

Join us on a Journey!

Most of us are familiar with the saying; “Old habits are hard to break.” A popular view in psychology to explain this is that to change the way we act, we need to change our old thought patterns and beliefs which can be hard to do! Related to our faith, at its core, if we as believers truly want to act as people of God, we need a new *mindset*, a new way of thinking.

That is what the book of Hebrews seeks to provide. Many of the early Jewish believers in Rome (*Hebrews* is a descriptor for the Jewish people) were slipping back into the rites and rituals of their pre-Jesus beliefs, their old habits, forgetting that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jewish law. This letter points out that Jesus was the Messiah whom the Old Testament law had been pointing to all along! Therefore, it is an encouragement to continue to believe and trust in the grace of Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

We need to be reminded of this as well. That is why 1-1/2 years ago we started a two-year journey through the New Testament called “Anchored in the Journey” based on a verse found in the book of Hebrews:

We who have run to God for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us; this hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, firm and secure. Hebrews 6:18-19

In our culture today, so many people are walking aimlessly without guidance, trying to *act rightly*, but operating through an old mindset. To counteract this, we must have a Biblical worldview (a Biblical mindset) so that we know what we believe and why we believe it. Just like the Hebrews, we need a solid foundation; something to run to, *someone* to hold on to.

For the next 28 days, we invite you to join us as we walk through this book, broken into 3 main sections each showing how Jesus fulfilled the Jewish law. We will be taught and challenged by a variety of leaders in our church using some of the key verses that gave the believers in the 1st Century a new mindset. Our prayer is that at the end of this time together, you will have a new mindset as well!

The supremacy of the PERSON of Jesus

God used many approaches to send His messages to the people in the Old Testament. The Hebrews believed there was no greater authoritative source of this communication than the **prophets** (men who spoke what God had directly told them), the **angels** (messengers from heaven, sent by God to communicate to men), and **Moses** (the person God chose to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and back into the land originally promised to them). After all, it was by the word of the Lord given to and through the angels, the prophets, and especially Moses, that Israel's relationship with God was established.

But in this first section of Hebrews, Jesus Christ (the long-awaited Messiah who would ultimately save the Jewish nation) is shown to be vastly superior to all three. Why? Because Jesus is the Son of God, all man, and all God, the Messiah (Savior) for all mankind.

Day 1 - Tadd Grandstaff (Lead Pastor)

Hebrews 1:3 (NLT) -*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.*

When I was a kid, my parents often used something called *layaway*. Layaway was a way of securing something you wanted to purchase but didn't have all the money to pay in full. So, you agreed to pay in installments here and there until you could finish paying off the items. You could only possess the items once you made the payment in full. Hold onto that thought.

In the Old Testament, there was an important day called the Day of Atonement when the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies to sacrifice an animal to atone for the people's sins. Pastor Tony Evans said once that you will not find a chair in the description of the Tabernacle (where the Holy of Holies was located). There was no place for the priest ever to sit down or rest because his work was never finished. He repeated this task over and over again. That was God's layaway plan. The priest had to atone for sins here and there, but he could never make the payment in full. There was no permanent solution to the sin problem, so a layaway solution was needed.

The book of Hebrews focuses on Jesus Christ and encourages us not to give up. We see Jesus as the heir of all things, the full representation of God, the sustainer of life, and the perfect atonement for our sins. After Jesus finished His work of atonement by dying for our sins, He rejoined His Father in heaven and sat down. Only after Jesus died on the cross was there a chair in heaven because the work was done. It was finished once and for all. The debt payment was made in full, and as a result, our salvation was fully secured. Jesus rested in the complete work of salvation, now we can rest in His work.

Challenge:

As you begin this journey in Hebrews, search your heart to see if there are any ways in which you have been trying to pay off your sin debt here and there instead of accepting and resting in the complete work of Jesus. Are you doing religious activities to earn forgiveness instead of receiving what Jesus has already completed?

Day 2 - Dan Thomas (Discipleship Pastor)

Hebrews 2:1, 4 (NLT) - *We must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. God confirmed the message by giving signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever He chose.*

I grew up going to church; I liked going and it was a fantastic habit for my parents to instill in me. In fact, I was one of the few people I knew who continued this habit when I was in college ... sort of... While I was used to going, the depth of my understanding of why I went, the Bible, or even Christianity as a whole, was shallow at best. Definitely not something that impacted me outside of that occasional Sunday morning attendance. Arguably, I was quickly drifting away from any “truth” I had known growing up.

Then something happened. In my last year of college, I found myself with a failing grade in a class I needed to graduate, and I was also involved in some activities I wished I wasn't and not doing some things I knew were best. It was a low point that I wasn't sure how to get out of, but it was in that spot that I was given a little New Testament Bible in a random encounter outside the cafeteria. For some reason, instead of just throwing it out, I decided to set aside all I thought I knew and read a chapter a day starting at the beginning. It wasn't long before the events I was reading about seemed to come alive, leaping off the page! It was as though I was there with Jesus, experiencing the signs, wonders, and miracles in real-time. I remember no longer seeing Jesus as the anemic-looking figure in the stained-glass windows at church, but He was a real person who was also God, calling me to follow Him!

So I decided to follow Him, even signing the back of that little Bible. Soon I began experiencing the Holy Spirit slowly moving in my life. I found my circumstances were changing, events happened that I could not have predicted or created, and I saw and understood things I didn't before. Most noticeably, my confidence changed. I always had self-confidence, but now it was a deeper confidence, not in myself but in THE truth and I knew the Holy Spirit would help me no matter what happened. Just like this verse says, “*God confirmed His message to ME!*”

Challenge:

Have hard moments in your life caused you to drift away from the truth? Have you forgotten, or never believed that God can work signs, wonders, and miracles in your life? My encouragement, seek out, listen to, and believe His Truth found in His Word.

Day 3 - Joshua Thomas (Director Youth/Young Adults)

Hebrews 2:17-18 (NLT) - Therefore, 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. Since He Himself has gone through suffering and testing, He is able to help us when we are being tested.

