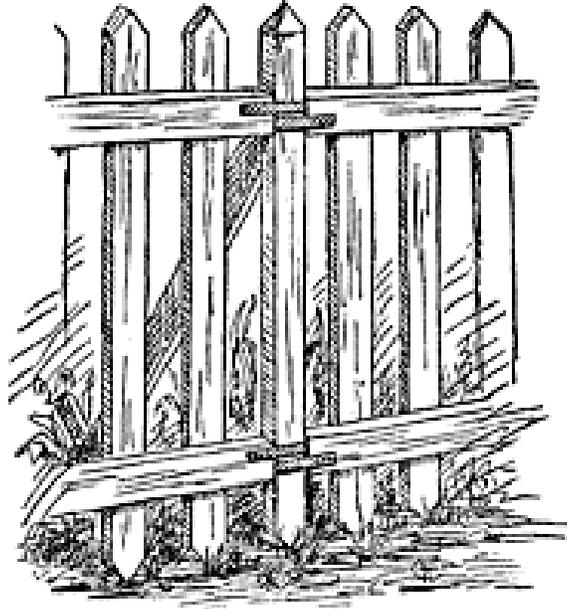


*Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies*

# Hebrews



**"Jump Off The Fence!!!"**



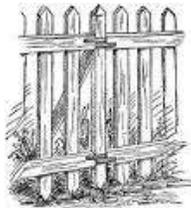
Bible Studies  
by Kathleen Dalton  
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**"Jump Off the Fence!"**  
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews

# Hebrews

## **"Jump Off The Fence!!!"**

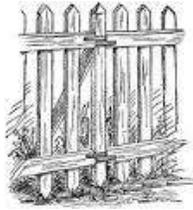


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# Hebrews

## **“Jump Off The Fence!!!”**



### **Introduction**

The book of Hebrews gives every person, whether a sold-out believer in Jesus Christ, or an unbelieving, hesitant straggler still sitting on the fence, a chance to think again about Jesus.

Is He really all He claimed to be?

Some of the readers of Hebrews – those who were already believers in Jesus - were going to need to make a course-correction or two, setting aside things which were being trusted more than Jesus.

And some – those who had not yet put their faith in Jesus – were going to be challenged to “jump off the fence” – off the fence of religion, which is death - and, risking all, to begin a brand new life with Jesus Christ.



## Jesus is Better

### APPLICATION:

8. For those who had already come to faith in Jesus, what one more thing did they need to know in order to ground them in their faith?
9. For those who were still sitting on the fence, what one more thing did they need to know in order to bring them to a commitment to faith in Jesus?
10. Are people in this day and age tempted to put faith in angels or anything else?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Jesus is Better**

Hebrews Chapter 1- Discussion Notes

We can only reach God if He reaches to us.

It's true...and it's timeless. Throughout history, the only way sinful man could ever dream of connecting with Holy God is if God made a way.

And God does. He always has.

In Old Testament times He reached out with messages. He sent those messages through the patriarchs, through prophets, through signs and wonders, through special men of God, through priests, and through angels.

The messages said: “I am here. I am Holy. I care about you. I require that you be Holy, too. I know you are a mess. I will someday come and help you with your mess. “

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish people who didn't fully understand what had happened. Looking back now, we know they had just walked out of the Old Testament times, and were standing in New Testament times.

Many of them had heard the Old Testament messages of God from men and angels. And then they had seen and heard the story of Jesus – and they had realized that He was God Himself, come to help them with their mess. They were Jews who had become Christians.

But many of them had also heard the Old Testament truths and the story of Jesus, and now were sitting on the fence, not sure whether or not they wanted to jump off that fence and wholeheartedly commit their lives to following Him. They had seen the persecution which could follow such a decision, and just weren't sure....

If they jumped off that fence they might be martyred. They might have to give up their dreams for a normal life with a retirement cottage by the sea. They just might go hungry. They might see their children suffer. They might be fearful, cold, running for their lives. Would it be worth it? Was Jesus really better?

## Jesus is Better

1. If life is unstable, shaking, and colliding, what is the thing we need most?

Can you think of a time in your life when everything you depended on for your security was gone?

I can.

Ken and I were in our early thirties; we had 5 children – our oldest was 10 and our youngest was 1; we were homeless, and driving across country in a van about to be repossessed, aiming for my Dad’s home in Indianapolis, where we were about to descend on him for an undetermined amount of time until we “got back on our feet”.

We were scared and confused – and of all the things we needed (shelter, food, clothing, jobs, etc.), there was one thing we had to have more than anything else in the world. We needed a word from God. We needed to know what He would have us do. We loved Him and trusted Him – but we had never been in this place before, and our hearts cried out – mile after mile across Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana – “tell us what to do!!!”.

When life is unstable, shaking and colliding, people desperately seek to hear from God.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD God, ‘When I will send a famine in the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.’ - Amos 8:11&12

*“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,” (1:1)*

2. (:1) How did God speak to people “long ago”?

In order to answer that, let’s break this down into several questions:

- What does the writer mean by “long ago”?

He’s talking about how God spoke to people in Old Testament times.

- Why does God even want to “speak” to people at all?

Now there’s a good question. The Psalmist asked the same question: “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man, that You take thought of him?” Psalms 8:3&4

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

The answer? He loves us. Don't ask me why.

- Why do we want Him to “speak” to us?

This is easier to answer. It's because we need Him so much. We actually need Him more than we need food and drink – we just don't realize it.

- Ps. 74:1-11 - In this passage, the Psalmist is remembering how it felt to have all of the precious things of life whisked out from under him, and then is recording the universal longing of every heart in verse 9: “There is no longer any prophet...”. In other words – with everything else gone in my life, I need a word from God – and where is the man who can give it to me? Help....Help....I need a word from God.
- Ezekiel 7:26 – The prophet Ezekiel echoes the same thought “Disaster will come upon disaster and rumor will be added to rumor, then they will seek a vision from a prophet, but the law will be lost from the priest and counsel from the elders.”

*“...in these last days has spoken to us in His Son...” (:2a)*

3. (:2a) How has God spoken in “these last days”?

The author of Hebrews is referring here to the days just preceding the writing of this letter...in other words, the days when Christ was on the earth. Before that time – before the time of Christ - God spoke to people through men and angels, through prophets and priests. But now He has done something even better; He has spoken through His Son, Jesus.

*“...in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”  
(:2&3)*

4. (:2&3) List 7 descriptions of God's Son found in these verses:
- 1) He is heir of all things
  - 2) He was the One who made the world.
  - 3) He radiates God the Father's glory
  - 4) He is the mirror for us to see the nature of God the Father
  - 5) He keeps all things held together by simply speaking
  - 6) He made the sacrifice which wiped out sin
  - 7) He is right now sitting down at God the Father's right hand

## Jesus is Better

5. Is there anything in that list you did not realize was true of Jesus?

*“...having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.”*

6. (:4) What is one more thing we can add to that list?

He is better than the angels. His name is more excellent than theirs. Now why would this author need to say that?

Because, remember, the Jews were used to hearing from God by way of angels. Look at a few of the times God spoke through angels:

- Genesis 18 – Three men (at least 2 are angels) visit Abraham
- Genesis 19 – Two angels rescue Lot from Sodom
- Genesis 28 – Jacob sees angels ascending and descending a ladder to heaven
- Exodus 12 – The angel of death passes over Egypt
- Numbers 22 – A wicked prophet is stopped by an angel
- II Kings 2 – Elijah the prophet is carried away in a fiery chariot attended by angels
- II Kings 6 – A fearful servant gets his eyes opened as he sees the angels of God protecting him and Elisha
- Job 1:6 – The angels present themselves before God after roaming throughout the earth.
- Psalms 78:25 – The miraculous manna was delivered by angels
- Zechariah, Daniel and Ezekiel all had messages delivered to them by angels

Due to these instances, and many others, the Jews highly regarded the word of angels...to the point that they may even have begun to be worshipful of angels. They needed to be brought up short, to remember Who was more to be desired than angels.

Someone greater than the angels had told the angels what to say so long ago, and now it was time to listen to the One to whom the angels reported.

