life, Christ is better. He is the perfect revelation of God, the final and complete sacrifice for sin, the compassionate and understanding mediator, and the *only* way to eternal life. Read Hebrews and begin to see history and life from God's perspective. Then give yourself unreservedly and completely to Christ.

VITAL STATISTICS

PURPOSE:

To present the sufficiency and superiority of Christ

AUTHOR:

Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Philip, Priscilla, and others have been suggested because the name of the author is not given in the biblical text itself. Whoever it was speaks of Timothy as "brother" (13:23).

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:

Hebrew Christians (perhaps second-generation Christians, see 2:3) who may have been considering a return to Judaism, perhaps because of immaturity, stemming from a lack of understanding of biblical truths

DATE WRITTEN:

Probably before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 because the religious sacrifices and ceremonies are referred to in the book, but no mention is made of the Temple's destruction

SETTING:

These Jewish Christians were probably undergoing fierce persecution, socially and physically, both from Jews and from Romans. Christ had not returned to establish his Kingdom, and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

KEY VERSE:

"The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven" (1:3).

KEY PEOPLE:

Old Testament men and women of faith (chapter 11)

THE BLUEPRINT

A. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST

(1:1—10:18)

1. Christ is greater than the angels
2. Christ is greater than Moses
3. Christ is greater than the Old Testament priesthood
4. The new covenant is greater than the old

The superiority of Christ over everyone and everything is clearly demonstrated by the author. Christianity supersedes all other religions and can never be surpassed. Where can one find anything better than Christ? Living in Christ is having the best there is in life. All competing religions are deceptions or cheap imitations.

B. THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH

(10:19—13:25)

Jews who had become Christians in the first century were tempted to fall back into Judaism because of uncertainty, the security of custom, and persecution. Today believers are also tempted to fall back into legalism, fulfilling minimum religious requirements rather than pressing on in genuine faith. We must strive to live by faith each day.

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
<i>Christ Is Superior</i>	Hebrews reveals Jesus' true identity as God. Jesus is the ultimate authority. He is greater than any religion or any angel. He is superior to any Jewish leader (such as Abraham, Moses, or Joshua) and superior to any priest. He is the complete revelation of God.	Jesus alone can forgive our sin. He has secured our forgiveness and salvation by his death on the cross. We can find peace with God and real meaning for life by believing in Christ. We should not accept any alternative to or substitute for him.
<i>High Priest</i>	In the Old Testament, the high priest represented the Jews before God. Jesus Christ links us with God. There is no other way to reach God. Because Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, he is the perfect substitute to die for our sin. He is our perfect representative with God.	Jesus guarantees our access to God the Father. He intercedes for us so we can boldly come to the Father with our needs. When we are weak, we can come confidently to God for forgiveness and ask for his help.
<i>Sacrifice</i>	Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate fulfillment of all that the Old Testament sacrifices represented—God's forgiveness for sin. Because Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sin, our sins are completely forgiven—past, present, and future.	Christ removed sin, which barred us from God's presence and fellowship. But we must accept his sacrifice for us. By believing in him, we are no longer guilty but cleansed and made whole. His sacrifice clears the way for us to have eternal life.
<i>Maturity</i>	Though we are saved from sin when we believe in Christ, we are given the task of going on and growing in our faith. Through our relationship with Christ, we can live blameless lives, be set aside for his special use, and develop maturity.	The process of maturing in our faith takes time. Daily commitment and service produce maturity. When we are mature in our faith, we are not easily swayed or shaken by temptations or worldly concerns.
<i>Faith</i>	Faith is confident trust in God's promises. God's greatest promise is that we can be saved through Jesus.	If we trust in Jesus Christ for our complete salvation, he will transform us completely. A life of obedience and complete trust is pleasing to God.
<i>Endurance</i>	Faith enables Christians to face trials. Genuine faith includes the commitment to stay true to God when we are under fire. Endurance builds character and leads to victory.	We can have victory in our trials if we don't give up or turn our back on Christ. Stay true to Christ and pray for endurance.

A. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST (1:1—10:18)

The relationship of Christianity to Judaism was a critical issue in the early church. The author clears up confusion by carefully explaining how Christ is superior to angels, Moses, and high priests. The new covenant is shown to be far superior to the old. This can be a great encouragement to us and help us avoid drifting away from our faith in Christ.

1. Christ is greater than the angels

Jesus Christ Is God's Son

1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ²And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. ³The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. ⁴This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

1:1
Num 12:6-8

1:2
Matt 21:38
John 1:3
1 Pet 1:20

1:3
Ps 110:1
John 14:9
2 Cor 4:4
Col 1:15

CHRIST AND THE ANGELS

Hebrews passage Old Testament passage How Christ is superior to angels

1:5, 6 Psalm 2:7 Christ is called "Son" of God, a title never given to an angel.

1:7, 14 Psalm 104:4 Angels are important but are still only servants under God.

1:8, 9 Psalm 45:6 Christ's Kingdom is forever.

1:10 Psalm 102:25 Christ is the Creator of the world.

1:13 Psalm 110:1 Christ is given unique honor by God.

The writer of Hebrews quotes from the Old Testament repeatedly in demonstrating Christ's greatness in comparison to the angels. This audience of first-century Jewish Christians had developed an imbalanced belief in angels and their role. Christ's lordship is affirmed without disrespect to God's valued angelic messengers.

- **1:1** The book of Hebrews describes in detail how Jesus Christ not only fulfills the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament but is better than everything in the Jewish system of thought. The Jews accepted the Old Testament, but most of them rejected Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. The recipients of this letter seem to have been Jewish Christians. They were well versed in Scripture, and they had professed faith in Christ. Whether through doubt, persecution, or false teaching, however, they may have been in danger of giving up their Christian faith and returning to Judaism.

The authorship of this book is uncertain. Several names have been suggested, including Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla, and Paul. Most scholars do not believe that Paul was the author, because the writing style of Hebrews is quite different from that of his letters. In addition, Paul identified himself in his other letters and appealed to his authority as an apostle, whereas this writer of Hebrews, who never gives his or her name, appeals to eye-witnesses of Jesus' ministry for authority. Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews evidently knew Paul well. Hebrews was probably written by one of Paul's close associates who often heard him preach.

- **1:1, 2** God used many approaches to send his messages to people in Old Testament times. He spoke to Isaiah in visions (Isaiah 6), to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 28:10-22), and to Abraham and Moses personally (Genesis 18; Exodus 31:18). Jewish people familiar with these stories would not have found it hard to believe that God was still revealing his will, but it was astonishing for them to think that God had revealed *himself* by speaking through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment and culmination of God's revelation through the centuries. When we know him, we have all we need to be saved from our sin and to have a perfect relationship with God.