There is something encouraging when we are reminded that Jesus was fully human. When the author of Hebrews included this piece, it reminded the Jewish people of the prophecies that foretold the birth and person of Jesus, but it also provided reassurance to the believers at the time, and today, that Jesus was fully God and fully man. He walked through life; He had a family, friends, and a job as a carpenter. Jesus in the flesh is powerful because He proves that there is a hope for all of us to be able to cling to God in the midst of anything and everything we might face. Jesus being human shows us that He is not an intangible figure in the sky, but a man who walked on the same earth we do, and walked through both joy-filled moments and hardships, just like us!

I remember an English professor I had, a person who was not a believer, at a University that was not a Christian school, sharing what he said was the most impactful part of the Bible. Now, in that moment I wasn't sure what was about to be said, so I listened cautiously. He shared that John 11:35, "Jesus wept," was incredibly important because of what that verse communicates. Sure, you may have used this as an easy memory verse in Sunday school like me, but the verse is important because it shows us that Jesus was human. "Jesus wept," this short verse shows us that God became flesh in the form of Jesus, it shows that having emotions is not a bad thing, it shows that Jesus experienced a vulnerable place in a valley that many of us have been in or will find ourselves in. Hebrews highlights this important aspect because the writer wants us to know we have a savior that loves us and he shows us that while emotions and hardships happen, there is hope that comes in knowing that Jesus walked the same roads we walk!

Challenge:

How is your faith challenged and encouraged when you remember that Jesus was both fully God and fully human, dealing with the same things you deal with daily?

Day 4 - Kay Thomas (Hope Kids Director)

Hebrews 3:4-6 (TPT) - *Every house is built by someone, but God is the Designer and Builder of all things. Indeed, Moses served God faithfully in all He gave him to do. His work prophetically illustrates things that would later be spoken and fulfilled. But Christ is more than a servant, He was faithful as the Son in charge of God's house. And now we are part of His house if we continue courageously to hold firmly to our bold confidence and our victorious hope.*

One of the ways I earned money while in college was to serve dinner parties in wealthy Chicago homes on Lake Shore Drive. My professor had connections, so I would set up, serve, sit at the piano, and sing to entertain their guests, then clean up and go home. The views of Lake Michigan and the fancy stores on Michigan Avenue were amazing! Even though I became friendly with some of those people and they called on me often (I mean, come on, she sings AND she cleans up the kitchen? What a deal!), I always returned to my 10th floor dorm room with a view of Jay's deli and the YWCA. Not nearly as impressive, and no grand piano! I was a servant with a job to do, not a part of the family.

Hebrews 3 tells us that is exactly who Moses was, a servant. But Jesus is the Son who is in charge of the house. When we become a part of His house, we become sons/daughters of the King of kings, no longer servants with a job to do, rather heirs to a kingdom with a God-given mission! Even though Moses was a great leader of many, we follow Jesus. We might follow human leaders, but ultimately we need to make sure we (as well as the leaders we follow) are following Jesus. Humans will make mistakes, but Jesus never fails. Moses was great, but Jesus is far greater! We get to enter into a relationship with the King of the universe who loves us.

When I went into those fancy homes in Chicago it was really fun, but I never got to sit down and make myself at home. That wasn't the relationship. I DO get to talk with Jesus, get to know Him better, and ask Him what He thinks I should do. I do get to be on an eternal mission that uses my God-given gifts because I am a part of His house!

Challenge:

Remind yourself that you are a son/daughter of the King. How does that change how you think about yourself and your purpose? Ask Jesus to show you what He wants you to begin doing to be on mission with Him.

Day 5 - Sandie Parker (Office Administrator)

Hebrews 3:13-14 (NLT) - *You 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. For 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.*

In Week 8 of my Freedom Grow Group last semester, we were talking about the power of words. I shared with the ladies in the group some deep wounds and insecurities I often deal with because of words that had been continually spoken to me as a child. I sometimes wonder how different my life would be if they had been words of life instead. These amazing women then poured life-giving, healing words into me. Their words were extremely kind and encouraging. They were not easy for me to hear, but I received them. They are words that I never will forget and now I have them in my arsenal and will use them against the enemy when he throws the words from my childhood at me.

That's what Hebrews 3:13 says we are to do for each other. We are to encourage each other daily. It instructs us to do this while we have the opportunity so that none of us will be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

As I've been reading and meditating on these verses, the lyrics to the old Hollies song, "*He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother*" keep coming to mind;

The road is long with many a winding turn, that leads us to who knows where. But I'm strong, strong enough to carry him; he ain't heavy, he's my brother.

As long we are chasing after Jesus, the enemy will try to trip us up. We never know when those "winding turns" hold traps that he has set. Satan wants to keep us stuck in sin; he wants us to believe his lies. When we encourage each other, we build each other up, we help each other stand strong in Christ. It's joining our shields together and covering each other like Pastor Tadd described during the Ephesians series.

Challenge:

Who is God telling you to encourage today? I challenge each of us to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to remind us daily of someone He wants us to encourage. And when He does, take time to do it.

Day 6 - Dave Jaeckels (Elder)

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT) - *For 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.*

I knew who Jesus was all my life, but was 43 years old before I became a Christ follower and started reading the New Testament. Then someone told me to specifically read the book of Hebrews because it talked all about faith. When I got to the scripture above, I wondered how the words in the Bible could be alive and active. And what did it mean that they were sharper than a two-edged sword, able to judge the thoughts and attitude of my heart? They were just words, right?

Then later I read John 1:1-14 and it became clear that the “The Word” was Jesus who was with God, was God, and who became a man who came to earth to live among us. So when I read this verse in Hebrews, I substituted Jesus’ name for “the word of God” and it was like a lightbulb went on - **Jesus** is alive and active in my life, **Jesus** knows all my thoughts and attitudes, pointing out to me things I don’t see but need to correct, and **Jesus** gives me the power to change!

I’ve experienced some hard things in life, even recently as I was preparing to lead a new Grow Group that could really help equip people at Hope Church to pray, I experienced a severe medical problem. Then in reaching out to the other two leaders for their support, I found they were experiencing their own serious medical issues! But I have learned that Jesus is the sword, the weapon that allows us to go on the attack, so I went to Him, and wow, did it make a difference for them and me! Our problems were all identified and resolved!

Jesus enables me to fight my battles and defeat the enemy every time, just like He used truth to slay the enemy after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness in Matthew 4. He, the Word of God, has become my go-to in any life situation, the unstoppable force that changes and influences every day of my life.