Notice how the Son is compared to angels in the following verses:

*“For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten You’? And again, ‘I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me.’ And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him.’ And of the angels He says, ‘Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.’ But of the Son He says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. You have loved*

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**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

*righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has appointed You with the oil of gladness above your companions.*

*And, ‘You Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands; they will perish, but You remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed, but You are the same. And Your years will not come to an end.’*

*But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet’? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?’”*

7. (:5-14) Fill out the following chart from these verses:

True of Jesus	True of Angels
:5 God calls Jesus His son (Psalms 2:7) (II Samuel 7:14)	:5 God never calls an angel His son
:6 God tells the angels to worship the son (Psalms 97:7)	:6 God never tells the son to worship the angels
	:7 God makes angels into “winds” and “flames of fire” to minister to people They are powerful, yes. (Psalm 104:4)
:8&9 But the Son sits on a throne. He is the One to whom the angels answer. (Psalm 45:6) (Psalm 45:7)	
:10 The Son is the One who made the heavens and the earth (Psalm 102:25)	:10 (implied) The angels were part of the creation of the earth – <i>He made them.</i>
:11&12 The earth the Son made will one day be gone – but the Son will remain. He is timeless. (Psalm 102:26&27)	:11&12 (implied) As part of the Son’s creation, the angels depend on Him for their very survival.
:13 The Son has been given the honor of sitting at the right hand of God the Father. (Psalm 110:1)	:13 The angels have never been given that honor.
:14 (implied) the Son provides salvation – not the angels	:14 The angels’ job is to care for those who will come to belief in the Son.

## Jesus is Better

### APPLICATION:

8. For those who had already come to faith in Jesus, what one more thing did they need to know in order to ground them in their faith?

They needed to realize anew that Jesus was the pinnacle of authority and revelation. Men and angels who had passed on the messages from God in Old Testament times had actually been sent by Jesus. There never had been any greater authority than the Son. The messages of the prophets and angels of old were not untrue when they were spoken so long ago, they were simply not yet completed. They pointed ahead to the Son who would someday come and complete the picture. This letter was going to assure them that total commitment to Jesus Christ, the One spoken of by prophets and angels, was the best possible decision they had ever made.

9. For those who were still sitting on the fence, what one more thing did they need to know?

They needed to know the very same thing. The writer of Hebrews is about to unfold for them the swelling comparison of “old” Judaism (which looked forward in faith to the coming promised Messiah), and “new” life in Jesus Christ (which looked back in faith at the Messiah who came, died on a cross, and rose from the dead). Old Judaism had to give way to new life in Jesus Christ. If it didn’t, then the people who clung to old Judaism were no longer worshipping the One, True God.

10. Are people in this day and age tempted to put faith in angels or anything else?

Oh my, yes. Whether it’s angels, or astrology, or fortune-tellers, or media, or politicians, or even well-meaning friends or leaders – it seems we run so quickly to embrace knowledge from people and angels, but move so slowly to respond to the Words of the Son of God – the Bible.

The book of Hebrews gives every person, whether a sold-out believer in Jesus Christ, or an unbelieving hold-out still sitting on the fence, a chance to think again about Jesus.

Some of the readers of Hebrews – those who were already believers in Jesus - were going to need to make a course correction or two, setting aside things which were being trusted more than Jesus. And some – those who had not yet put their faith in Jesus – were going to be challenged to “jump off the fence” – off the fence of religion, which is death - and, risking all, begin a brand new life with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is better.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better Than Angels**  
Hebrews Chapter 2- Questions

1. (:1-3a) What is one good reason the readers of this letter should pay much closer attention to the words of Jesus?
2. (:3b-4) What proofs do we have that these things are true?
3. (:5-8) What is one major difference between men and angels?
4. If we (men) have so much authority in the world, being even more powerful than angels, and being the inheritors of the whole world, why does it seem just the opposite? Why does it seem the angels are more powerful than we are?
5. (:9a) What does it mean when it says Jesus “was made for a little while lower than the angels” ?
6. (:9b-10) Why was Jesus willing to be made for a little while lower than the angels?
7. (:11-18) When Jesus made Himself just like us (lower than the angels for a little while) and totally identified with us in all of our weakness – what wonderful gifts was He giving us?
  - a. :11-13
  - b. :14
  - c. :15
  - d. :17
  - e. :18
8. (:16) Did Jesus come as an angel to save angels?

**APPLICATION:**

9. Now go back to verses 1&2 of this chapter, and answer the question the writer of Hebrews asks: “...how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”
10. Is it possible to be a true Christian and still slide back into your past habits of trusting something or someone more than you trust Christ?
11. If you are having trouble trusting Jesus, even though you know He is better, what can you do? (hint: see chapter 2, verse 18) ☺

## Jesus is Better

### Better Than Angels

#### Hebrews Chapter 2- Discussion Notes

In the light of Chapter 1, there's a good question to ask here: *Why* are we so slow to look to Jesus? Why do we prefer anything and everything else when we are longing for a word from God?

It's because of what we know we must do when we look to Jesus:

- **We know we have to admit we are sinners.** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23. When we turn our eyes to Jesus, we are turning our eyes to God. Jesus is God. And when we turn our eyes to God we have no choice but to see our own pitiful condition. We can't help but notice the difference between God and us. He is perfect. We are sinful. It's much easier on our egos to look to angels or astrology or those who predict the future on the evening news.
- **We know we have to take the blame which belongs to us.** For whatever situation we are in. Even if we are in the middle of something which everyone around us would say is not our fault at all, when we look to Jesus we can't retain even a particle of personal pride. He is light and He is truth – and we can't hide a thing from Him.  
“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.”  
Psalm 139: 23&24. We might be able to retain our pride in ourselves if we didn't have to look to Jesus.
- **We know we might not get the answer we long for.** Jesus' own life on earth is our mirror. He was perfectly righteous and yet He suffered...He chose to suffer. He chose to take a punishment someone else deserved. If He chose to live that way, He might ask us to do the same. He just might not give us the deliverance or the comfort or the freedom we are seeking. “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”  
Philippians 1:29. If we look to Jesus we might not get the answer we want.

So...as born-again believers we are tempted to say we love and trust Jesus, but to really be trusting other things and people to lead us and guide our decisions.

The writer to the Hebrews is speaking to a group of people so very much like us. Many of them, whether believers or still unbelievers, are hesitantly balancing on top of a fence, so to speak. They know Jesus spoke the truth. They know He said He is God...and many of them have actually believed that He is, indeed, God. But they are conflicted. Going forward with Him will ask for so much personal sacrifice...and sliding back into the old superstitions of Judaism, the old comfortable ways of doing religion, the ways

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which don't make everyone mad at them, the ways which won't ask for a walk of faith...just seems so attractive.....so tempting....

*“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For it the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (:1-3a)*

1. (:1-3a) What is one good reason the readers of this letter should pay much closer attention to the words of Jesus?

This is a form of sound reasoning....an argument going from the lesser to the greater. In other words...if this lesser thing is true....how much truer is the greater thing?

Just look back into Old Testament history. When God sent angels to communicate with mankind (the very giving of the Law of Moses was through angels...Deuteronomy 33:2, Psalm 68:17, Acts 7:38,53, Galatians 3:19), and men turned around and ignored those messages, or rebelled against them, what happened? God's judgment happened, right? People could not just get a message from God and then “do their own thing” and expect that God would sit idly by, right?

So, if disrespect for the angels' message brought God's wrath, how in the world would anyone expect to escape the judgment of God if the message of the Son of God – the message of God Himself in Person – was ignored or rebelled against?

*“After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.” (:3b-4)*

2. (:3b-4) What proofs do we have that these things are true?
  - It was first spoken by the Lord Jesus (as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John)
  - Then it was confirmed, or verified, by the people who heard Him speak those words (the apostles, Mary, and other followers of Jesus during His life on earth)
  - And also God worked miracles and signs and wonders through the ministry of Jesus to add believability to His message. “If I do not the works of my Father, do not believe me; but, if I do them, though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” John 10:37&38.
  - And, even after Jesus was gone from the earth, the Holy Spirit gave spiritual gifts to men in order to accomplish the work Jesus had begun, testifying over and over and over again, generation after generation, that the word of Jesus was true and to be trusted.

## Jesus is Better

*“For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying, ‘What is man that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands; You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’”*

### 3. (:5-8) What is one major difference between men and angels?

The writer goes back again to a look at angels in order to make his emphasis even stronger. The world was given to men, not angels. The world and everything in it was given to men to rule over. It was not ever given to angels. That’s why Satan (the fallen angel) had to win a man over to rebellion against God. On his own, Satan could never have won the right to rule the world. He needed then, and will need in the future, a man to willingly submit to him so that he can work his evil plan. Why? Man was given the right to rule. And man was given the freedom to give that right away.

### 4. If we (men) have so much authority in the world, being even more powerful than angels, and being the inheritors of the whole world, why does it seem just the opposite? Why does it seem the angels are more powerful than we are?