1:2 Jesus was God's agent in creating the world: "For through him God created everything" (Colossians 1:16). As followers of Christ, we may give easy assent to this truth but deny it in practice. We may believe that Christ knows and controls the laws of heaven (pertaining to salvation and spiritual growth), but we may act each day as though our financial, family, or medical problems

are beyond his reach. If Jesus could create the universe, then no part of life is out of his control. Do not exclude Jesus' wisdom and the Bible's guidance in your complex problems of life. No expert, professor, doctor, lawyer, or financial adviser knows more about your ultimate security and well being than Jesus does. Go first to God for advice. Talk to him in prayer and listen to him in his Word. He can sustain you in times of stress. From that perspective you can evaluate all the other wisdom and help made available to you.

- **1:3** Not only is Jesus the exact representation of God, but he is God himself—the very God who spoke in Old Testament times. He is eternal; he worked with the Father in creating the world (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He is the full revelation of God. You can have no clearer view of God than by looking at Christ. Jesus Christ is the complete expression of God in a human body.
- **1:3** The book of Hebrews links God's saving power with his creative power. In other words, the power that brought the universe into being and that keeps it operating is the very power that cleanses our sins. How mistaken we would be to ever think that God couldn't forgive us. No sin is too big for the Ruler of the universe to handle. He can and will forgive us when we come to him through his Son. That Jesus *sat down* means that the work was complete. Christ's sacrifice was final.
- **1:4** The "far greater" name that was given to Jesus is "Son." This name given to him by his Father is greater than the names and titles of the angels.
- **1:4ff** False teachers in many of the early churches taught that God could be approached only through angels. Instead of worshiping God directly, followers of these heretics revered angels. Hebrews clearly denounces such teaching as false. Some thought of Jesus as the highest angel of God. But Jesus is not a superior angel, and in any case, angels are not to be worshiped (see Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:1-10). We should not regard any intermediaries or authorities as greater than Christ. Jesus is God. He alone deserves our worship.

The Son Is Greater Than the Angels

⁵For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus:

“You are my Son.
Today I have become your Father.”*

1:5
†Ps 2:7
‡2 Sam 7:14

God also said,

“I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son.”*

⁶And when he brought his supreme* Son into the world, God said,*

“Let all of God’s angels worship him.”*

1:6
†Deut 32:43
‡Ps 8:4

⁷Regarding the angels, he says,

“He sends his angels like the winds,
his servants like flames of fire.”*

1:7
‡Pss 8:5; 104:4

⁸But to the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.
You rule with a scepter of justice.

1:8-9
†Ps 45:6-7

⁹ You love justice and hate evil.

Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you,
pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.”*

¹⁰He also says to the Son,

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth
and made the heavens with your hands.

1:10-12
†Ps 102:25-27

¹¹ They will perish, but you remain forever.

They will wear out like old clothing.

¹² You will fold them up like a cloak

and discard them like old clothing.

But you are always the same;
you will live forever.”*

¹³And God never said to any of the angels,

“Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet.”*

1:13
Ps 110:1
Matt 22:44

¹⁴Therefore, angels are only servants—spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

1:14
Pss 34:7; 91:11

1:5a Or *Today I reveal you as my Son.* Ps 2:7. 1:5b 2 Sam 7:14. 1:6a Or *firstborn.* 1:6b Or *when he again brings his supreme Son (or firstborn Son) into the world, God will say.* 1:6c Deut 32:43. 1:7 Ps 104:4 (Greek version). 1:8-9 Ps 45:6-7. 1:10-12 Ps 102:25-27. 1:13 Ps 110:1.

1:5, 6 Jesus is God’s honored, firstborn Son. In Jewish families the firstborn son held the place of highest privilege and responsibility. The Jewish Christians reading this message would understand that as God’s firstborn, Jesus was superior to any created being.

1:10-12 The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 102:25-27. In the quotation, he regards God as the speaker and applies the words to the Son, Jesus. The earth and the heavens folded up like a cloak reveals that the earth is not permanent or indestructible (a position held by many Greek and Roman philosophies). Jesus’ authority is established over all of creation, so we dare not treat any created object or earthly resource as more important than he is. When we spend more time on ourselves than on serving Christ, we treat ourselves (his creation) as being more important than our Creator. When we regard our finances, rather than our faith in Christ, as the basis for security, we give higher status to an earthly resource than we do to God. Rather than trusting in changeable and temporary resources, trust in God, who is eternal.

• **1:11, 12** Because the readers of Hebrews (Jewish Christians) had experienced the rejection of their fellow Jews, they often felt

isolated. Many were tempted to exchange the changeless Christ for their familiar old faith. The writer of Hebrews warned them not to do this: Christ is our *only* security in a changing world. Whatever may happen in this world, Christ remains forever changeless. If we trust him, we are absolutely secure, because we stand on the firmest foundation in the universe—Jesus Christ. A famous hymn captures this truth: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

1:12 What does it mean that Christ is changeless (“you are always the same”)? It means that Christ’s character will never change. He persistently shows his love to us. He is always fair, just, and merciful to us who are so undeserving. Be thankful that Christ is changeless; he will always help you when you need it and offer forgiveness when you fall.

• **1:14** Angels are God’s messengers, spiritual beings created by God and under his authority (Colossians 1:16). They have several functions: serving believers (1:14), protecting the helpless (Matthew 18:10), proclaiming God’s messages (Revelation 14:6-12), and executing God’s judgment (Acts 12:1-23; Revelation 20:1-3).

A Warning against Drifting Away

2 So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. ²For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. ³So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? ⁴And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose.

2:2
Deut 33:2
Acts 7:38, 53
Gal 3:19
2:3
Heb 1:2; 10:29
2:4
Mark 16:20

Jesus, the Man

⁵And furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world we are talking about.

⁶For in one place the Scriptures say,

“What are mere mortals that you should think about them,
or a son of man* that you should care for him?”

⁷Yet you made them only a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.*

⁸You gave them authority over all things.”*

2:6-8
Ps 8:4-6

2:8
1 Cor 15:27

2:9
Phil 2:6-9

Now when it says “all things,” it means nothing is left out. But we have not yet seen all things put under their authority. ⁹What we do see is Jesus, who was given a position “a little lower than the angels”; and because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and

2:6 Or the *Son of Man*. **2:7** Some manuscripts add *You gave them charge of everything you made*.
2:6-8 Ps 8:4-6 (Greek version).

LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S HUMANITY



Christ is the perfect human leader and he wants to lead you
model and he is worth imitating
sacrifice. and he died for you
conqueror and he conquered death to give you eternal life
High Priest and he is merciful, loving, and understanding

God, in Christ, became a living, breathing human being. Hebrews points out many reasons why this is so important.

2:1-3 The author called his readers to pay attention to the truth they had heard so that they wouldn't drift away into false teachings. Paying careful attention is hard work. It involves focusing our mind, body, and senses. Listening to Christ means not merely hearing but also obeying (see James 1:22-25). We must listen carefully and be ready to carry out his instructions.