Challenge:

How about you? How could you read and activate the Word more effectively in your life? When you pray, I encourage you to confidently pray with the power that the sword of Jesus brings!

Day 7 – Tim Upper (Elder)

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NLT) – *Since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy and will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

C.S. Lewis once said “*Friendship is born at the moment when one person says to another ‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one!’*” (*The Four Loves*). Have you ever experienced that? Have you ever been talking with someone and during the conversation realized that you both love the same book or the same obscure TV show? After that moment, you forever feel closer to that person because you now have a connection; however seemingly insignificant that point of connection may seem.

Satan loves to get us to believe that we’re alone in absolutely everything. If we think we’re alone, then it’s easy to let shame set in and for us to believe that no one would understand if we shared our struggles. So we keep them to ourselves, grit our teeth, and fight against the enemy on our own to the best of our ability (very rarely does this ever work out!).

The C.S. Lewis’ “you too” quote applies to our sin as well. I grew up in church and spent years struggling with a secret pornography addiction. I fought on my own because I thought a good Christian man shouldn’t struggle with something like that. I still remember how freeing it felt when I realized that it’s a common struggle and that there are plenty of men who were happy to support me in my fight against this addiction and who needed my support as well. Getting in a small group with those men was a huge factor for me to find freedom.

Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus also faced every temptation that we face and did not sin. Which means He understands our weaknesses! So no matter what you’ve done, don’t let the enemy convince you that you’re alone or not good enough to come to Jesus with it. We can come boldly before the throne of God, where He’ll say “You too? I faced that too and defeated it.” There we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Challenge:

Get in a Grow Group! If you aren’t in one, then it’s a crucial next step in your spiritual journey. Surrounding yourself with other believers is the best way to combat Satan’s lie that you are alone!

The supremacy of the PRIESTHOOD of Jesus

From the very beginning, central to the Old Testament law, was the need for a blood sacrifice to pay the price for the sin, in order to be for *man* to be acceptable to God. The *priest* was a vital component of this sacrificial system as he was the go-between for man and God, facilitating the necessary sacrifices for each sin.

To the Hebrews, the *high priest* was the highest religious authority in the land. He alone was allowed to enter the holiest part of the Temple and once a year, the high priest made atonement (offered an acceptable sacrifice) for the sins of the entire nation of Israel. Only the Jews descending from Levi, one of the sons of Abraham, could be responsible for religious rituals, and then only those *Levites* who were a descendant of Aaron (the brother of Moses) could serve in the office of priest.

But in this second section of Hebrews, we find that Jesus was the highest priest because He existed before man!

Day 8 - Alex Miles (Online Campus Pastor)

Hebrews 5:8-9 (NLT) - *Even though Jesus was God's Son, He learned obedience from the things He suffered. In this way, God qualified Him as a perfect High Priest, and He became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him.*

If you have spent more than two seconds at Hope Church, then you have heard these two words: Faith and Obedience. Similarly, the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "*Only he who believes is obedient; only he who is obedient believes.*" Obedience, faith, and belief all have a unique relationship with one another; they are intertwined, hand-in-hand, inseparable.

First, let me say this, if I were God's son and born from the virgin Mary, I would ABSOLUTELY name-drop at every party! Instead of abusing that authority though, I love that Jesus chose to humanize himself by setting aside the perks of being "God's one and only son," and demonstrated the value of obedience through suffering. Jesus never seemed to take the easy road, did He?

Reflecting on that, I think I often opt for the easy way out in order to reduce the suffering, the hard stuff, in my life. But Jesus modeled something different for us here. Obedience is so important that it's worth suffering for. The Greek word used in this verse for "obedience" is *hupakoe*, translated as "to listen for the knock on the door." Life has a way of providing doors, and oftentimes, the faith necessary to walk through the door is hinged on the obedience it takes to first hear the knock on the door. So, the next time life gets difficult, we should lean in, and look for ways to listen and be obedient to God.

The encouraging part in all of this is that we serve a God who has gone before us. Jesus came to this earth and was obedient all the way to His death on a cross, all so that we could share in eternal salvation with Him!

Challenge:

My prayer for my family and yours is that we slow down enough to listen to what God is calling us to, and no matter how hard it seems, be obedient to His calling.

Day 9 - Jeanni Miles (Next Steps Coordinator)

Hebrews 5:12-14 (NLT) - *You 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. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, and who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.*

My husband and I have 2 young boys; Levi is 4, and Cason just turned 1. Being an only child myself, it has been eye-opening for me to see how different two siblings can be from one another. My oldest refuses to cease playing in order to eat food, while my youngest will eat everything on his plate PLUS everything remaining from his brother's. When Cason first began trying finger food as a baby, he immediately began to lose interest in his bottle. It was as if he'd finally been exposed to the real thing and no longer cared for the liquid diet he'd been on up to that point.

In this passage, we see the importance of graduating from a liquid diet to the real deal. The writer of Hebrews is using this as an analogy to the process of sanctification - the process of being made holy or set apart. For all of us, as babies in Christ (new Christians), milk is a staple. Rather than diving off the deep end right away, it is important to first be a consumer of God's Word. But because God's intention for our lives is to bring us back to His original design, we must mature by pursuing Him on a daily basis in all that we do. We must transition from being only a consumer of God's Word to applying it to each part of our lives, whether that be while we are dealing with a difficult co-worker, trying to reel in a wayward child, or sitting in 5 o'clock traffic. It's looking for ways to shine the light of Jesus not only in times of celebration but also in the midst of a crisis. We will know that our diets shift as we are exposed to different situations in life and begin to see a pattern of holiness in our responses.

Challenge:

We should always be taking steps in our walk with Christ. Maybe it is time to begin making worship a priority throughout the week. Maybe it is time for you to join a grow group and begin journeying with people. Or maybe it is time to make serving on a Hope Team part of every Sunday. It's time to graduate from that baby's milk and jump into the buffet that God wants to share with us. So, here's your permission, go eat up!

Day 10 - Sandie Parker (Office Administrator)

Hebrews 6:11-12 (NIV) - *We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

What is something you worked diligently at and accomplished by pushing through and not giving up? Maybe a degree or certificate, a major home project, overcoming an addiction, running a marathon? Didn't it feel amazing to put in the hard work and accomplish it?