The end of verse 8 shows where things stand right now. Although man was given the right to rule, that right was given away when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and followed the advice of a fallen angel. As of right now, all things are not subjected unto man. Man does not control the world. He lost control in Eden. Right now, Satan is the “Prince” of this world. Man right for a time is “lower” than the angels, but that is not what God intended.

Someday God will turn that around. Man will be in charge again. How will that happen? Years ago, a man was born who lived perfectly, righteously on the earth. He never sinned. He loved and healed. He spoke the truth always. He never bent his knee to satan. And then that perfect man – the one man who never deserved to die – died. His death was the purchase price for the world Adam & Eve had lost. His resurrection sealed the deal eternally. He will forever be alive to stake his claim to planet earth any time He chooses.

There is a world to come which will someday be forever subjected to man – but again – remember – not to angels.

We, men and women, were always intended to be “above” the angels. We’ll experience that plan of God in the world to come – the world not tainted by sin. And the reason we will experience it is because God made it possible by becoming a man.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
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*“But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus...” (:9a)*

5. (:9a) What does it mean when it says Jesus “was made for a little while lower than the angels” ?

It means He was born a man. And that He willingly accepted his lowered position for a little while. “...who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:6&7.

*“...namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.” (:9b&10)*

6. (:9b-10) Why was Jesus willing to be made for a little while lower than the angels?

Because He knew what the end would be. He knew He would live perfectly, then die, and pay the price for sin. “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:8. He knew the suffering and humiliation of being just like us would complete the job – it would mean He could buy us back from our hopeless condition. He was willing to do that because of love.

*“For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise.’ And again, ‘I will put My trust in Him.’ And again, ‘Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.’ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” (:11-18)*

## Jesus is Better

7. (:11-18) When Jesus made Himself just like us (lower than the angels for a little while) and totally identified with us in all of our weakness – what wonderful gifts was He giving us?
  - a. :11-13 He became a brother to us. He became related to us – a family member – with all the deep ties of faithfulness to us that that implies.
  - b. :14 – He rendered satan powerless. Satan’s hold over men was always that they had willingly given themselves to him. That hold was now broken as they got the chance to willingly give themselves back to God.
  - c. :15 – He freed men from the fear of death. Men have been slaves to the fear of dying ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed. But the work of Jesus on the cross and in the tomb freed them from that fear – because when a man willingly gives himself back to God that man will never have to die. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” John 10:27&28
  - d. :17 – He became man’s High Priest. He became the one who stands between man and Holy God. He protects man from the wrath of God by standing in between. When God looks at a man who has believed in Jesus, He sees not a sinner, but a man clothed with the righteousness of Jesus.
  - e. :18 – He understands our condition because He willingly put Himself in the way of temptation, and He never fell. He knows how to help us do the same.

*“For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.” (:16)*

8. (:16) Did Jesus come as an angel to save angels?  
No. He came as a man – a descendant of Abraham – to save men.

### **APPLICATION:**

9. Now go back to verses 1&2 of this chapter, and answer the question the writer of Hebrews asks: “...how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” Think about it, you Jews who are longingly looking back at the law – Judaism - as your way of salvation. There is no escape from the judgment of God through trusting the law. There never was. What are you thinking?
10. Is it possible to be a true Christian and still slide back into your past habits of trusting something or someone more than you trust Christ?  
My personal experience tells me a resounding YES! Yes – it happens again and again and again. I take my morning walk, talking to Jesus, praying, learning to trust Him for my every breath....and then, 2 hours later I find myself worrying about how to pay my bills. I find myself hoping someone or something will come along to deliver me from my fears about life. I have forgotten all about trusting Jesus. I haven’t lost my salvation, but I have lost the sweet walk of trusting Him for everything.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
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So again and again the Lord brings me back to that place where I remember I can trust Him. I don't need to look to anyone or anything else.

I think that's what this writer to the Hebrews is doing. He's just reminding the readers of what they already know. Look away from everything else. Look to Jesus. He is closer than a brother. He's family. He won't give up on you. If you have put your faith in Him, keep walking in faith. If you have never put your faith in Him, do it!

11. If you are having trouble trusting Jesus, even though you know He is far superior to anything else you are trusting, what can you do? (hint: see chapter 2, verse 18) ☺

Sounds way too simple, I know, but you just ask Him to come to your aid. Ask **Him** to help **you** trust **Him**. ☺

*“For since He Himself was tempted in that which he has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” Hebrews 2:18*

## Jesus is Better

### Better Than Moses

#### Hebrews Chapter 3- Questions

*“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;” (:1)*

First of all....*fix your thoughts on Jesus*. Spend a few minutes silently thinking about Jesus. Remember all you can about His life. Think of as many of His names as you can. Focus on the time in your life when you first realized He was calling you to be His own. Talk to Him for a few minutes.

Then, answer the following:

1. (:2) Who was Moses? In what way is Jesus the same as Moses?
2. (:3-6) In what ways is Jesus better than Moses?
3. Recall the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. What happened along the way? How long did it take? How many of them made it to the promised land?
4. (:7-11) Why was the Jewish nation not able to enter into the Promised Land?
5. (:12) What causes unbelief?
6. (:13) Is there anything we can do to help others who may be teetering on the edge of belief/unbelief?
7. (:14&15) What is one characteristic of a true believer in Jesus Christ?
8. (:16-19) What made God so angry at the Jews of Moses’ day?

#### **APPLICATION:**

9. Why did you say “yes” to Christ?
10. Is Jesus the best thing in your life right now?
11. Think of one practical way you can show someone else that Jesus is the absolute best.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better Than Moses**  
Hebrews Chapter 3- Discussion Notes

*“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;” (:1)*

First of all...*fix your thoughts on Jesus.* Either on your own, or as a group, spend a few minutes silently thinking about Jesus. Remember all you can about His life. Think of as many of His names as you can. Focus on the time in your life when you first realized He was calling you to be His own. Talk to Him for a few minutes.

Now, if you are in a group, spend a few more minutes sharing some of the things you have been thinking of in the last few minutes.

Then, think through the following questions and answers:

*“He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.” (:2)*

2. (:2) Who was Moses? In what way is Jesus the same as Moses?

Moses was a Jewish man, chosen by God in Old Testament times (about 1,500 BC), to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, where they were slaves.

How had they gotten to that point? They had left the land promised to Abraham because of a famine. Joseph, one of the 12 great-grandsons of Abraham, had become the assistant to the Pharaoh of Egypt, and had rescued his own family from starvation by bringing them to Egypt where there was food.

But over the next 400 years, long after Joseph was dead and gone, the Pharaohs of Egypt had stopped liking the Jewish people and had begun to hate them and be jealous of them. They enslaved them more and more until it was nearly unbearable.

Then God raised up Moses to set them free. Moses learned to listen to God and obey Him, and he was successful in freeing his people from the Egyptian slavery.

God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses after the people of Israel were out of Egypt and free, and the Jewish people have since then always considered Moses one of the greatest prophets of God. Even today Jewish people have great respect for Moses and love to retell the stories of Moses.

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Verse 2 says Jesus was the same as Moses in that He was faithful to God. God gave Moses a job to do and he did it. God gave Jesus a job to do and he did it.

*“For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.” (:3-6)*

12. (:3-6) In what ways is Jesus better than Moses?

The readers of this letter had a great respect for Moses. They knew their own history, and knew they would not be alive as a people if it had not been for this great man, Moses. Therefore, if Jesus was as great as Moses, that was really saying something. But if Jesus was better than Moses, then that was way over and above. Anything Jesus would say or ask for would require unquestioning obedience if he was, indeed, better than Moses.

The writer is saying - Jesus is better than Moses. Moses was faithful, yes, as a servant in God’s “house” – as a servant in God’s plan for the world. But Jesus was faithful as a son in God’s house. Not just a servant, but a son. A son is better.

We are the “house” of God. We are the family of God. We are God’s plan. Moses helped get us here. But if Jesus hadn’t come when He did, whatever Moses did would have been worthless. Without Jesus we would be nothing. Jesus is even better than Moses.

13. Recall the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. What happened along the way? How long did it take? How many of them made it to the promised land?

As they left Egypt they were on their way back home to the land God had given Abraham. The trip back was hard. There were times when the people of Israel were afraid, and times when they were rebellious. When they finally made it to the border of the land God had given them, they sent in spies to see what the land was like, who was living there, and how hard it was going to be to take it back. Twelve spies went in – twelve spies came back to report. Ten of those spies didn’t like what they saw. They thought the job of taking back the land looked too hard.