2:1 These early believers were in danger of falling away from following Jesus. They had heard the words of the gospel, but those words had not sunk in. People raised in believing families and churches risk the same danger today. They hear the words and more or less agree, but mental assent to Christ's leadership is insufficient to be Christ's disciple. Are you a Sunday school teacher, a small group leader, or a club leader? Don't assume that people who comply and conform are truly committed to Christ. Get to know each person who attends your group and challenge each with the truth and implications of commitment to Christ. Don't surrender anyone to casual belief.

2:2, 3 “The message God delivered through angels” refers to the teaching that angels, as messengers for God, had brought the law to Moses (see Galatians 3:19). A central theme of Hebrews is that Christ is infinitely greater than all other proposed ways to God. The author was saying that the faith of his Jewish readers was good, but faith must point to Christ. Just as Christ is greater than angels, so Christ's message is more important than theirs. No one will escape God's punishment if he or she is indifferent to the salvation offered by Christ.

2:3 Eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry had handed down his teachings to the readers of this book. These readers were second-generation believers who had not seen Christ in the flesh. They are like us; we have not seen Jesus personally. We base our belief

in Jesus on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible. See John 20:29 for Jesus' encouragement to those who believe without ever having seen him.

2:4 “God confirmed the message” continues the thought from 2:3. Those who had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on his words also had the truth of their words confirmed by “signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” In the book of Acts, miracles and gifts of the Spirit authenticated the Good News wherever it was preached (see Acts 9:31-42; 14:1-20). Paul, who discussed spiritual gifts in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4, taught that their purpose is to build up the church, making it strong and mature. When we see the gifts of the Spirit in an individual or congregation, we know that God is truly present. As we receive God's gifts, we should thank him for them and put them to use in the church.

2:8, 9 God put Jesus in charge of everything, and Jesus revealed himself to us. We do not yet see Jesus reigning on earth, but we can picture him in his heavenly glory. When you are confused by present events and anxious about the future, remember Jesus' true position and authority. He is Lord of all, and one day he will rule on earth as he does now in heaven. This truth can give stability to your decisions day by day.

• **2:9, 10** God's grace to us led Christ to his death. Jesus did not come into the world to gain status or political power, but to suffer and die so that we could have eternal life (“bring many children into glory”). If it is difficult for us to identify with Christ's servant attitude, perhaps we need to evaluate our own motives. Are we more interested in power or participation, domination or service, getting or giving?

honor.” Yes, by God’s grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. ¹⁰God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.

¹¹So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.* ¹²For he said to God,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.

I will praise you among your assembled people.”*

¹³He also said,

“I will put my trust in him,”

that is, “I and the children God has given me.”*

¹⁴Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had* the power of death. ¹⁵Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

¹⁶We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters,* so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. ¹⁸Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

2. Christ is greater than Moses

3 And so, dear brothers and sisters who belong to God and* are partners with those called to heaven, think carefully about this Jesus whom we declare to be God’s messenger* and High Priest. ²For he was faithful to God, who appointed him, just as Moses served faithfully when he was entrusted with God’s entire* house.

2:11 Greek *brothers*; also in 2:12. 2:12 Ps 22:22. 2:13 Isa 8:17-18. 2:14 Or *has*. 2:17 Greek *like the brothers*. 3:1a Greek *And so, holy brothers who*. 3:1b Greek *God’s apostle*. 3:2 Some manuscripts do not include *entire*.

2:10
Luke 13:32; 24:46
Rom 11:36
Heb 5:9

2:11
Matt 28:10
John 20:17
Rom 8:29
Heb 10:10; 13:12

2:12
[†]Ps 22:22

2:13
[†]Isa 8:17-18
John 17:11-12

2:14
John 1:14
Rom 8:3
1 Cor 15:54-57
2 Tim 1:10
1 Jn 3:8

2:17
Phil 2:7
Heb 3:1; 4:15; 5:1
1 Jn 2:2; 4:10

2:18
Heb 4:15; 5:2

3:1
Heb 2:17; 4:14

3:2
Num 12:7-8

- **2:10** How was Jesus made a perfect leader through suffering? Jesus’ suffering made him a perfect leader, or pioneer, of our salvation (see the notes on 5:8 and 5:9). Jesus did not need to suffer for his own salvation, because he was God in human form. His perfect obedience (which led him down the road of suffering) demonstrates that he was the complete sacrifice for us. Through suffering, Jesus completed the work necessary for our own salvation. Our suffering can make us more sensitive servants of God. People who have known pain are able to reach out with compassion to others who hurt. If you have suffered, ask God how your experience can be used to help others.
- **2:11-13** We who have been set apart for God’s service, cleansed, and made holy (sanctified) by Jesus now have the same Father he has, so he has made us his brothers and sisters. Various psalms look forward to Christ and his work in the world. Here the writer quotes a portion of Psalm 22, a messianic psalm. Because God has adopted all believers as his children, Jesus calls them his brothers and sisters.
- 2:14, 15** Jesus had to become human so that he could die and rise again in order to destroy the devil’s power over death (Romans 6:5-11). Only then could Christ deliver those who had lived in constant fear of death and free them to live for him. When we belong to God, we need not fear death, because we know that death is only the doorway into eternal life (1 Corinthians 15).
- **2:14, 15** Christ’s death and resurrection set us free from the fear of death because death has been defeated. Every person must die, but death is not the end; instead, it is the doorway to a new life. All who dread death should have the opportunity to know the hope that Christ’s victory brings. How can you share this truth with those close to you?
- **2:16, 17** In the Old Testament, the high priest was the mediator between God and his people. His job was to regularly offer animal sacrifices according to the law and to intercede with God for

forgiveness of the people’s sins. Jesus Christ is now our High Priest. He came to earth as a human being; therefore, he understands our weaknesses and shows mercy to us. He has *once and for all* paid the penalty for our sins by his own sacrificial death (atonement), and he can be depended on to restore our broken relationship with God. We are released from sin’s domination over us when we commit ourselves fully to Christ, trusting completely in what he has done for us (see the note on 4:14 for more about Jesus as the great High Priest).