In today's scripture, we are encouraged to diligently pursue a mature, purposeful faith in Jesus until our time on earth is done and our hope in Jesus has come to fruition. Paul is referring to an eternity spent face-to-face with Jesus.

In the world we live in, perseverance is crucial for those who truly want to follow, grow, and live for Jesus. It's easy to be discouraged by all the things going on around us and in the world if we do not hold firmly to this hope.

The last several months were not easy for me. It was a season where I've felt "blah." Not bad or depressed, just sort of existing and not thriving. Days when I pushed through doing what I "had" to do, waiting for the day when they once again became things I "got" to do. This wasn't normal for me. It's crucial in these seasons that we continue to push through and not lose sight of what God has called us to do, nor the hope we have in Him. No matter how we feel, it's important that we do not get lazy or complacent. We need to follow the examples of those who have gone on before us who left an example of faith and obedience that we can imitate.

In addition to spending time in prayer and God's Word, the things that have helped me were friends who encouraged me, pushed me, and kept me accountable to God's calling on my life, being out in nature, and thinking about what awaits me on the other side of eternity.

Challenge:

Are you diligently pursuing your relationship with Jesus or is it just something else that you "have to do"? No matter where you are in your faith journey, what is the next step that Jesus is calling you to take to move one step closer to Him?

Day 11 - Doug Duggins (Operations Pastor)

Hebrews 6:18-19 (NIV) - *God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*

Have you ever lied? If you thought no, then congrats, you just lied! When I was in 4th grade I remember telling a big lie. I was given a pink slip, to be signed by my parents for bad behavior. Clearly, I didn't want to give this to my parents because I was sure to be punished. So, I had the bright idea of signing the pink slip myself. I got out my best pencil, used my best print letters, and wrote my mom's name.

Aside from the two obvious issues already, I spelled her name wrong (this is where the facepalm emoji would fit perfectly!) I'm not sure how but the teacher knew something was up. She pulled me outside of class and asked me if I had signed the pink slip. I said NO my mom did. When she told me all the reasons why she knew I was lying and that she had already called my mom to let her know, I was instantly scared to death. Needless to say, I felt pain that night. Wow, that was a big, dumb lie.

Even though people have the ability to lie, it is impossible for God to lie. We can have hope in this because He has given us His unchangeable promise and oath. When we are in a time of grief, sorrow, fear, or heartbreak, God says we can have confidence in Him, the anchor for our souls.

We have a heavenly Father who loves us and knows all the emotions we go through. Thankfully, He is strong and trustworthy and makes many promises to us including to never leave us or forsake us. But in order for us to take refuge in those promises we must know what they are. Daily reading God's love letter to us, the Bible, is the best way to know what He has promised to you!

Challenge:

I encourage you to prioritize reading your Bible daily and look for His loving promises! Don't wait until you need the promises of God before you know them.

Day 12 - Dan Thomas (Discipleship Pastor)

Hebrews 7:24-25 (NLT) - *Because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood lasts forever. Therefore, He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.*

According to Webster's Dictionary, to *intercede* means "to go or pass between; to act between parties with a view to reconcile; to mediate; to go between; to represent one party for another." A familiar example of intercession is what happens in a courtroom where lawyers intercede on behalf of their clients.

In his book *Intercessory Prayer*, Dutch Sheets explains the role of Jesus as our intercessor as described in this verse in Hebrews. He says:

In light of the Creation and the Fall of man, Adam was supposed to represent God on planet Earth – managing, governing, and ruling for Him. God told Adam what He wanted, and Adam represented Him to the rest of the earth. Literally, Adam was God's intercessor or mediator on earth (under the authority of God). Adam, of course, failed, so God sent another human to fix what Adam messed up – Jesus. Jesus became the final intercessor or mediator, going between and representing God to humanity. This is confirmed in 1 Timothy 2:5 which says, "There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus."

Then he gives an insightful picture of what that might look like. He says whenever we come to God in prayer, picture Jesus there at the Father's right hand, leaning in, like an advisor, speaking into the Father's ear:

"Father, (your name) is here to speak with You. He isn't coming on his own merits or righteousness; he is here based on Mine. He is here in My name. He has a few things to ask you." To which the Father responds back; "Of course I remember, Son. You've made him one of Ours. Because he came through You, (your name) is always welcome here. Come boldly (your name) and make your request known to me!"

Challenge:

Wow! That is a profound conversation! What difference would it make to you as you prayed, if you pictured this conversation between Jesus and the Father? That truly is happening!

Day 13 - Dallan Moorefield (Worship Coordinator)

Hebrews 8:5-6 (NLT) - *They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: "Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain." But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.*

As a kid, I used to love to play with Legos. Building whatever my imagination could muster was a great way to spend an afternoon. I remember many days spent making all sorts of pint-sized creations. Nowadays, they have some pretty impressive Lego sets. Some even look like world-famous landmarks and look identical to their real-world counterparts. Except for one big difference. They are just a (tiny) copy.

When Moses was on the mountain, God showed him a model for the Tabernacle. It was to show people an illustration of what takes place in heaven. This tabernacle would serve to foreshadow the real deal. In the verse above, we read about Christ obtaining a ministry that is much more excellent than the old. Why is this? Because no one ever has, or ever will, be able to forgive sin like Jesus.

The better promises of the new covenant are because of Jesus, and the relationship with God we are now afforded because of what He did on the cross. By His bloodshed, Christ has been made the mediator between us and a holy God. There is nothing we could do, purchase, or earn that could make us righteous. It is only through the sacrifice of Jesus and the promise of this new covenant that we have hope. We are no longer required to go to a priest and make a sacrifice. Jesus was our perfect sacrifice and His death was sufficient to pay for *all* our sins. Wow. What a promise.

Challenge:

Today, how can you lean into the incredible promise you have in Jesus so that it will impact how you live?

Day 14 - Jim Cook (Elder)

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NLT) - *Just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.*

In my younger years, I loved backpacking the Appalachian Trail. Many climbs and descents were so tough, I often thought I would never do this again...but I did...back again and again and again!