But two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, pleaded with the people of Israel to trust God. They, too, saw a very difficult time ahead, but they urged everyone to go ahead anyway, because God had said to do it, and they trusted God.

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The people of Israel were rebellious, though, and decided they just couldn't risk obeying God. It looked too hard.

Because they decided to not believe God, He told them they would wander around in the desert for 40 years, until all the adults who had chosen not to believe had died off, and then their children and grandchildren would be given another chance to trust Him.

Only 2 adults of all those Jews who fled Egypt were able to enter the land of promise 40 years later: Joshua and Caleb.

*“Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years.’ Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways’; As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” (:7-11)*

14. (:7-11) Why was the Jewish nation not able to enter into the Promised Land? Sometimes we think of “unbelief” as something over which we have little control. Almost like – we would believe if we could, but we just can't. We would believe, but we are afraid. We would believe but we don't have enough facts. We would believe, but we just can't.

But that's not what God says about unbelief. He says the Jewish people hardened their own hearts. They came up to the point of trusting God and decided not to, because weeks or months or even years before they had made small decisions of unbelief, which eventually added up to one big decision of unbelief.

*“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” (:12)*

15. (:12) What causes unbelief?

Sin. Evil. It's not complicated or hard to understand.

*“But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (:13)*

16. (:13) Is there anything we can do to help others who may be teetering on the edge of belief/unbelief?

Yes. We can encourage one another by being honest about sin. By speaking the truth about the sin of unbelief. Sin is deceitful – once sinning begins it is easier and easier to tell lies about what it being done, and to believe those lies.

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Encouragement here, then, is not a matter of comforting or helping or making one another feel better. There is a place for that, of course, in Christian relationships – but in this passage encouraging one another has more the idea of confronting one another about sin – especially the sin of unbelief.

*“For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.’” (:14&15)*

17. (:14&15) What is one characteristic of a true believer in Jesus Christ?

A true believer in Jesus does not “let go” of Jesus. A true believer in Jesus “holds fast” to Jesus. A true believer is an overcomer. Look at I John 5:4&5. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

So, does that mean I am a true believer if I try very hard to stay in love with Jesus? What if I don’t try hard enough?

Look also at I John 4:4 “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” It looks like our ability to not “let go” of Jesus is based not on how hard we try, but on how great He is, doesn’t it?

Look also at Jesus’ own words in John 10:28,29 “...I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

A true believer in Jesus “holds fast” to Jesus because Jesus is “holding fast” to him.

Moses was as faithful as he could be, but ultimately he was just a man, doing his best to trust God, and making mistakes along the way.

Jesus was faithful, and remains faithful today, and will be faithful all through eternity. He is better than Moses...better than anything else in life.

*“For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.” (:16-19)*

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18. (:16-19) What made God so angry at the Jews of Moses’ day?  
He was angry because they chose to sin. They didn’t have to sin, they chose to. They sinned by refusing to believe God. It’s the ultimate sin.

**APPLICATION:**

19. Why did you say “yes” to Christ?  
It was a miracle, wasn’t it? He reached out to you, asked you to believe in Him, and somehow gave you the faith to do just that.

20. Is Jesus the best thing in your life right now?

21. Think of one practical way you can show someone else that Jesus is the absolute best Person who ever could have come into your life.

Here’s a suggestion: Make your favorite pie, deliver it to a friend, with a note or, better yet, a conversation, which says – just like this dessert is better than any I could imagine, so Jesus is better than anything else in life.

He’s better than angels. Better than Moses. Better than religion. Better than insurance. Better than winning the lottery. Better than horoscopes. Better than popularity. Better than friends. Better than family. Better than the best dessert in the world.

## Jesus is Better

### Better Than The Sabbath

#### Hebrews Chapter 4- Questions

1. (:1) What is this “rest”?
2. (:2) Why was the message of rest of no value to the Israelites of Moses’ day?
3. (:3) At what point do we “enter” the rest of God?
4. (:1-9) How do we know there is still a promise of a rest for us...when this was just an account of something which happened to Israelites so many years ago?
5. What was the Sabbath in the Old Testament, and how does that picture the rest we can have?
6. (:10) What do we have to put aside if we want to enter God’s rest? (see Galatians 2:16)
7. (:11-13) What do we need to be willing to have happen if we want to enter God’s rest?
8. (:14-16) It was the prophet Moses, and then the great leader Joshua who led the Israelites into the Promised Land – the place of rest. In what way could a High Priest help a person find God’s rest?

#### APPLICATION

9. Have you entered into God’s rest?
10. When did you enter in?
11. If you have entered God’s rest, why does it feel sometimes like you are not having a very “restful” time of it?

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Hebrews Chapter 4- Discussion Notes

**Reminder:** The author is writing to a group of Jews – some of them are Christians, and some of them are still investigating Christianity, but all of them are being tempted to go back to observing ritual Judaism to avoid persecution. Instead of going back to Judaism, they need to keep going forward with Jesus.

To make his point, he refers to an incident in Israel’s history when the Lord had led Israel out of Egypt to the border of Canaan. God promised them He had given them this land they were looking at, and twelve spies were sent in to scope it out. Ten of those spies came back afraid, and the Israelites agreed that this would be just too dangerous to try...even though God had told them they would be victorious. Because of their sinful unbelief, they forfeited God’s rest. They did not get their chance to enter the Promised Land.

1. (:1) What is this “rest”?

As the people of Israel were standing at the border of Canaan wanting to enter into the promised land...but afraid, they were like us...wanting to enter into His promised rest. The picture is not one of a bunch of Israelites anxiously looking forward to fording the Jordan River, so they could sit down and do nothing for the remainder of their lives. That’s not the kind of “rest” being talked about. Instead, it is a picture of people who have finally entered into the place they were always meant to be – to do the things they were designed to do – with the abilities given to them by God. It’s a picture of hard work surrounded by peace and purpose. That is a picture of what the Christian life is supposed to be like. Is that a picture of your life? If not...do you want it to be?

2. (:2) Why was the message of rest of no value to the Israelites of Moses’ day? They did not combine it with faith. Just hearing and knowing the truth is not enough. People must act on what they have heard.

3. (:3) At what point do we “enter” the rest of God? When we believe. First, we enter the rest of God when we believe in Jesus for our salvation. The “rest” of God becomes our reason for living when we become Christians.

But also, there is an application of this truth for our every-day walk as believers in Jesus. We enter God’s “rest” when we, as Christians, stop trusting in ourselves to be strong

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enough to serve God, and learn to put all our hope in the strength Jesus can give us for service. We “rest” when we trust Him, not ourselves, for everything in our lives.

4. (:1-9) How do we know there is still a promise of a rest for us...when this was just an account of something which happened to Israelites so many years ago?
  - Verse 1 says the promise still stands
  - Verses 6 & 7 quote from Psalms 95, saying that a rest was still available to the people of God even four hundred years after the conquest of the land had been completed
  - Verse 8 says the rest Joshua accomplished was not the only rest we can have
  - Verse 9 says “there remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God”.
  - Jesus Himself promised us this rest – see Matthew 11:28-30

5. What was the Sabbath in the Old Testament, and why would it be meaningful to these readers that this rest is called “Sabbath-rest”?

Answering this question is really key to an understanding of this chapter, so let’s spend a little time here.

The keeping of the Sabbath had its roots in something not Jewish, actually, something given by God to men before Abraham was ever called to be the Father of the Jewish nation. On the seventh day of creation God ceased working - not in the sense of weariness - but He just simply stopped creating...sort of an “Ahhhh...that was good....let’s enjoy it.” (Genesis 2:2,3)

The word “Sabbath” comes from the Hebrew word “Shabbat”, meaning “cease, or desist”. The Sabbath was always intended as a gift to the people God created. It was a day for resting from hard work, and for remembering that it’s all in God’s hands anyway.

The burden of making a living, and more than that, the burden of finding a way to have a relationship with God, never was supposed to rest on our shoulders. The Sabbath was intended as a chance to take a little time regularly in life to stop working and praise God and trust Him for the future. Yes, God expected His people to work, but mostly He wanted them to know He was always working, and it was His work that His people could depend on to make it through life – and to make it to eternity. The Sabbath was a day to look forward to a future Messiah Who would bring with Him a permanent “rest” from sin and from the drudgery of life in a sinful world.

God made the Sabbath day “Holy”, or “set apart”, but there was no command at the beginning of creation, for man to do anything except enjoy the day as God had.