- **2:18** Knowing that Christ suffered pain and faced temptation helps us face our trials. Jesus understands our struggles because he faced them as a human being. We can trust Christ to help us survive suffering and overcome temptation. When you face trials, go to Jesus for strength and patience. He understands your needs and is able to help (see 4:14-16).
- 3:1** This verse would have been especially meaningful to Jewish Christians. For Jews, the highest human authority was the high priest. For Christians, the highest human authorities were God’s messengers, the apostles. Jesus, God’s messenger and High Priest, is the ultimate authority in the church.
- 3:1** The writer says to “think carefully about this Jesus,” to fix our minds, ponder carefully, and focus on the true significance of Jesus. How much do we do that? In our age of sound bites, fast food, and quick-fix solutions, very few people take time to think about anything or anyone. In Jesus we have one to whom we should listen (God’s messenger), through whom we come to the Father (High Priest), and to whom we give obedience (he is entrusted with God’s entire house). When you think about the significance and superiority of Jesus, how does it affect your life today? Your decisions? Your actions?
- 3:2, 3** To the Jewish people, Moses was a great hero; he had led their ancestors, the Israelites, from Egyptian bondage to the border of the Promised Land. He also had written the first five

3:3
2 Cor 3:7-11

³But Jesus deserves far more glory than Moses, just as a person who builds a house deserves more praise than the house itself. ⁴For every house has a builder, but the one who built everything is God.

3:5
Exod 14:31
Num 12:7

⁵Moses was certainly faithful in God's house as a servant. His work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later. ⁶But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ.*

3:6
Eph 2:19-22
1 Tim 3:15
1 Pet 2:5

⁷That is why the Holy Spirit says,

3:7-11
[†]Ps 95:7-11

"Today when you hear his voice,

3:8
Exod 17:7

⁸ don't harden your hearts
as Israel did when they rebelled,
when they tested me in the wilderness.

⁹ There your ancestors tested and tried my patience,
even though they saw my miracles for forty years.

¹⁰ So I was angry with them, and I said,
'Their hearts always turn away from me.

They refuse to do what I tell them.'

3:11
Num 14:21-23

¹¹ So in my anger I took an oath:

'They will never enter my place of rest.'"^{*}

3:13
Eph 4:22

¹²Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters.* Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. ¹³You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

3:14
Heb 3:6

¹⁴For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. ¹⁵Remember what it says:

3:15
[†]Ps 95:7-8

"Today when you hear his voice,
don't harden your hearts
as Israel did when they rebelled.""^{*}

3:6 Some manuscripts add *faithful to the end*. **3:7-11** Ps 95:7-11. **3:12** Greek *brothers*. **3:15** Ps 95:7-8.

books of the Old Testament, and he was the prophet through whom God had given the law; therefore, Moses was the greatest prophet in the Scriptures. But Jesus is worthy of greater honor as the central figure of faith than Moses, who was merely a human servant. Jesus is more than human; he is God himself (1:3). As Moses led the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, so Christ leads us out of sin's slavery. Why settle for Moses, the author of Hebrews asks, when you can have Jesus Christ, who appointed Moses?

3:5 Moses was faithful to God's calling not only to deliver Israel but also to prepare the way for the Messiah ("his work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later"). All the Old Testament believers also served to prepare the way. Thus, knowing the Old Testament is the best foundation for understanding the New Testament. In reading the Old Testament, we see (1) how God used people to accomplish his purposes, (2) how God used events and personalities to illustrate important truths, (3) how, through prophets, God announced the Messiah, and (4) how, through the system of sacrifices, God prepared people to understand the Messiah's work. If you include the Old Testament in your regular Bible reading, the New Testament will grow clearer and more meaningful to you.

3:6 Because Christ lives in us as believers, we can remain courageous and hopeful to the end. We are not saved by being steadfast and firm in our faith, but our courage and hope do reveal that our faith is real. Without this enduring faithfulness, we could easily be blown away by the winds of temptation, false teaching, or persecution (see also 3:14).

- **3:7-15** This passage refers to the Israelites who had hardened their hearts in the wilderness. A hardened heart is as useless as a hardened lump of clay or a hardened loaf of bread. Nothing can restore it and make it useful. The writer of Psalm 95 warns against hardening our hearts as Israel did in the wilderness by continuing to resist God's will (Exodus 17:7; Numbers 13; 14; 20). The people

were so convinced that God couldn't deliver them that they simply lost their faith in him. People with hardened hearts are so stubbornly set in their ways that they cannot turn to God. This does not happen suddenly or all at once; it is the result of a series of choices to disregard God's will. Let people know that those who resist God long enough, God will toss aside like hardened bread, useless and worthless.

- **3:11** God's *rest* has several meanings in Scripture: (1) the seventh day of creation and the weekly Sabbath commemorating it (Genesis 2:2; Hebrews 4:4-9); (2) the Promised Land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 12:8-12; Psalm 95); (3) peace with God now because of our relationship with Christ through faith (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4:1, 3, 8-11); and (4) our future eternal life with Christ (Hebrews 4:8-11). All of these meanings were probably familiar to the Jewish Christian readers of Hebrews. We can apply the verses as a warning about God's anger in the face of human rebellion against his Kingdom. By rejecting God's provision (Christ) and not enduring in our faith, we miss the opportunity for spiritual rest.
- **3:12-14** Our hearts turn away from the living God when we stubbornly refuse to believe him. If we persist in our unbelief, God will eventually leave us alone in our sin. But God can give us new hearts, new desires, and new spirits (Ezekiel 36:22-27). To prevent having an unbelieving heart, stay in fellowship with other believers, talk daily about your mutual faith, be aware of the deceitfulness of sin (it attracts but also destroys), and encourage each other with love and concern.
- **3:15-19** The Israelites failed to enter the Promised Land because they did not believe in God's protection, and they did not believe that God would help them conquer the giants in the land (see Numbers 14-15). So God sent them into the wilderness to wander for 40 years. This was an unhappy alternative to the wonderful gift he had planned for them. Lack of trust in God always prevents us from receiving his best.

¹⁶And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard his voice? Wasn't it the people Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn't it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn't it the people who disobeyed him? ¹⁹So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest.

3:16-18
Num 14:1-35
3:17
Num 14:29
1 Cor 10:5
3:18
Num 14:22-23

Promised Rest for God's People

4 God's promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it. ²For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. ³For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said,

4:2
1 Thes 2:13
4:3
†Ps 95:11

“In my anger I took an oath:
‘They will never enter my place of rest.’”*

even though this rest has been ready since he made the world. ⁴We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: “On the seventh day God rested from all his work.”* ⁵But in the other passage God said, “They will never enter my place of rest.”*

4:4
†Gen 2:2
4:5
†Ps 95:11
4:6
Heb 3:18
4:7
†Ps 95:7-8

⁶So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. ⁷So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted:

“Today when you hear his voice,
don't harden your hearts.”*

⁸Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come. ⁹So there is a special rest* still waiting for the people of God. ¹⁰For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. ¹¹So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.

4:8
Josh 22:4
4:10
Gen 2:2
Rev 14:13

4:2 Some manuscripts read *they didn't combine what they heard with faith*. **4:3** Ps 95:11. **4:4** Gen 2:2. **4:5** Ps 95:11. **4:7** Ps 95:7-8. **4:9** Or a Sabbath rest.

