

Growth Group Leaders Guide

February 10, 2019

“HEBREWS” - Week 2

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

For those who weren't there or even those who didn't understand it very well it will help them to get acquainted with the text and topic. These questions are also designed to be “softball” questions in order to get people to engage and participate.

1. If you had a free round trip plane ticket anywhere in the world where would you go? Why?
2. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

This is an opportunity to clarify the teaching for those who may not have understood it. This can also be a jumping off point for great discussion. Sometimes groups don't get past this question and that's ok! Remember, you want to “scratch where it itches” so don't feel the need to rush past this.

DIGGING DEEPER

3. This weekend we heard that because of God's wrath towards sin, everyone is under the judgment of God. There's no question that the topic of judgment can be uncomfortable or confusing to many people, and these days it's hardly politically correct. That's why it's important for us to take a look at what Jesus and the Bible actually say about it. How does the Bible describe the reality and consequences of judgment in each of the following verses?

Ephesians 5:6, Matthew 25:41, Ezekiel 7:8, Revelation 14:9-12

Ephesians 5:6 New International Version (NIV)

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

God's wrath falls on the disobedient. It is worth noting that simply being uninformed or misinformed does not absolve people of sin.

Matthew 25:41 New International Version (NIV)

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

During the final judgement those who are not in Christ will be sent away. The punishment is eternal and it was the same punishment that was prepared for the devil and the angels who rebelled against God.

A follow up question could be; "Why do you think moderne people struggle so much with the idea of God's judgement?"

* The defining characteristic of the punishment for the wicked is separation from God, the one thing we truly need. The Bible references "fire" or "lake of fire" in its description of God's wrath many times. Most scholars agree that it may not be actual fire, but that it's probably far worse. This passage illustrates that God does punish the wicked and this punishment entails real suffering.

**For further reading consider this blog from Talbot School of Theology

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/the-good-book-blog/questions-about-hell-is-it-a-literal-fire-or-worse.html>

- If God forgives us as followers of Jesus, why might it be important to keep in mind God's wrath and judgment?

There are several possible answer to this question. Some if the reasons e should be mindful of God's wrath and judgment are:

- It should create within us a sense if urgency to share what we have experienced with those in our life who are skeptical of the Christians claims.
- As believers we need to remember the severity of God's wrath so that we can consider what Christ did in taking that wrath for us. This is a key aspect of the Gospel and it is this realization that compels a Christian toward real change.
- Because of the severity of the biblical descriptions of judgment and hell, some people question how it fits in with God's love. Can you think of any ways a person can reconcile God's love with the truth that he will also judge people? If so, explain.

Many people find this particular aspect of the Christian faith hard to reconcile. Modern, western, people usually appreciate the aspect of God's character that is love but they recoil at the aspect of God that is our judge. First, we need to realized that this is a bi-product of the prevailing cultural attitudes. Western people value forgiveness and therefore agree with the Bible when it espouses forgiveness.

Second, Without a God of judgement you can't have a God of love. If sin is real, and judgement is real, and hell is real, then it follows that God paid an incredibly high price by offering His Son in our place. If God had not paid so high a price it His love for us might be called into question.

2. It can be humbling when we realize Jesus' life, death and resurrection satisfies God's wrath against us. He then takes us, flaws and all, and gives us a new identity. This truth impacts

everyone differently, but can be hard to embrace if you feel undeserving. How do Paul's words to the Colossians describe a person's new identity in Christ as a Jesus follower.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We were formerly in the "dominion of darkness" - this also means that those who are not in Christ are currently in "darkness". It is interesting to consider that someone who is living and creating just inches away can be experiencing a completely different reality.

Colossians 1:21-22 (NIV)

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

Here we learn we were alienated from God but now we have been "reconciled". Not only that but this text says we are "holy" and "blameless" due to Christ's sacrifice.

Colossians 2:9-14 (NIV)

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Here are some possible answers:

- Christ is God in "bodily form"
 - He has ultimate control and authority
 - We are buried with him in baptism and raised to a new life
 - He forgave all our sins
 - He did it on the cross
3. This week, we heard how Jesus' sufferings accomplished so much more beyond his immediate situation. The same can be true for our own hardships and challenges. What insight does Paul give us in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 when life's challenges heat up?

2 Corinthians 1:3-11 (NIV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it

is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

- We can expect challenges. Paul, the greatest missionary ever, experienced more than his fair share of trials. Believers should not expect an easy life. God's agenda is not to make us happy, rather it is to make us holy.
- We suffer and are comforted by God, so that we can comfort others.
- Jesus already delivered us from the most catastrophic peril we will ever face. How much more will he sustain us through lesser trials.
- God hears and answers our prayers.