The next time we see the Sabbath in scripture is just after the Jews had been freed from Egypt, with Moses as their leader, before the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai. God gave them an object lesson at that point to teach them what Sabbath was all about. He gave them manna, and told them not to gather more than one day’s worth at a time., except on the Sabbath. On any other day of the week, if they gathered more than one

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day’s worth, it would spoil on the second day. But on the day before the Sabbath they could gather for two days’ worth, and the manna would last through the Sabbath day. No one had to work, even to gather food, on “Shabbat.”

After the giving of the Ten Commandments (one of which was to keep the Sabbath “set apart”), and then during the 40 years of wandering, and then even after the Jewish people entered the Promised Land, there were probably times when Sabbath was kept and enjoyed, but there were many more times when Sabbath rules were ignored. We can see in Psalm 92, which is a Psalm to be sung on the Sabbath, that the Sabbath was a time of joy and victory more than a time of “don’t do this and don’t do that”.

Many years later, after the Jews returned to a broken-down Jerusalem from Babylon, one of Nehemiah’s strongest reforms was to re-institute respect for the Sabbath. It seems the people who had stayed behind in Jerusalem seventy years before had forgotten what the Sabbath was all about. On the other hand, many of the Jews taken prisoner to Babylon clung tenaciously to the Sabbath, because all else about their worship was gone. They were living in a foreign land – far away from their temple, which had been destroyed anyway. But even though they were far away, Sabbath could be celebrated in their homes, and could be easily adapted to wherever they lived.

As the children of these people returned back to Jerusalem seventy years later they were shocked and dismayed to find that the city they had been dreaming about, the one they had longed to come back to, was filled with people who had forgotten about God, forgotten about the Sabbath.

Under Nehemiah’s preaching the Jerusalemites repented and began observing Sabbath once more, along with the returning Jews. The reforms Nehemiah established lasted until the time of Jesus. The Jews “kept” the Sabbath, so that the One the Sabbath was pointing to could arrive.

So, when Jesus finally arrived, did He change the Sabbath rules? Yes. And no.

Jesus was what the Sabbath had been looking forward to. He was the “rest” they were celebrating and anticipating. But most Jews were so busy keeping the law thinking that made them good enough for God that they didn’t recognize the One Who was bringing them rest which would never end. After Jesus, there was no need to wait for a Messiah. After Jesus, every day could be a day of rest. Every day could be a Sabbath day. For those who believed.

But most of them preferred their Sabbath tradition to their Savior. They chose to feel they were doing something to make themselves good enough for God, instead of admitting their need for a Savior, a Messiah, a gift of “rest” from God.

So, yes, Jesus changed the rules of the Sabbath – the ones the Jews had put in place in order to be good enough to earn salvation (which they never could do). But, no, He

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didn't change God's rules, the ones put in place by God to point all of mankind toward their Savior.

6. How does that help us understand this rest we are promised?

It's pretty simple, then, isn't it? When we believe in Jesus we enter into God's rest. We are no longer trying to earn our own salvation. We have entered a relationship with God based on what He has done to save us.

After Jesus' death and resurrection no one was required to keep one certain day each week - the Sabbath day - "set apart". No one needed any longer to keep looking forward to that day when God would give a rest which would last forever. The Sabbath Himself had arrived.

7. (:10) What do we have to put aside if we want to enter God's rest? (see Galatians 2:16)

We have to set aside our own work. Our own efforts to be good. Our own efforts to please God. Our own righteousness. Our own keeping of the law. None of our own work has ever done us a lick of good in entering God's rest.

We're going to see this again and again in the book of Hebrews: What is being written to unbelievers is also applicable to believers.

For the unbelievers, the writer is pleading with them to come to belief in Jesus Christ as God's Messiah – the Sabbath rest all of Judaism had been looking forward to for two thousand years.

For the believer – the writer is urging them to every day put aside their trust in the things of this world, and every day learn more and more to trust Jesus only for every need. Trust Him for energy, for power, for courage, for food, for drink, for housing, for health....for everything.

8. (:11-13) What do we need to be willing to have happen if we want to enter God's rest?

We need to be willing for God to show us our sin. We need to be willing to open up the Bible and see clearly how useless it has been for us to try to be good for God. We need to let God uncover every dark and ugly corner of our life. Until we see clearly all the ways we have been trying to be good enough for God, we'll never enter God's rest. We'll still be hanging on to ourselves, instead of letting go and reaching out in faith to Jesus.

9. (:14-16) It was the prophet Moses, and then the great leader Joshua who led the Israelites into the Promised Land – the place of rest. In what way could a High Priest help a person find God's rest?

The Job of High Priest was to:

- Represent others before God
- Offer sacrifice for sin

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- Deal gently, being weak themselves

Moses and Joshua only could lead the people to enter the land of Israel, and point them towards a time when real “rest” would come from a future Savior. Our High Priest, Jesus, can do more. He can lead us to that real “rest”.

- He can stand in front of God and represent us to Him. He can, in effect, say, “Here is Kathleen. I love her and want her to be with Us for eternity.”
- He can offer his own death as a sacrifice for sin. “Here she is, Father, and I know nothing she has ever done can make her good enough to stand in Our presence, but I offer up my own death as the price for her sins.”
- Then He can gently lead us to the point in our life when we know what He has done for us, and we hungrily believe in Him.

**APPLICATION**

10. Have you entered into God’s rest for salvation? Have you entered God’s rest for your every-day life?

11. When did you enter in?

12. If you have entered God’s rest, why does it feel sometimes like you are not having a very “restful” time of it?

Because we forget. We start trying again to be good enough for God. He doesn’t want that. Our job is to strive to keep trusting Him – not to strive to be better for Him. Resting is hard work. But it’s hard work He is ready to help us do.

*“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)*

# Jesus is Better

## Better Than A High Priest

Hebrews Chapter 5:1-10- Questions

1. According to verses 1-4, what are some of the qualifications and jobs of a high priest in Israel?

Qualifications	Jobs

2. What other jobs and qualifications does Old Testament scripture tell us the priest or high priest of Israel has?
  - 1) Exodus 27:20,21
  - 2) Exodus 29:38-44
  - 3) Leviticus 6:12
  - 4) Leviticus 10:11
  - 5) Leviticus 13:1-8
  - 6) Leviticus 24:8
  - 7) Numbers 10:1-10
  - 8) Deuteronomy 17:8-13
  - 9) Deuteronomy 33:10
  - 10) Malachi 2:7
3. In what ways is Jesus like a High Priest of Israel? (:5)
4. In what way is Jesus not like a High Priest of Israel? (:6)
5. Who was Melchizedek? (see Genesis 14:17-24)



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### Better Than A High Priest Hebrews Chapter 5:1-10- Discussion Notes

*“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.” (:1-4)*

1. According to verses 1-4, what are some of the qualifications and jobs of a high priest in Israel?

Qualifications	Jobs
A man	Represent men to God (help men approach God)
Appointed by God	Offer gifts
Subject to weakness	Offer sacrifices for sin
Called by God	Deal gently with people
	Offer sacrifices for his own sins
	Offer national sacrifices

2. What other jobs and qualifications does Old Testament scripture tell us the priest or high priest of Israel has?
  - 1) Jewish and of the tribe of Levi, family of Aaron
  - 2) Exodus 27:20,21 – Keep oil in the menorah – lamp always burning
  - 3) Exodus 29:38-44 – Offer daily sacrifices (twice a day)
  - 4) Leviticus 6:12 – Keep the fire burning in the altar
  - 5) Leviticus 10:11 – Teach the law
  - 6) Leviticus 13:1-8 – Physician, disease control
  - 7) Leviticus 24:8 – Celebrate the Sabbath
  - 8) Numbers 10:1-10 – Blow the trumpets to assemble Israel, sound an Alarm, go to war, celebrate feasts
  - 9) Deuteronomy 17:8-13 – Render verdicts in matters of law
  - 10) Deuteronomy 33:10 – Teach the law, burn incense, sacrifice offerings

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11) Malachi 2:7 – Preserve the truth, a messenger of God

*“So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You...’”;*  
(:5)

3. In what ways is Jesus like a high priest of Israel? (:5)

He was a Jewish man, chosen and called by God, and subject to weakness, although He never submitted to weakness. He helped men approach God, offered gifts and sacrifices (Himself), and dealt gently with people. (see John 8:1-11)

*“just as He says also in another passage, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizidek.’” (:6)*

4. In what way is Jesus not like a high priest of Israel? (:6)

He was not of the tribe of Levi, or the family of Aaron. He was the Son of God, and of the tribe of Judah. He was a King as well as a priest. The High Priest of Israel could never be both a king and a priest.