This reminds me of a great illustration. A backpacker had a huge backpack, packed with everything he would need for his trek. He started out at the base of this mountain. With each step, he began to regret he had ever started! He slipped and fell, finally reaching the top hours later. With sweat, a few tears, and body aches, he sat down on a rock. Looking back at the base of the mountain he saw a tiny moving object. He realized it was another backpacker with a backpack as big as a pickup truck bed. Finally, he saw the man's face and recognized him. It was Jesus Christ! He said, "You must be carrying the sins of the whole world on your shoulders!" The backpacker - Jesus - looked at him and said, "No, just yours!" Just thinking of Jesus' sacrifice causes me to weep tears of love, joy, and hope.

When Jesus was crucified, a soldier thrust a spear into His side...out flowed water and blood! The soldier had pierced the shock-absorbing pericardial sac around Jesus' heart. The soldier had broken His heart.

How many times have I broken His heart, only to hear Him say how much He loves me?! How about you? Do we fully comprehend the depth of our sins and the height of His love and redemptive sacrifice? I gave Him my sins...He gave me His righteousness! He became my sin! (2 Corinthians 5:21) I gave Him my past...He gave me an eternal future! I gave Him my broken promises...He offered me His forgiveness and grace. He has placed me in a position of holiness and perfection in His sight, but I need the Holy Spirit's help daily to have my earthly condition become more like my heavenly position.

Challenge:

His love is beyond words! How can you respond to that kind of love?

Day 15 - David Price (Elder)

Hebrews 10:10, 12 (NLT) - *For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. Our High Priest offered Himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then He sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand.*

There is a lot packed into a few verses ... Wow! Some things that struck me as I meditated on these:

1. Who:

- God – The Father, it was His will that Jesus died. As a parent, it is amazing to consider the fact that God the Father willingly gave His son as a sacrifice for my sin. Jesus, who had never been separated from God His Father from eternity past, was separated from Him on the cross as He bore my sin!
- Jesus – Both High Priest and Christ, He was the single sacrifice for sin. Jesus willingly submitted Himself to the will of His Father. He showed He fully trusted Him by obeying Him.
- Us - You and I, are made holy, acceptable to God!

2. What (note the contrasts):

- “A single sacrifice for sins, good for all time.” The original readers of this passage knew that sacrifices for sins were offered daily in the temple. But when Jesus died, His sacrifice was sufficient for all sin for all time including all the sins I (or anyone) committed before I knew Jesus, those I committed after I came to know Him, and all those I will commit in the future.
- The “body of Jesus” was sacrificed (not a sheep, goat, or bird like the Old Testament law required, but a person!)
- After Jesus conquered death, He “*sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand.*” I love the picture of rest here, “He sat down.” Additionally, this is stated in the past tense, the work is finished, it is done!

Challenge:

In Jesus, you are set free from the weight of the sins of your past. What are you going to do with this freedom? Ask God to show you how you should live differently because of this fact.

Day 16 - Katrina Rorer (Guest Service Coach)

Hebrews 10:20-23 (NLV) - By His death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise.

Growing up my family moved a lot. By the time I graduated from high school, I had attended more schools than grades (14 to be exact). I longed for connection and belonging, but I couldn't quite jump over the walls I had created to protect my heart. Like a kid with my face pressed against the glass, I could see what I wanted, but it always felt like it was just out of reach.

Isn't that often the way it is with relationships? We want to be fully known but we're afraid to fully trust. It's so easy to approach God like that too, desperately wanting to be close and yet afraid to come closer. We worry. We hold back. We fixate on all the reasons that we shouldn't, so we stay hidden behind a veil of guilt and shame. But Jesus came and shattered that veil. He took our mess, nailed it to the cross, and covered it with His blood. We can come into His presence with confidence. No sin, mistake, or pain can take that away.

As I opened my heart to the truth of what God had done for me, my walls came down and I learned to trust again. The stability that I craved, the connection I needed was found in Jesus. The connection that you need is found in Him too. And when your emotions lie and tell you that God could never really love you like that because you've made too many mistakes, be brave and remind yourself of the truth: God made a way through Jesus because He wants us to be close. He is waiting and longing to wrap you up with His love and acceptance.

Challenge:

Today remind yourself often: "God wants to be with me and Jesus made a way. I can come to Him with confidence." Then take a few minutes to do just that. He's waiting to be close to you.

Day 17 - Rene Summers (Grow Group Coach)

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT) - *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.*

I often refer to the advice of Steven Covey, “*Always begin with the end in mind.*” By keeping my goal in mind, I can take the logical steps to get there. Starting at the end of these verses above, “*...especially now that the day of His returning is drawing near,*” I wonder, what do I want to accomplish, what is my goal before His return? I want to tell others how much Jesus loves them (especially now that He is returning for me sooner than He was 60+ years ago!) How do I do that? As a Grow Group leader, I am privileged to meet regularly with those seeking a closer relationship with Jesus, those who are hurting, and brokenhearted, as well as those celebrating life’s joys and the miracles of God. However, I wouldn’t know about these journeys if I hadn’t been part of a grow group! I wouldn’t be able to speak words of life to others and to call on my prayer warriors if I wasn’t part of the Church that Jesus loves.

Backing up one sentence, “*And let us not neglect our meeting together,*” it saddens me to hear from friends that they aren’t attending church for a variety of reasons. I believe Jesus designed the church, both the large gathering and small groups, to worship Him together, encourage and warn each other, pray together, and strengthen our faith. I’ve seen the enemy try to cut someone away from the group, which makes them easy prey. If we don’t meet together, we might be the enemy’s next target, or we may miss the blessing of helping someone stay connected safely to the Body!

Now back to the beginning of the passage, “*Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.*” Being part of a Sunday morning Hope Team, folding 1,000 t-shirts together for our 10-year celebration, praying over someone in my grow group who is walking through a scary medical diagnosis, and mentoring a new group leader, are some of the ways I’ve been motivated to offer acts of love and good works which helps me accomplish my goal of sharing the love of Jesus with others.

Challenge:

What steps will you take to stay connected to the church body and encourage others, especially knowing that the day of His return is drawing near?

Day 18 - Bryant Hodges (Worship Pastor)

Hebrews 11:1,6 (NLT) - *Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see... It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.*

There are so many things in life that we “hope for” and often there is “*evidence of things that we cannot see*”. From a practical worldly perspective, we hope that the brakes will stop our vehicle when we push them. We can’t actually see it all happen, but the evidence is proven when the car stops. That is kind of an elementary example, but it can translate to our faith; how do we build our faith to the point where we just trust without thinking about it or without needing an explanation? I am no mechanic and I don’t need to know how the brakes work, I just need to know that they will. Have you ever tried to “figure God out”? Careful!!!! There have been so many times in my life when I’ve tried to take control back. Faith isn’t just for the first steps, it is for the entire journey.