- **4:1-3** Some of the Jewish Christians who received this letter may have been on the verge of turning back from their promised rest in Christ, just as the people in Moses' day had turned back from the Promised Land. In both cases, the difficulties of the present moment overshadowed the reality of God's promise, and the people doubted that God would fulfill his promises. When we trust our own efforts instead of Christ's power, we, too, are in danger of turning back. Our own efforts are never adequate; only Christ can see us through.
- **4:2** The Israelites of Moses' day illustrate a problem facing many who fill our churches today. They know a great deal about Christ, but they do not know him personally—they don't combine their knowledge with faith. Let the Good News about Christ benefit your life. Believe in him and then act on what you know. Trust in Christ and do what he says.
- **4:4** God rested on the seventh day, not because he was tired, but to indicate the completion of creation. The world was perfect, and God was well satisfied with it. This rest is a foretaste of our eternal joy when creation will be renewed and restored, every mark of sin will be removed, and the world will be made perfect again. Our Sabbath-rest in Christ begins when we trust him to complete his good and perfect work in us (see the note on 3:11).
- **4:6, 7** God had given the Israelites the opportunity to enter Canaan, but they disobeyed and failed to enter (Numbers 13–14). Now God offers us the opportunity to enter his ultimate place of

rest—he invites us to come to Christ. To enter his rest, you must believe that God has this relationship in mind for you; you must stop trying to create it; you must trust in Christ for it; and you must determine to obey him. *Today* is the best time to find peace with God. Tomorrow may be too late.

- **4:8-11** God wants us to enter his rest. For the Israelites of Moses' time, this rest was the earthly rest to be found in the Promised Land. For Christians, it is peace with God now and eternal life on a new earth later. We do not need to wait for the next life to enjoy God's rest and peace; we may have it daily now! Our daily rest in the Lord will not end with death but will become an eternal rest in the place that Christ is preparing for us (John 14:1-4).
- **4:10** Busy people often work especially hard the week before vacation, tying up loose ends so they can relax. Students usually have their final exams right before semester breaks. When we know a rest is coming, we put extra effort into finishing our work. Healthy Christians love the work God has given them, doing it with passion and gusto, putting all their strength and care into it. But Christians love God's promise of heaven's rest even more and look forward to God's rest with great joy. Today, renew your effort to work hard for God. Rest is coming. Relish the thought.
- **4:11** If Jesus has provided for our rest through faith, why must we “do our best to enter that rest”? This is not the struggle of doing good in order to obtain salvation, nor is it a mystical struggle to overcome selfishness. It refers to making every effort to appreciate and benefit from what God has already provided. Salvation is not to be taken for granted; to appropriate the gift God offers requires decision and commitment.

4:12
Isa 49:2
Jer 23:29
1 Cor 14:24-25
Eph 6:17
1 Pet 1:23

¹²For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

4:13
2 Chr 16:9
Ps 33:13-15

3. Christ is greater than the Old Testament priesthood
Christ Is Our High Priest

4:14
Heb 2:17; 3:1

¹⁴So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

4:15
2 Cor 5:21
Heb 2:17-18

4:16
Heb 7:19

5:1
Heb 2:17; 7:27; 8:3

5 Every high priest is a man chosen to represent other people in their dealings with God. ¹He presents their gifts to God and offers sacrifices for their sins. ²And he is able to deal gently with ignorant and wayward people because he himself is subject to the same weaknesses. ³That is why he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as theirs.

5:2
Heb 2:17; 4:15

5:3
Lev 9:7; 16:6
Heb 7:27; 9:7

⁴And no one can become a high priest simply because he wants such an honor. He must be called by God for this work, just as Aaron was. ⁵That is why Christ did not honor himself by assuming he could become High Priest. No, he was chosen by God, who said to him,

5:4
Exod 28:1

5:5
Acts 13:33

THE CHOICES OF MATURITY



<i>Mature Choices</i>	<i>Versus</i>	<i>Immature Choices</i>
Teaching others	rather than . . .	just being taught
Developing depth of understanding . . .	rather than . . .	struggling with the basics
Self-evaluation	rather than . . .	self-criticism
Seeking unity	rather than . . .	promoting disunity
Desiring spiritual challenges	rather than . . .	desiring entertainment
Careful study and observation	rather than . . .	opinions and halfhearted efforts
Active faith	rather than . . .	cautious apathy and doubt
Confidence	rather than . . .	fear
Feelings and experiences evaluated in the light of God's Word	rather than . . .	experiences evaluated according to feelings

One way to evaluate spiritual maturity is by looking at the choices we make. The writer of Hebrews notes many of the ways these choices change with personal growth.

- **4:12** The Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life-changing, and dynamic as it works in us. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also let it shape our lives.
- **4:13** Nothing can be hidden from God. He knows about everyone everywhere, and everything about us is wide open to his all-seeing eyes. God sees all we do and knows all we think. Even when we are unaware of his presence, he is there. When we try to hide from him, he sees us. We can have no secrets from God. It is comforting to realize that although God knows us intimately, he still loves us.
- 4:14** Christ is superior to the priests, and his priesthood is superior to their priesthood. To the Jews, the high priest was the highest religious authority in the land. He alone entered the Most Holy Place in the Temple once a year to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation (Leviticus 16). Like the high priest, Jesus mediates between God and us. As humanity's representative, he intercedes for us before God. As God's representative, he assures us of God's forgiveness. Jesus has more authority than the Jewish high priests because he is truly God and truly man. Unlike the high priest, who could go before God only once a year, Christ is

always at God's right hand, interceding for us. He is always available to hear us when we pray.

4:15 Jesus is like us because he experienced a full range of temptations throughout his life as a human being. We can be comforted knowing that Jesus faced temptation—he can sympathize with us. We can be encouraged knowing that Jesus faced temptation without giving in to sin. He shows us that we do not have to sin when facing the seductive lure of temptation. Jesus is the only perfect human being who has ever lived.

4:16 Prayer is our approach to God, and we are to come "boldly." Some Christians approach God meekly with heads hung low, afraid to ask him to meet their needs. Others pray flippantly, giving little thought to what they say. Come with reverence because he is your King. But also come with bold assurance because he is your Friend and Counselor.

5:4-6 This chapter stresses both Christ's divine appointment and his humanity. The writer uses two Old Testament verses to show Christ's divine appointment: Psalms 2:7 and 110:4. At the time this book was written, the Romans selected the high priest in Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, however, God chose Aaron, and only Aaron's descendants could be high priests. Christ, like Aaron, was chosen and called by God.