Priests were in charge of ruling and leading the spiritual needs of the people. Kings were in charge of ruling and leading the physical needs of the people. But kings were never to offer sacrifices (in fact, King Saul lost his kingship because of doing just that – see I Samuel 13:8-14). And priests would never sit on a throne...or wear a crown. Priests were of the house of Levi...kings were of the house of Judah.

Priests were teachers, preachers, physicians, disease control experts, interpreters of the law, intercessors for the people, and they offered sacrifices.

Kings led the defense forces of the country, went to war, made the laws, enforced the laws, kept the economy healthy, and represented the country to other nations.

Priests and Kings were two different animals...so to speak.

(see Zechariah 6:11-15 for an example of a High Priest who through a small drama showed that a High Priest was coming some day who would be both priest and king)

5. Who was Melchizidek? (see Genesis 14:17-24)

The writer of Hebrews just touches on the name of this ancient man here, then he will bring it up again later, in chapter 7 of Hebrews.

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After you read the Genesis passage above, you see that there was a priest who was also a king who lived before the time of Abraham. Once God chose Abraham to be the Father of the Jewish nation in about 2,000 BC, and therefore God had a whole nation who would represent Him to the world, then Melchizidek was no longer necessary. But, even though Melchizidek is no longer with us, the picture he gave us remains.

Melchizidek was a priest of the One, True God who was not a Jew. He was a priest before there were any Jews. He was a man who represented the whole world before God, not just the Jewish nation. And he was a king, too, King of Salem (King of a geographical place that would some day be the city of Jerusalem)

Jesus is a priest, a high priest of Israel. He does everything a priest of Israel does, but He is more. Jesus is better. And, we see here and again in Chapter 7, Jesus does everything the great High Priest Melchizidek did, but He is better. He is priest not only of Israel, but of the whole world, and he is a king, too. Jesus is better.

*“In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.” (:7)*

6. As our high priest, what did Jesus pray for while on earth? (:7)

It looks like this verse is saying Jesus prayed that He wouldn't die. Hmm. Is this right? Jesus prayed that He wouldn't die? How could a High Priest pray such a prayer, knowing that death was necessary for the forgiveness of sins? But verse 7 also says God “heard” (and therefore, answered) His prayers.

So what does that tell us? It tells us that Jesus was not praying to avoid the physical death which He had to go through in order to pay the price for sin. He was praying that God would not let Him stay dead. Not let Him be forever dead. He was praying for resurrection. God heard Him and answered. Our High Priest was praying that He would be able to represent us before God not just for one lifetime, but for eternity. God answered His prayer.

*“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizidek.” (:8-10)*

7. What kind of salvation does Jesus, a high priest like Melchizidek, offer? (:8-10)  
Eternal. A high priest of Israel could never offer eternal salvation. Only a high priest who was the Son of God and in the order of Melchizidek could offer such a thing.

Again. Jesus is better.

**"Jump Off the Fence!"**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

8. Apply. What is the application of this passage to your life?  
Here's mine: Jesus is my go-between. He stands between me and Holy God the Father and continually keeps me safe and pure in the Father's eyes. This is incredible. He obeyed; He suffered; He completed His mission...all so that I could stand forgiven and cleansed in His presence. Forever. Why would I ever sit on the fence? Why would I ever have trouble trusting this great high priest?

## Jesus is Better

### Jump Off The Fence!!!

Hebrews Chapter 5:11 – 6:20- Questions

1. (5:11) Why is the writer of Hebrews stopping here in the middle of this explanation of the high priestly role of Jesus?
2. (5:12-14) What is keeping these readers from “growing up”, or gaining maturity?
3. (6:1-3) What are some of the elementary, or basic, teachings which these readers have already received?
  - ✓
  - ✓
  - ✓
  - ✓
  - ✓
  - ✓
4. (6:4-6) If any person has already received good instruction about the things of God and had the Holy Spirit draw them and help them see their need of salvation, and then decides not to believe in Jesus, can that person find another way to connect with God? In other words, is there some other way to God besides repentance and faith in Jesus? (John 14:6)
5. (6:7-8) The writer of Hebrews is using pretty strong language here. What comparison is made in these two verses?
6. (6:9) Does the writer of Hebrews have any compassion at all for these people to whom the book is written?
7. (6:10-12) What good things have these people done for other Christians, even though some of them have not come to faith in Christ themselves?
8. (6:13-19) What promise did God make to Abraham which could move those readers who are “riding the fence” to faith in Jesus? (see Genesis 22:16-18) (John 8:56)

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

9. (6:18) What two “proofs” did God give Abraham, and thus all the future Jews, that He would keep His promises?
  
10. (6:19) A ship’s anchor sinks deep into the sea bed to give security to all aboard that the ship will not move from its location. If our hope in Christ is like an anchor, where does that anchor take hold, giving security that we will always stay firmly planted in Christ?
  
11. (6:20) Now the writer is returning to something he was talking about in Chapter 5. What was that?

**APPLICATION:**

12. If you are a person who has heard about Christ, and has Christian friends, maybe even goes regularly to church, but still you haven’t made a commitment of your life to Jesus, what does this passage say about you?
  
13. If you know someone who needs to “grow up” – what could you do to open their eyes to their immaturity?

## Jesus is Better

### Jump Off The Fence!!!!

Hebrews Chapter 5:11 – 6:20- Discussion Notes

*“Concerning Him we have much to say and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” (:11)*

1. (5:11) Why is the writer of Hebrews stopping here in the middle of this explanation of the high priestly role of Jesus?

This writer has so much good stuff to share with his readers, but has to stop here because he knows there are some of his readers who just simply won't "hear" what he says, won't accept and understand what he says, because they have become "dull of hearing".

*“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (:12-14)*

2. (5:12-14) What is keeping these readers from "growing up", or gaining maturity?

You remember we have noted all along that some of the readers of this letter are already true believers in Jesus, and some are not.

Some of those who are already believers in Jesus have just stopped growing spiritually because they have stumbled around in their walk with God. They haven't been "practicing" faith, but instead have wondered if being a "secret" believer might be the better choice. Living for Christ has looked to hard.

Some have no ability to keep listening because they have placed unbelief in the way. Unbelief has made it impossible for them to go further in their understanding of Jesus. Faith in Jesus is not just knowledge. It is also action. And these listeners have gained knowledge but have not taken action. They are going deaf. They are like babies who can't understand the things elementary school children can understand. These readers have decided to remain babies, thus, their ability to hear more truth is stopped. These are those who have not come to faith in Jesus yet. They seem to be a part of a group (or maybe a family) of Jews who are believers, but somehow this specific group have remained lingering "on the fence" of unbelief even after some of their good friends have proclaimed their faith in Jesus.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

*“Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.” (:1-3)*

3. (6:1-3) What are some of the elementary, or basic, teachings which these readers have already received?
- ✓ Repentance (sin must be acknowledged and turned away from)
  - ✓ Faith (faith is not just head knowledge, but an action of belief)
  - ✓ Instructions about washings (traditions don't save you)
  - ✓ Laying on of hands (commissioning –every person who believes in Jesus has a responsibility to go out and spread the news )
  - ✓ Resurrection of the dead (our hope of eternal life – we will die, but we won't stay dead)
  - ✓ Eternal judgment (those who don't believe in Christ have no hope for eternity. They will be eternally punished...eternally judged)

*“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.” (:4-6)*

4. (6:4-6) If any person has already received good instruction about the things of God and had the Holy Spirit draw them and help them see their need of salvation, and then decides not to believe in Jesus, can that person find another way to connect with God? In other words, is there some other way to God besides repentance and faith in Jesus? (John 14:6)

The answer, simply, is no. There is no other way to be right with God. Jesus has died and risen from the dead. That is our only hope. Jesus is not going to die again and rise from the dead again, in perhaps another way or time, so that we can wait to believe then. Our only chance to believe is in what we have already heard. There is no other way. There is no other “repentance” which can save us, but the repentance that starts with Jesus and ends with Jesus. The Jesus who lived and died in 33 AD is the only Jesus.

## Jesus is Better

*“For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.” (:7-8)*

5. (6:7-8) The writer of Hebrews is using pretty strong language here. What comparison is made in these two verses?

The readers who have not believed are compared to land which brings forth only briars and thistles. They are being told they are useless, ugly, good-for-nothing.

*“But beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.” (:9)*

6. (6:9) Does the writer of Hebrews have any compassion at all for these people to whom the book is written?

Yes. Even though the writer is willing to speak hard things to these people, he does not hold back on his great regard for them, too. He says he is confident they could do better. He believes they could make a decision of faith and live as people of faith.