“It is impossible to please God without faith.” Have you ever been in a situation where someone didn’t trust you or believe in you even if you had never given them a reason not to? It hurt, didn’t it? Have you ever been given the privilege of working on a big project and your boss said, “I believe in you”? Have you ever had someone confide in you and say, “You are the only person I can trust with this”? There is something about being trusted that is pleasing to us. Not in an egotistical way, but in a humbling way. There are times when we say we trust God, but our actions instead say, “I really don’t trust God even though He has never given me a reason not to” or, “I don’t trust God as much as I trust me.”

God is so good to us and if we can take the time to pull out of our busy lives, get out of our own heads, and get out of His way, we will find that the evidence of His faithfulness and goodness is all around us and in everything we see!!

Challenge:

Today, take a few moments to reflect on how God has been faithful in your life. As you remember how good He has been to you, release whatever it is that you might be trying to control on your own. Be hopeful today because the evidence is coming!

Day 19 - Joan Jaeckles (Hope Kids Coach)

Hebrews 11:7-40 (TPT) - Take a moment to read this passage about the heroes of the faith.

“By Faith,” how often have we heard the phrase? In The Passion Translation, it states in chapter 11 verse 7, how faith opened Noah’s heart to receive God’s revelations and warnings. By listening to God’s voice, Noah was able to save his family from the flood. How often do we open our hearts so we can hear God’s whispers?

I know how I opened my heart to God’s whispering. When I first met my husband, Dave, he was not a strong Christ follower. I guess you could say that we were unevenly yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). I prayed many prayers, cried many tears, and hoped that he would become stronger in his faith. I promised God I would do anything if this would just happen. When Dave lost his job and the only job offers he received were here in North Carolina, like Abraham in Hebrews 11:8, I left everything I knew and loved and followed in faith to start a new life here.

Like Rahab in Hebrews 11:31, I believed in God’s protection for my family, and like Moses facing the Red Sea in Hebrews 11:29, I knew God would be there for Dave and I. I watched as God slowly changed my husband’s heart and saw him become the true spiritual head of our household.

In her book *Pray Big Things*, Julia Jeffress Sadler states in referring to Joseph’s faith in Genesis 39-41, “*While he was in prison for a crime he didn’t commit Joseph continued to believe God was in control.*”

Challenge:

I now ask you to join with me, my fellow journeyman, not to give up on our family and friends who seem far from God. Continue to be faithful in your prayers and believe, as the heroes of Hebrews 11:7-40 did, that our God hears us and will bring our lost family and friends back to us in unity.

Day 20 - Kay Thomas (Hope Kids Director)

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT) - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

I am NOT a runner! The truth is I have been known to trip on my own feet walking down a completely smooth hallway, so if you were hoping for some kind of athletic analogy, this is not it. However, I do want to run with endurance this race called life! I want to live with the end in mind.

When our kids were little, we talked about parenting the long game, that we were raising adults. The same is true in my personal life. I've heard I should ask, "How do I want *people* to remember me?" But I think the more important question is, "What do I want *God* to think of me?" I want to finish well, knowing I did everything I could to live for Jesus and point others to Him. I am pretty passionate about it, especially when it comes to helping the next generation follow, grow, and live for Jesus. In fact, at times in my life I have been told that I am "too passionate," like it's a negative thing. Can I be completely transparent for a second? I don't care! Let them say I'm too passionate. I know that God has entrusted me with a mission, not to earn His love; but because He loves me.

We are here to run a **race** and I wanna win! What is the win? Following Jesus and helping others to do the same! He endured the cross for us! Do you honestly think He did that so we could live a lukewarm life that kinda follows Him when it suits us? I don't think so. Let's get rid of the things that slow us down and keep us from running hard after Him. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal what those things are and help us run this race anyway! What if we ran together? (Or tripped together) What if we linked arms, got rid of those things that weigh us down, and passionately ran on mission to the end? What if we finished well? What if we were all "too passionate?" I'm getting excited just typing that! Come on! Run with me!

Challenge:

What is keeping you from running after Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you release that to Him and run the race with endurance and passion!

The supremacy of the POWER of Jesus

The *Old Covenant* relied on keeping all of the law, which included following the sacrificial system, all of the time, in order to be acceptable to God. But because this is so hard to measure, arguably, every moment of every day there was a risk of error, the Hebrews established additional laws (rituals and rules) that regulated all aspects of daily life, private and public, in an attempt to prevent them from falling short. As a result, the priest's work was never finished; every day the Hebrews needed to offer sacrifices for their sins and every day the priests needed to offer sacrifices for the people.

But in this final section of Hebrews, we are reminded that Jesus' sacrifice was perfect, once and for all. We were not just temporarily forgiven, it was permanent. We know this because when by faith, we accept His sacrifice for us, we are filled with the power of His Spirit giving us great confidence that further grows our faith!

Day 21 - Doug Duggins (Operations Pastor)

Hebrews 12:11 (NIV) - *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

Did you know that 38% of people make New Year's Resolutions but only 9% of people stick to them all year long? Worse, there is an 80% chance that you will completely forget the resolutions you make! The most popular resolutions are improving fitness and diet, improving mental health, better management of finances, and improving relationships. Why is it that improving these important areas of our lives are so quickly forgotten? It's because changing what we have always done is hard. God even tells us that disciplines are PAINFUL! We quit because the pain of change doesn't seem worth it. The truth is, we are going to experience pain in life, either now or later.

The good news is we get to choose our pain. We can choose to continue doing what we've always done, and if it's unhealthy, then in the future, discipline will not be our choice anymore. Like a good father, our heavenly Father will bring discipline to us for our own good and that discipline will be painful.

Another option is to choose discipline now. Choose to place disciplines on ourselves, then peace is promised in the future. Beverly Sills says, "*There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.*" When we choose to put disciplines in our lives for improvement, they become the habits that lead to peace. Peace in your relationships, health, finances, etc. Sure it might be painful and difficult to begin, but Christ followers should always be improving because righteousness and peace are worth it. I don't know anyone who doesn't need more peace in their life.