“You are my Son.
Today I have become your Father.*”

⁶And in another passage God said to him,

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”*

⁷While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God. ⁸Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. ⁹In this way, God qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. ¹⁰And God designated him to be a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

5:6
1Ps 110:4

5:7
Matt 26:38-46
Mark 14:32-42
Luke 22:39-46

5:8
Phil 2:8
Heb 1:2

5:10
Ps 110:4
Heb 5:6

A Call to Spiritual Growth

¹¹There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don’t seem to listen. ¹²You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word.* You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. ¹³For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn’t know how to do what is right. ¹⁴Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

5:12
1 Cor 3:2
1 Pet 2:2

5:13
1 Cor 14:20
Eph 4:14

5:14
Rom 16:19
1 Cor 2:6

6 So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don’t need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds* and placing our faith in God. ²You don’t need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

6:1
Phil 3:12-14
Heb 5:12; 9:14

6:2
Acts 2:4; 6:6;
17:18, 32

5:5 Or *Today I reveal you as my Son.* Ps 2:7. 5:6 Ps 110:4. 5:12 Or *about the oracles of God.* 6:1 Greek from *dead works.*

5:6 Melchizedek was a priest of Salem (now called Jerusalem). His Profile is found in Genesis 15, p. 29. Melchizedek’s position is explained in Hebrews 7.

5:7 Jesus was in great agony as he prepared to face death (Luke 22:41-44). Although Jesus cried out to God, asking to be delivered, he was prepared to suffer humiliation, separation from his Father, and death in order to do God’s will. At times we will undergo trials, not because we want to suffer, but because we want to obey God. Let Jesus’ obedience sustain and encourage you in times of trial. You will be able to face anything if you know that Jesus Christ is with you.

5:7 Have you ever felt that God didn’t hear your prayers? Be sure you are praying with reverent submission, willing to do what God wants. God responds to his obedient children.

5:8 Jesus’ human life was not a script that he passively followed. It was a life that he chose freely (John 10:17, 18). It was a continuous process of making the will of God the Father his own. Jesus chose to obey, even though obedience led to suffering and death. Because Jesus obeyed perfectly, even under great trial, he can help us obey, no matter how difficult obedience seems to be.

5:9 Christ was always morally perfect. By obeying, he demonstrated his perfection to us, not to God or to himself. In the Bible, *perfect* usually means completeness or maturity. By sharing our experience of suffering, Christ shared our human experience completely. He is now able to offer eternal salvation to those who obey him. See Philipians 2:5-11 for Christ’s attitude as he took on human form.

5:9 The “eternal salvation” we have been offered means the elimination of a verdict on our sin, the setting aside of judgment, and the award of undeserved membership in God’s family. It is a change in destiny, an awakening of hope, an overcoming of death. Salvation turns a person toward heaven and inaugurates a life of discipleship with the living Christ. It is God’s vote for you, God’s invitation to you, God’s energy invested in you. Salvation is

the reason you can smile in the morning and rest in the evening. God loves you, and you belong to him.

• **5:12, 13** These Jewish Christians were immature. Some of them should have been teaching others, but they had not even applied the basics to their own lives. They were reluctant to move beyond age-old traditions, established doctrines, and discussion of the basics. They wouldn’t be able to understand the high-priestly role of Christ unless they moved out of their comfortable position, cut some of their Jewish ties, and stopped trying to blend in with their culture. Commitment to Christ moves people out of their comfort zones.

• **5:12-14** In order to grow from infant Christians to mature Christians, we must learn discernment. We must train our conscience, our senses, our mind, and our body to distinguish good from evil. Can you recognize temptation before it traps you? Can you tell the difference between a correct use of Scripture and a mistaken one?

• **5:14** Our capacity to feast on deeper knowledge of God (“solid food”) is determined by our spiritual growth. Too often we want God’s banquet before we are spiritually capable of digesting it. As you grow in the Lord and put into practice what you have learned, your capacity to understand will also grow.

• **6:1, 2** Certain basic teachings are essential for all believers to understand. Those basics include the importance of faith, the foolishness of trying to be saved by good deeds, the meaning of baptism and spiritual gifts, and the facts of resurrection and eternal life. To go on to maturity in our understanding, we need to move beyond (but not away from) the basic teachings to a more complete understanding of the faith. And this is what the author intends for his readers to do (6:3). Mature Christians should be teaching new Christians the basics. Then, acting on what they know, the mature will learn even more from God’s Word.

6:3 These Christians needed to move beyond the basics of their faith to an understanding of Christ as the perfect High

6:4
John 4:10
Eph 2:8

6:5
Ps 34:8
1 Pet 2:3

6:6
2 Pet 2:21
1 Jn 5:16

⁴For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come—⁶and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame.

ABRAHAM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Abraham was an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1:1, 2, 17;
Luke 3:23, 34

Jesus Christ was human; he was born into the line of Abraham, whom God had chosen to be the father of a great nation through which the whole world would be blessed. We are blessed because of what Jesus Christ, Abraham's descendant, did for us.

Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation.

Matthew 3:9;
Luke 3:8;
Acts 13:26;
Romans 4:1; 11:1;
2 Corinthians 11:22;
Hebrews 6:13, 14

God wanted to set apart a nation for himself, a nation that would tell the world about him. He began with a man of faith who, though old and childless, believed God's promise of innumerable descendants. We can trust God to do the impossible when we have faith.

Abraham, because of his faith, now sits in the Kingdom with Christ.

Matthew 8:11;
Luke 13:28;
16:23-31

Abraham followed God, and now he is enjoying his reward—eternity with God. We will one day meet Abraham because we have been promised eternity as well.

God *is* Abraham's God; thus, Abraham is alive with God.

Matthew 22:32;
Mark 12:26;
Luke 20:37;
Acts 7:32

As Abraham lives forever, we will live forever, because we, like Abraham, have chosen the life of faith.

Abraham received great promises from God.

Luke 1:55, 72, 73;
Acts 3:25; 7:17, 18;
Galatians 3:6, 14-16;
Hebrews 6:13-15

Many of the promises God made to Abraham seemed impossible to be realized, but Abraham trusted God. The promises to believers in God's Word also seem too incredible to believe, but we can trust God to keep all his promises.

Abraham followed God.

Acts 7:2-8;
Hebrews 11:8, 17-19

Abraham followed God's leading from his homeland to an unknown territory, which became the Jews' Promised Land. When we follow God, even before he makes all his plans clear to us, we will never be disappointed.

God blessed Abraham because of his faith.

Romans 4;
Galatians 3:6-9, 14-19; Hebrews 11:8, 17-19;
James 2:21-24

Abraham showed faith in times of disappointment, trial, and testing. Because of Abraham's faith, God counted him righteous and called him his "friend." God accepts us because of our faith.

Abraham is the father of all those who come to God by faith.

Romans 9:6-8;
Galatians 3:6-9, 14-29

The Jews are Abraham's children, and Christ was his descendant. We are Christ's brothers and sisters; thus, all believers are Abraham's children and God's children. Abraham was righteous because of his faith; we are made righteous through faith in Christ. The promises made to Abraham apply to us because of Christ.

Priest and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. Rather than arguing about the respective merits of Judaism and Christianity, they needed to depend on Christ and live effectively for him.