*“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (:10-12)*

7. (6:10-12) What good things have these people done for other Christians, even though they have not come to faith in Christ themselves?

It looks like these people have been part of an effort to help the people of God. Perhaps they are part of a group of exiled Jews who are all traveling together to find a new home. These Jews would have traveled together even though some of them might have become believers in Jesus and some of them hadn't yet come to that decision. They would travel together because of their oneness in Jewishness. In many countries they would have been banished together, they would have been from the same families, and they would have taken care of one another.

The writer is saying these people have shown love for God by showing love for the people of God, and he urges them to continue to show love for God by moving forward in their knowledge of Jesus and by making a personal commitment to belief in Him.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
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*“For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.’ And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.” (:13-19)*

8. (6:13-19) What promise did God make to Abraham which could move these readers who are “riding the fence” to faith in Jesus? (see Genesis 22:16-18) (John 8:56)

The promise in Genesis 22 was that the world would be blessed through the Jewish people. That promise came to pass when Jesus, a Jew and a descendant of the man who received this promise, purchased salvation for the whole world. The readers of this letter knew that promise very well.

If they were to take that promise seriously they would see that Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise. And if they believed in the integrity of the God Who had made the promise, they would respond in faith to Jesus.

*“so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.” (:18)*

9. (6:18) What two “proofs” did God give Abraham, and thus all the future Jews, that He would keep His promises?
- ✓ First, He made the promise
  - ✓ Then, He swore an oath that He would keep the promise, telling everyone the oath rested on His own integrity.

Men, whose word can be held in doubt, will swear an oath based on the integrity of a mutually respected person, so that all will know they will follow through on their promises.

God, in swearing an oath, was stooping to communicating with men in a way they understood, so that there would be no way they would miss the truth: God made a promise that a Messiah was coming. God swore on Himself that His promise would come to pass.

So, readers of this letter, do you trust in the integrity of the One you say is your God?

## Jesus is Better

*“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.” (:19)*

10. (6:19) A ship’s anchor sinks deep into the sea bed to give security to all aboard that the ship will not move from its location. If our hope in Christ is like an anchor, where does that anchor take hold, giving security that we will always stay firmly planted in Christ?

The anchor of the Christian’s hope goes not down into a sea bed, but up into the Holy temple in heaven, right into the Holy of Holies, right into the very presence of God. Our hope is firmly planted in the presence of God Himself. There is no greater security than that.

*“where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (:20)*

11. (6:20) Now the writer is returning to something he was talking about in Chapter 5. What was that?

The mention in verse 19 of the Holy of Holies is a nice segue back into the topic: The High Priesthood of Jesus. He entered the Holy of Holies – the presence of God – in order to pay the price for our sins. The next lesson, in Chapter 7, will continue on to see what else we can learn about our High Priest.

### **APPLICATION:**

12. If you are a person who has heard about Christ, and has Christian friends, maybe even goes regularly to church, but still you haven’t made a commitment of your life to Jesus, what does this passage say about you?

It says you are useless. No better than that which is piled up out on the street, ready to be picked up and taken to the dump. You are garbage. You are one hundred percent guilty of the sin of unbelief.

13. If you know someone who needs to “grow up” – someone who needs to “jump off the fence” – what could you do to open their eyes to their immaturity?

In my mind, the most obvious answer to this question is: Tell them the truth.

Now...there might be gentler or more creative ways to do this other than simply getting face to face and telling them they are garbage in the eyes of God. But...that certainly would get their attention...Do we have a responsibility to do this?

Seems like it, doesn’t it? Whoever wrote this letter thought so.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better Than Melchizedek**

Hebrews Chapter 7 - Questions

Start out this study by defining these words:

- Jew
- Priest
- Levite
- The Law
- The temple

1. (:1-3) What do we learn about Melchizedek from these three verses, and from Genesis 14:17-24?
2. (:4-10) Was Melchizedek greater than Abraham? Why? Why would this be significant for the readers of this letter?
3. (:11) Could perfection be attained through the keeping of the law?
4. (:12) Levitical (Jewish) priests ministered the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people. What law did Melchizedek minister?

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5. (:13-14) Could Jesus have been a Levitical priest?
  
6. (:15-19) What was the “better hope” ministered by both Melchizidek and Jesus?
  
7. (:20-22) What oath did God swear about Jesus?
  
8. (:23-28) Compare the Levitical Priesthood and the Melchizidekan Priesthood.

### **APPLICATION:**

9. Why does the writer of this letter bring up the whole subject of Melchizidek?  
What difference does this truth make to the Jews who received this letter?
  
10. What difference does this truth make to you?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better Than Melchizedek**

Hebrews Chapter 7 – Discussion Notes

Start out this study with a few definitions:

- Jew: A descendant of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. It’s important to include Isaac & Jacob in this definition, because not all descendants of Abraham are Jews. Abraham was a Jew because God chose him and because Abraham chose God, too. The same is true of Isaac and Jacob. They were chosen of God, and they turned right around and chose God back.

Abraham had other children who did not choose God. Ishmael.

Isaac had other children who did not choose God. Esau.

After Jacob, all descendants were considered Jews, whether or not they chose to live by faith in the One, True God.

- Priest: A person chosen to spend his life introducing people to God, explaining God’s ways, helping people get right with God.
- Levite: A Jewish priest. All Jewish priests were descendants of Isaac, Jacob and Levi. The priests had many different jobs to do in the temple in Israel. They were divided up into 24 “courses”, or “orders”, so as to split up the work which had to be done. Each priest, as part of his group or order, took turns ministering in the temple. The rest of the time he lived in his own home in his own city, and supported his family with not only his priestly income, but also with the crops and livestock he was able to sell.
- The Law: The Ten Commandments + other laws given to the Jewish people in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament). These laws were the truth the priests used to convey to men who God was, and how they could know Him.

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- The temple: A building for worship of God, built in a specific place in Israel, in the city of Jerusalem. God chose the specific place. There could never be such a

thing as a temple of the One, True God located anywhere else. The temple was the place the priests ministered, and was built in such a way to give the priests another tool to explain God to men, and to show them how He must be approached.

1. (:1-3) What do we learn about Melchizedek from these three verses, and from Genesis 14:17-24?

From Hebrews 7:1-3:

- a. He was the King of Salem (means “King of Peace”)
- b. He was the priest of Most High God
- c. He lived in the time of Abraham
- d. Abraham considered him a Priest of the same God he worshipped.
- e. Melchizedek blessed Abraham
- f. Abraham gave a tenth of his goods to Melchizedek, indicating this was his way to give back to God.
- g. His name means “King of righteousness”
- h. No genealogical records are available for him – we know he existed because we see his story recorded in Genesis and because he is mentioned in Psalms and here in Hebrews. But because there are no genealogical records we don’t know when or where he was born, or when or where he died. He has no “pedigree”.
- i. Because he has no records, no proof of death, there is no proof his priesthood ever ended. His right to be a priest still exists today. In this way, he is compared to Jesus, who is also a priest who was never cut off from his job by death.

From Genesis 14:17-24:

- He met Abraham in a valley after Abraham’s great victory in battle.
- He brought bread and wine, meaning his purpose in being there was to host a meal in the presence of the One, True God. He came to minister to the people who had won the battle.
- He gave a blessing from God to Abraham, acknowledging for all involved that it was God who had given this victory.
- Abraham gave a tenth of all the spoils to Melchizedek, acknowledging his submission to this priest of God.
- The other king present at this meeting, the King of Sodom, was there to be sure he got his own people back, who had been taken captive by the enemy.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

2. (:4-10) Was Melchizedek greater than Abraham? Why? Why would this be significant for the readers of this letter?

Yes, Melchizedek was in a position of higher authority than Abraham. Abraham paid “tax” to Melchizedek. Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek.

The priests who would someday be the priests of Israel did, in effect, pay the “tax” and receive the blessing from Melchizedek, too, since they were still “in” Abraham at the time this happened. All of this shows the superiority of Melchizedek to the priests of Israel.

Why is this significant? Because the readers of this letter were sure they were Jews. They were sure they were committed to Abraham and Moses and the Levitical priesthood. But they weren’t sure they were 100% on the side of Jesus. For goodness sake, why not? Jesus was like Melchizedek...even greater than Abraham and Aaron. Again, this writer is showing them they were choosing to be committed to the lesser, not the greater. How silly.

3. (:11) Could perfection be attained through the keeping of the law?