Challenge:

No matter where you are now, it's not ok to stay there. Strengthen yourself by starting one new discipline in your life today and then keep at it!

Day 22 - Dustin Saul (Student Hope Coordinator)

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NLT) - *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Recently, God has been teaching me quite a bit about His love and how to love others well. I have an amazing wife of seven years, Haley, and three children four years old and under. I love our kids, don't get me wrong, but we are "in the thick of it" right now. Oftentimes, (not due to our lack of trying), my household feels anything but peaceful and holy. LOL! I'm truly thankful for God's forgiveness daily!

In my weekly Grow Group, we have been studying the book of 1 Corinthians. In chapter 13 (aka the "love" chapter), Paul begins by saying, "*Love is patient, love is kind,*" and I quickly began to feel the Holy Spirit convicting me as I read it saying, "How often are you patient and kind with those you love?" This is way more difficult than I imagined it would be! I think this verse goes hand-in-hand with Hebrews 12:14-15. When I am patient and kind, I quickly think of peace and strive to show others the love that God has modeled for me. In the proceeding verses, Hebrews 12:1-13, we are reminded that God disciplines His children because of His love for them.

One of the coolest things that I found when studying verse 14 was that different translations of this text slightly change the wording; "*work at living in peace* with everyone", and "*work at living a holy life* for those who are not holy will not see the Lord." To me, this communicates a more continuous progression to be holy and striving to be at peace with one another. Peace and holiness are how others see God in our lives so that everyone can have a chance to know God's grace and love.

This is an amazing reminder of how God wants us to live together in love, peace, kindness, and striving for holiness.

Challenge:

Today, ask God to show you ways you can start showing others His love, peace, kindness, and holiness so they can see Him in you. He wants to use you in a HUGE way if you will only let Him.

Day 23 - Bryant Hodges (Worship Pastor)

Hebrews 12:28 (NIV) - *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

I love this scripture because it sums up so much about the nature of God in one verse. It helps to ask, why are we receiving His kingdom? Because God, in His loving and grace-filled nature, made a way for us!

On our own, we messed it all up. From the very beginning of time, we have distanced ourselves from God. We have pulled away, pushed Him away, and tried to do life on our own. I think we can all agree that humankind as a whole has done a fabulous job of trying to sabotage our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Yet completely full of grace, He chose to reconcile us back to Him through the blood of Jesus. We have heard it time and time again but take a few moments and let that sink in. How could we ever comprehend that kind of love?!

“Therefore ... let us be thankful.” The fact that God even finds me worthy enough to set foot in His kingdom, much less receive any part of it, is mind-blowing. As such, thankfulness should be part of our worship every time we worship our Father. It is gut-wrenching to look back on my life and think of all the mistakes I’ve made, all the people I’ve hurt, and all the times I have turned my back on God. It also fills my heart with gratitude to think of how He loved me through all of it, how He has blessed me despite it all, and how He has been so faithful every step of my journey. When I gain a clear perspective on both my mistakes and His grace, I find myself in true worship with reverence and awe. I believe reverence begins with humility and there is no better way to humble yourself than to reflect on how good God has been to you.

Challenge:

Take a moment to reflect on how good God has been to you. Spend some time thanking Him for your journey no matter how rocky it might have been. Now worship Him for His unending grace and faithfulness in your life!

Day 24 - Joshua Thomas (Director Youth/Young Adults)

Hebrews 13:1-2 (NLT) - *Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!*

Don't you just love that little note at the end that the author of Hebrews throws in there? "*Some have welcomed angels without knowing it!*" I love this reminder of how we all should live, every person that we come across has been made in the image of God, and we can be a light of truth in their life. As disciples and followers of Jesus, we need to do what Jesus did, He is the blueprint for how we need to live. The spirit of hospitality is a way of life, loving others so that they know what the love of Jesus truly feels like. If we don't love others, we aren't being like Christ.

One of the reminders I have for myself is that every person I come across has a seat at the table. At large gatherings, I never like the idea of a "kid's table," because let's be honest, it feels exclusive. Growing up, my family always just added an extra table at the end to extend the existing table. Whether it was a holiday or birthday party, we had just one long table, and that became a symbol of bringing everyone in.

Does it make things a little messy sometimes? Sure, but isn't that more fun? The reality is, inviting people to sit at your table is going to be messy, you might not click with everyone or agree with their views, but it's the example Jesus left for us. Jesus invited people to the table, people with different views, lifestyles, and backgrounds and He chose to love them and lead them to the light. What if the person you have been avoiding has a calling they don't know yet? You could be the catalyst for helping them follow, grow, and begin living for Jesus. We can't just say that we love people, we have to actually make a place for them at the table. It was Jesus' great love that saved you, so love others in the same way.

Challenge:

Who in your life do you need to love by inviting them to the table? You just might find yourself "entertaining an angel"!

Day 25 - Laura Alvis (Hope Kids Coach)

Hebrews 13:5-6 (ESV) - *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

Growing up, we had a 1965 Chrysler Imperial, and when my grandmother passed away, we inherited her 1964 Chrysler Imperial. These may be considered classic cars today, but to a middle-school girl in the 1980s, they were just really OLD, and now we had two of them! Before school, students would congregate outside around the drop-off circle until the school bell rang. I remember asking my mom to drop me off at the very beginning of the circle so that less kids would see the car that I got out of because I was embarrassed and more concerned about what others thought.

Following Hebrew chapter 12's call to worship God with reverence and awe, being content is one of the ways we can worship God described in chapter 13. Being content is actually an act of worship. The Oxford Language Dictionary defines contentment as, "a feeling of happiness or satisfaction." Yet unlike happiness, which is tied to our emotions, contentment brings a longer-lasting, stable sense of peace and satisfaction.

Consider contentment as the antidote for greed. It switches our focus from need to gratitude, declaring I am satisfied with what God has given me. Looking back, there were so many things I could have been thankful for regarding the Chryslers that could have changed my perspective. I could have been thankful for cars that lasted over 20 years, saving our family money that allowed us to have and do other things, grateful for the opportunity for my Mom to be at home with us before and after school, and for resources to bless others. I love how the instruction to "be content" is followed by a reminder of God's promise to never leave or forsake us and that we know with confidence that He is our Helper and to not be afraid. Trust God to meet your needs and acknowledge that God's provisions extend beyond material wealth to encompass the love and joy that shape our lives.