6:4-6 In the first century, a pagan who investigated Christianity and then went back to paganism made a clean break with the church. But for Jewish Christians who decided to return to Judaism, the break was less obvious. Their lifestyle remained relatively unchanged. But by deliberately turning away from Christ, they were cutting themselves off from God's forgiveness. Those who persevere in believing are true saints; those who continue to reject Christ are unbelievers, no matter how well they behave.

6:6 This verse points to the danger of the Hebrew Christians' returning to Judaism and thus committing apostasy. Some apply

this verse today to superficial believers who renounce their Christianity or to unbelievers who come close to salvation and then turn away. Either way, those who reject Christ will not be saved. Christ died once for all. He will not be crucified again. Apart from his cross, there is no other possible way of salvation. However, the author does not indicate that his readers were in danger of renouncing Christ (see 6:9). He is warning against hardness of heart that would make repentance inconceivable for the sinner.

⁷When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. ⁸But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.

6:8
Gen 3:17-18

⁹Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. ¹⁰For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers,* as you still do. ¹¹Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. ¹²Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance.

6:10
Matt 10:40, 42
1 Thes 1:3
6:11
Heb 3:6; 10:22
6:12
Heb 10:36; 13:7

God's Promises Bring Hope

¹³For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying:

6:13
Gen 22:16

¹⁴ "I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number."^{*}

6:14
¹Gen 22:17

¹⁵Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised.

6:15
Gen 21:15

¹⁶Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding. ¹⁷God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. ¹⁸So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. ¹⁹This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. ²⁰Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

6:17
Ps 110:4
Heb 11:9

6:18
Num 23:19
1 Sam 15:29
Titus 1:2
Heb 3:6

6:19
Lev 16:2-3, 12, 15
Heb 9:2-3, 7

6:20
Ps 110:4
Heb 4:14; 5:6

Melchizedek Is Greater Than Abraham

7 This Melchizedek was king of the city of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. When Abraham was returning home after winning a great battle against the kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him. ²Then Abraham took a tenth of all he had captured in battle

7:1-2
Gen 14:17-20

6:10 Greek for God's holy people. **6:14** Gen 22:17.

• **6:7, 8** The writer uses an analogy from agriculture to make a simple point. Real seeds (the gospel) given genuine care by the farmer (God) and planted in a fertile field (your heart and life) will produce a bountiful crop (spiritual maturity). Weeds (temptations) threaten to overwhelm the crop. If the field produces only weeds, then the seeds are lost and the field ruined.

An unproductive Christian life falls under God's condemnation. You have been watered by God's grace with clear and abundant teaching and preaching. What excuse do you have for a useless or unproductive life? Don't be a Christian in name only. Make sure your life bears fruit.

• **6:10** It's easy to get discouraged, thinking that God has forgotten us. But God is never unjust. He never forgets or overlooks our hard work for him. Presently you may not be receiving rewards and acclaim, but God knows your efforts of love and ministry. Let God's love for you and his intimate knowledge of your service for him bolster you as you face disappointment and rejection here on earth.

• **6:11, 12** Hope keeps the Christian from becoming lazy or feeling bored. Like an athlete, train hard and run well, remembering the reward that lies ahead (Philippians 3:14).

6:15 Abraham waited patiently; it was 25 years from the time God had promised him a son (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-16; 15:4, 5; 17:16) to Isaac's birth (Genesis 21:1-3). Because our trials and temptations are often so intense, they seem to last for an eternity. Both the Bible and the testimony of mature Christians encourage us to wait for God to act in his timing, even when our needs seem too great to wait any longer.

6:17 God's promises are unchanging and trustworthy because God is unchanging and trustworthy. When promising Abraham a son, God took an oath in his own name. The oath was as good as God's name, and God's name was as good as his divine nature.

• **6:18, 19** These two unchangeable things are God's promise and his oath. God embodies all truth; therefore, he cannot lie. Because God is truth, you can be secure in his promises; you don't need to wonder if he will change his plans. Our hope is secure and immovable, anchored in God, just as a ship's anchor holds firmly to the seabed. To the true seeker who comes to God in belief, God gives an unconditional promise of acceptance. When you ask God with openness, honesty, and sincerity to save you from your sins, *he will do it*. This truth should give you encouragement, assurance, and confidence.

• **6:19, 20** A curtain hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, "God's inner sanctuary." This curtain prevented anyone from entering, gazing into, or even getting a fleeting glimpse of the interior of the Most Holy Place (see also 9:1-8). The high priest could enter there only once a year to stand in God's presence and atone for the sins of the entire nation. But Christ is in God's presence at all times, not just once a year, as the High Priest who can continually intercede for us.

7:2ff The writer uses this story from Genesis 14:18-20 to show that Christ is even greater than Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, and Levi (Abraham's descendant). Therefore, the Jewish priesthood (made up of Levi's descendants) was inferior to Melchizedek's priesthood (a type of Christ's priesthood).

and gave it to Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek means “king of justice,” and king of Salem means “king of peace.”³ There is no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors—no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, resembling the Son of God.

7:3
Ps 110:4

7:4
Gen 14:20

7:5
Num 18:21, 26

7:6
Rom 4:13

7:7
Gen 14:19

7:8
Heb 5:6; 6:20

⁴Consider then how great this Melchizedek was. Even Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel, recognized this by giving him a tenth of what he had taken in battle. ⁵Now the law of Moses required that the priests, who are descendants of Levi, must collect a tithe from the rest of the people of Israel,* who are also descendants of Abraham. ⁶But Melchizedek, who was not a descendant of Levi, collected a tenth from Abraham. And Melchizedek placed a blessing upon Abraham, the one who had already received the promises of God. ⁷And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed.

⁸The priests who collect tithes are men who die, so Melchizedek is greater than they are, because we are told that he lives on. ⁹In addition, we might even say that these Levites—the ones who collect the tithe—paid a tithe to Melchizedek when their ancestor Abraham paid a tithe to him. ¹⁰For although Levi wasn’t born yet, the seed from which he came was in Abraham’s body when Melchizedek collected the tithe from him.

7:11
Ps 110:4
Heb 5:6; 7:17

7:14
Gen 49:10
Isa 11:1
Matt 1:3; 2:6
Luke 3:33
Rom 1:3
Rev 5:5

¹¹So if the priesthood of Levi, on which the law was based, could have achieved the perfection God intended, why did God need to establish a different priesthood, with a priest in the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Levi and Aaron?*

¹²And if the priesthood is changed, the law must also be changed to permit it. ¹³For the priest we are talking about belongs to a different tribe, whose members have never served at the altar as priests. ¹⁴What I mean is, our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, and Moses never mentioned priests coming from that tribe.