Challenge:

Take a moment today to express gratitude to God for what you have. Spend a few minutes praising Him for His promise to "never leave you nor forsake you" and for being "your helper."

Day 26 - Jeanni Miles (Next Steps Coordinator)

Hebrews 13:7, 17 (NLT) - *Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives and follow the example of their faith... Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.*

When I was a student, I admired so much a married couple who volunteered with our youth group. They had two young boys, yet they would find childcare two nights a week so that they could spend time with me and my friends at youth group. As I walked through middle and high school, I began observing this couple more closely. The reason their words of encouragement and direction resonated with me was because I could see that their hearts were truly aligned with Christ, and that was their desire for me as well.

As I have matured into an adult, I am realizing the importance of continuing to recognize and honor those spiritual leaders who are speaking into my life. In journeying towards Christ, it is helpful to have the example of a leader to look to. I recently came across this definition of what it means to be a leader, "*A great leader inspires confidence in other people and moves them to action.*" In the case of a spiritual leader, I think the inspired confidence comes from watching a leader apply God's truth to their own life and then being the hands and feet of Jesus to the people around them, moving *us* to action.

Through close observation of all our leaders (parents, pastors, groups, Hope Team, etc.), we are given the opportunity to add to our tool belt tactics to help others follow, grow, and live for Jesus. Their guidance can also provide us wisdom and discernment when we are in a challenging season. And then through these relationships, we gain accountability from someone who loves us and is simply pointing us back to God. So, I encourage you to identify these leaders, follow their example, and as they watch over your soul, give them reason to do so with joy!

Challenge:

Who are the leaders in your life that you need to pay close attention to in how they honor God with their lives? If you don't have a spiritual leader in your life that you can look to, I would encourage you to begin looking for one by joining a team or group!

Day 27 - Alex Miles (Online Campus Pastor)

Hebrews 13:14-15 (NLT) - *For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to His name.*

My wife Mackenzie and I have four small kids, our oldest being six years old. Lots of diapers. Lots of car seats. Not a lot of sleep. One thing that we have learned to really value is intentional time spent at home. Yes, we love to take our kids on little adventures, exploring new things with them. But there is just something special about spending quality time together at home, as a family. It has been so rewarding watching our kids find value in this as well.

On long days when our family has been away from home, as we get closer to home, our kids will begin to recognize certain turns in the road or different houses on the street we live on. Once we arrive on our street, our kids will begin to yell, "We're here!!!! We're home!!!!"

Today we see our scripture referring to our true home. There is a gravitational pull that we all feel towards the warmth and comfort of a home. And though that isn't necessarily a bad thing, as believers it is important to know that this world is NOT our permanent home. In fact, we have an eternal home in heaven that is amazing!

Here's the tension. In our longing for the comfort of home here on Earth, we can fool ourselves into believing that this world, full of material things that will someday perish, is our permanent home. If we do this, we will begin to center our attention around it, turning our backs on a world that does not know Jesus.

Instead, our lives should be focused on God's Kingdom, heaven, our eternal home with Jesus. And while we are here on this Earth, we must proclaim the name of Jesus! Singing praises to Him while pointing others to the hope that we find in Jesus!

Challenge:

Today, how can you begin to live your life outwardly focused on those who do not know Jesus?

Day 28 - Tadd Grandstaff (Lead Pastor)

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT) - *Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with His blood, may He equip you with all you need for doing His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him. All glory to Him forever and ever! Amen.*

These words are a final prayer blessing for all who are in Christ Jesus and have received what He has done for us through His death, burial, and resurrection. I pray these words will also serve as a final prayer and reminder of what God has done for you through Jesus.

Throughout the Bible, God is associated with peace. In this context, "peace" is directly tied to the reconciliation offered through Jesus Christ. Because of our sins, we were at odds with God spiritually and relationally. Rather than God choosing wrath and judgment against us, He lovingly gave us grace by pouring His wrath and judgment on Jesus in our place. His blood was poured out as a covenant promise God made to us that He would rescue His people from their sins. The blood offering provided by Jesus offers us an eternal relationship with God where we are fully reconciled to Him.

I understand that's a lot to take in and comprehend. What does all of this mean? It means God isn't a distant God, but He is close and personal. He went through the most extraordinary lengths to get to you. God loves you and cares about everything you are going through. He loves you so much that He allowed Jesus to be sacrificed for you. Understand God's work was complete in Jesus, and since we are reconciled to God, His promises are fulfilled. He now resides within us, working and producing good works within us and giving us everything we need to do the will of God so that our lives will bring Him glory forever and ever!

Challenge:

As we close out this journey of Hebrews, reflect on what God has done for you through Jesus, what His Spirit is actively doing in you, and how you can live your life to bring glory to Him. If any area of your life is not pleasing to Him or bringing Him glory, ask Him to reveal it to you. Ask the Holy Spirit, through the power of Jesus Christ, to equip you to live your life to bring glory to Him. He'll do it!!

What's your next step?

We hope this devotional has helped you see Jesus, our Lord, the Messiah, in a new and more personal way. And along the way, perhaps it has even helped you establish some new habits.

But maybe this time together has done even more. Our prayer is that it has ignited a fresh hunger for God inside of you, a heart for Revival! One definition of a Revival is, "*the awakening or quickening of God's people to their true nature and purpose*". What if we, as a church, were all moving toward our true nature and purpose? What might our world look like? It all starts with you!

Amazing things happen when we abandon our hearts to God; we experience life like it was meant to be lived – in the power of His Spirit!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tadd', with a stylized, flowing script.

Pastor Tadd

Consider Journaling

Journaling is a great way to solidify and remember what you have heard, whether from the Holy Spirit as you read God's Word, as you pray, or from the speaker on Sunday morning.

There is no "right way" to journal; it is just a tool to make your time spent with God memorable, so it can be very personal and specific to you. For example, you could write down ...

- a verse that stood out to you.
- a few new ideas that helped you understand.
- a single word that God put in your heart.
- a simple sketch/doodle that popped into your mind.

Included in this devotional are a few blank pages that you can use to give it a try.