Jesus Is like Melchizedek

¹⁵This change has been made very clear since a different priest, who is like Melchizedek, has appeared. ¹⁶Jesus became a priest, not by meeting the physical requirement of belonging to the tribe of Levi, but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. ¹⁷And the psalmist pointed this out when he prophesied,

7:17
†Ps 110:4
Heb 5:6; 6:20

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”*

¹⁸Yes, the old requirement about the priesthood was set aside because it was weak and useless. ¹⁹For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

7:18
Rom 8:3

7:19
Rom 3:20
Heb 9:9; 10:19-22

²⁰This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron’s descendants became priests without such an oath, ²¹but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to him,

7:21
†Ps 110:4
Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:17

“The LORD has taken an oath and will not break his vow:

‘You are a priest forever.’”*

7:5 Greek from their brothers. 7:11 Greek the order of Aaron? 7:17 Ps 110:4. 7:21 Ps 110:4.

- **7:3-10** Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High (see the note on Genesis 14:18 and his Profile in Genesis 15, p. 29). He is said to remain a priest forever (see also Psalm 110:4), because his priesthood has no record of beginning or ending. He was a priest of God in Salem (Jerusalem) long before the nation of Israel and the regular priesthood began.
- **7:11-17** Jesus’ high-priestly role was superior to that of any priest of Levi, because the Messiah was a priest of a higher order (Psalm 110:4). If the Jewish priests and their laws had been able to save people, why would God need to send Christ as a priest, who came not from the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe) but from the tribe of Judah? The animal sacrifices had to be repeated, and they offered only temporary forgiveness; but Christ’s sacrifice was offered once, and it offers total and permanent forgiveness. Under the new covenant, the Levitical priesthood was canceled in favor of Christ’s role as High Priest. Because Christ is our High Priest, we need to pay attention to him. No minister, leader, or Christian friend can substitute for Christ’s work and for his role in our salvation.

7:18, 19 The law was not intended to save people or to make them perfect, but to point out sin (see Romans 3:20; 5:20) and

to point toward Christ (see Galatians 3:24, 25). Salvation comes through Christ, whose sacrifice brings forgiveness for our sins. Being ethical, working diligently to help others, and giving to charitable causes are all commendable, but all of our good deeds cannot save us or make us right with God.

7:19 How can you draw near to God? The Bible makes it clear that your own body is God’s temple. Your spirit needs and wants closeness with God. You want to know the living God personally, not as an idea or concept, not as a distant monarch. You can draw near to God through prayer, worship, and Bible meditation. You need not live like a monk, but you probably need more prayer in your life. The habit of worship has become a convenience to be wedged between sports and other recreations. Instead, make worship your top priority. Bible meditation may include verse memory, songs, and quiet personal reading. The Bible is the word of God for you. Use it every day and you will draw nearer and nearer to God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Thirteen lessons for individual or group study

HOW TO USE THIS BIBLE STUDY

It's always exciting to get more than you expect. And that's what you'll find in this Bible study guide—much more than you expect. Our goal was to write thoughtful, practical, dependable, and application-oriented studies of God's word.

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With the Bible text, extensive notes and helps, and questions to guide discussion, *Life Application Bible Studies* have everything you need in one place.

The lessons in this Bible study guide will work for large classes as well as small-group studies. To get everyone involved in your discussions, encourage participants to answer the questions before each meeting.

Each lesson is divided into five easy-to-lead sections. The section called "Reflect" introduces you and the members of your group to a specific area of life touched by the lesson. "Read" shows which chapters to read and which notes and other features to use. Additional questions help you understand the passage. "Realize" brings into focus the biblical principle to be learned with questions, a special insight, or both. "Respond" helps you make connections with your own situation and personal needs. The questions are designed to help you find areas in your life where you can apply the biblical truths. "Resolve" helps you map out action plans for that day.

Begin and end each lesson with prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance, direction, and wisdom.

Recommended time allotments for each section of a lesson are as follows:

Segment	60 minutes	90 minutes
<i>Reflect on your life</i>	<i>5 minutes</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>
<i>Read the passage</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>Realize the principle</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>	<i>20 minutes</i>
<i>Respond to the message</i>	<i>20 minutes</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>
<i>Resolve to take action</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>

All five sections work together to help a person learn the lessons, live out the principles, and obey the commands taught in the Bible.

Also, at the end of each lesson, there is a section entitled "More for studying other themes in this section." These questions will help you lead the group in studying other parts of each section not covered in depth by the main lesson.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it (James 1:22-25).

LESSON 1

GOD'S BEST!

HEBREWS INTRODUCTION



1 Outside of your family, which people had the greatest positive influence on your childhood?

2 Describe one way their influence has lasted in your life.



Read the introduction to Hebrews, Hebrews 1:1-3, and the following notes:

1:1 1:1, 2 1:3

3 What factors made it difficult for devout Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah (see Introduction)?

4 In what ways do people settle for less than Christ (see Introduction)?

5 Who is Jesus and what did he do (1:1-3)?

When the book of Hebrews was written, many people were questioning Jesus' identity as God's Son. The author wanted to reassure Jewish believers that Jesus was the perfect revelation of God, the perfect sacrifice for sin, and the only intermediary they needed before God. Christ is better than the old system of sacrifices and forgiveness that many wanted to resume. Nothing—no system and no person—can take Jesus' place. Jesus' identity and qualifications are still questioned today. It doesn't matter what people say about Jesus. The truth stands—he is the God-man and our only hope for eternal life. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (13:8).



6 In what ways is Jesus superior to the old system of sacrifices and priests?

7 What wrong ideas do people have about Jesus today?

8 What are some reasons people give for rejecting Christ?

9 How does the book of Hebrews answer objections to following Christ?



10 Hebrews says that Jesus is superior to the old system of priests and sacrifices. What is Jesus superior to today?

11 Why is Jesus' superiority important to the way we live?

12 What situations might cause you to doubt the superiority of Christ?

13 How can a correct understanding of his superiority help you live by faith each day?

14 Read the first paragraph of “The Blueprint” section, and check the box that best represents your present level of commitment to the point of view of Hebrews:

- Convinced of the superiority of Christ
- Growing confident of the superiority of Christ
- Seeking understanding of the superiority of Christ
- Have many questions about the superiority of Christ
- Have many doubts about the superiority of Christ
- Unconvinced of the superiority of Christ

15 What kind of influence do you want Christ to have in your life?



16 As you study Hebrews, ask God to give you a deeper appreciation for Jesus Christ.

A What does the book of Hebrews contribute to the New Testament? How does it challenge you in ways that other books do not?

B Is it easier to keep the faith when you are harassed for it or when you receive a lot of support for it? What steps can you take to strengthen your faith?

C Given the writing style and subject matter of Hebrews, who would you think wrote this book? How does the author’s identity affect your understanding of the book?

D Which of the last three “Megathemes” (Maturity, Faith, Endurance) would you most like to see grow in your life as a result of this study? Why?

MORE
for studying
other themes
in this section