The very fact that Jesus had to come and minister to the world not as a Levitical priest, but as priest like Melchizedek, was proof that the law could never do the whole job. The law was good, but it couldn’t bring a person eternal salvation. The job of the Levitical priests had to be done over and over and over again. If a person was trying to have fellowship with the One, True God under the law, each time that person sinned they were back to square one.

There needed to be another law, and another priest. A law and a priest which could bring people to God once, and have it last for eternity.

4. (:12) Levitical (Jewish) priests ministered the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people. What law did Melchizedek minister?

The New Covenant. The law which could be written on people’s hearts, not just on tablets of stone. (Jeremiah 31:31-37). This law set people free to obey. It empowered people to be all God had intended for them to be. This law is the law of faith. The law of grace. The law of eternal salvation. This law could only be administered by a priest who could offer an eternal sacrifice.

And, this law could be administered to the whole world, not just the Jewish people. Melchizedek was a high priest of God – to the world. Jesus was like Melchizedek...no, not just like...better than Melchizedek.

## Jesus is Better

5. (:13-14) Was Jesus a Levitical priest?

No. He was a Jew, of the tribe of Judah. Not of the tribe of Levi. The two could never be mixed. No Jewish man of the tribe of Judah could ever be a Levitical priest.

6. (:15-19) What was the “better hope” ministered by both Melchizidek and Jesus?

That people could draw near to God based on a sacrifice which was eternally effective. A sacrifice which didn’t have to be repeated once a person sinned again. A sacrifice which was effective not only for Jews, but for anyone, anywhere in the whole world. Melchizidek was this kind of priest. He ministered this truth to a world looking forward to the coming of this eternal sacrifice. The people in Melchizidek’s time were made right with God by faith in the One Who promised that future sacrifice. The people in our time are made right with God by faith in the One who already came and made that sacrifice. Melchizidek ministered the law of faith to the world. Jesus ministers the law of faith to the world.

7. (:20-22) What oath did God swear about Jesus?

God didn’t have to make an oath concerning Jesus. His word was certainly good enough. But He did, so that no man anywhere would have reason to doubt. His oath, made in Psalm 110, simply says, “you are what I said you are. You will be high priest to the world, just like Melchizidek was.”

8. (:23-28) Compare the Levitical Priesthood and the Melchizedekan Priesthood.

Levitical	Melchizedekan
From the tribe of Levi	From the world
Proof of ancestry	No ancestral records
Died	Never died
Ministered the Old law	Ministered the New law
Could never permanently take away sin	Could permanently take away sin
Owes allegiance to Melchizedek	Is owed allegiance by Levites
Priest only, never a king	Both priest and king
Ministers to Jews only	Ministers to the world
Temporary	Permanent

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

9. Why does the writer of this letter bring up the whole subject of Melchizedek? What difference does this truth make to the Jews who received this letter?

It’s becoming obvious, isn’t it? The Jews who were still “sitting on the fence” were being told in yet another way that they were hanging back with Judaism and making a huge mistake. They needed to leave the old, crumbling Judaism behind, and move forward to what Judaism was always meant to point them to. They needed to commit to Jesus.

10. What difference does this truth make to you?

Again, the question has to be: Are you committed to Jesus? Or have you been “riding the fence”, like the recipients of this letter? Are you choosing again and again to be “religious”, or “go to church”, or “clean up your life”, but refusing to bow your knee to Jesus, telling Him you will go with Him anywhere, obey Him completely, love Him forever? Are you willing to be humiliated and persecuted for Him? Are you willing to die for Him? Are you willing to follow Him down the path of unpopularity? Are you willing to be His servant, going where He goes?

“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My father will honor the one who serves me.” (John 12:25-26)

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### Better than the Old Covenant

#### Hebrews Chapter 8 - Questions

1. (:1&2) Where does Christ minister today?
2. (:3) What do high priests offer to God?
3. (:4) At the time of the writing of this letter, there was still a temple in Jerusalem. The writer is asking: If Christ were on earth would He be doing the job of a Levitical priest?
4. (:5) The things the Levitical priests did were actually a “picture” of what?
5. (:6-10) So if Jesus is not a Levitical priest, and is not ministering under the covenant God made with the Jews at Sinai, under what covenant is He working?
6. What was wrong with the first (old) covenant?
7. What is better about the second (new) covenant?
8. (:11-12) What is the end result of the new covenant?
9. (:13) What happened to the old covenant when the new covenant came along?

#### **APPLICATION:**

10. Do you live under the old covenant or the new covenant? Are you trying to obey the Ten Commandments and failing? Or have you given your life to Jesus, and realizing He is giving you the freedom to not have to sin?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better than the Old Covenant**

Hebrews Chapter 8 – Discussion Notes

Besides making sacrifices at the temple, the priests of Israel worked all year long performing religious ceremonies and leading annual holiday-type celebrations, such as the weekly Sabbath rituals, and Passover (in the spring), Pentecost (in the summer), and the three autumn holidays: Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

They knew exactly when and how to do all these things because the Lord had spelled it all out in detail when He gave Moses the Law. The Law was more than just the Ten Commandments. It was a covenant, or agreement, between God and the Jewish people. God promised to be their God, and they promised to do the things He asked them to do. They promised to obey Him, to offer sacrifices when they failed to obey, and to celebrate His Holidays in the special ways He wanted.

The priests of Israel began their ministry for God over 500 years before there was ever a temple in Jerusalem. When Moses led the people of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt the Lord God gave them their instructions about how things should be done. They built a “tabernacle” (a mobile temple) as they wandered about in the wilderness, and conducted their religious ceremonies sort of “on the road”. Once they finally settled down in Israel, over 40 years later, they kept worshipping Him at that tabernacle, until finally King David’s son, Solomon, built the temple, almost 500 years later.

Was God just an arbitrary tyrant who enjoyed making people do hard things? Why did He instruct them so exactly about how things were to be built, and how things were to be done? Because everything He told them to do...literally everything (sizes, dates, times of day, incenses to use, colors to use, instruments to play, food to eat and not to eat, clothes to wear...everything) had a special meaning. Everything was a picture of Himself...what He was like, and how to approach Him. The Jews were given their marching orders in this amazing covenant with God, not to satisfy the whim of a powerful “Wizard of Oz”, but to show the whole world what this God was like, and that He wanted to love them and touch their lives with His goodness. All the rules were God reaching out in love to the world. The Jews made a promise to God that they would play their part of helping the world understand God. That was the first covenant.

It didn’t exactly work. God kept His promises, but the Jews did not. But even in failure, it accomplished something amazing – it showed the world how sinful each person is, and

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how unbelievably merciful God is that He still would reach out to save the ones who failed to keep their end of the bargain.

The Jews, in failing to keep the old Covenant, opened the door for the new.

*“Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.” (:1&2)*

1. (:1&2) Where does Christ minister today?

He has been sitting at the right hand of God ever since He left this earth after His resurrection – 2,000 years ago. The two of them together sit in the heavenly temple, one built by God, not by men.

*“For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer.” (:3)*

2. (:3) What do high priests offer to God?

All high priests have the responsibility to offer gifts and sacrifices to God on behalf of the people they represent. Jesus, as our permanent high priest, does the same in the heavenly tabernacle.

*“Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;” (:4)*

3. (:4) At the time of the writing of this letter, there was still a temple in Jerusalem. The writer is asking: If Christ were on earth would He be doing the job of a Levitical priest?

This verse is repeating what we have seen before in Hebrews. Christ, while on earth, did not offer sacrifices in the earthly temple, because He was not a Levitical priest. And if He was on earth today, He wouldn't be offering sacrifices in the earthly temple, either (if there was one...which there isn't right now). Why not? Because Christ is not a high priest of the old covenant – the original covenant struck with Moses and the Jews at Sinai. That covenant provided for high priests who would offer sacrifices in the temple. Jesus works under a different covenant...a better covenant.

*“who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘See,’ He says, ‘that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain,’” (:5)*

4. (:5) The things the Levitical priests did were actually a “picture” of what? They were all a picture of the way things actually work in heaven. The tabernacle (the mobile temple) and the actual Jerusalem temple were a “pattern” of the heavenly temple.

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

*“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, ‘Behold, days are coming, says the LORD, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’”*  
(:6-10)

5. (:6-10) So if Jesus was not and is not a Levitical high priest, and is not ministering under the covenant God made with the Jews at Sinai, under what covenant is He working?

He’s operating under the “new” covenant. The covenant which came later, after the Jews had failed to keep the “old” covenant. Jesus is ministering like Melchizedek of old – to the whole world – not with sacrifices which must be made over and over again, but with a sacrifice that was made once and for all.

6. What was wrong with the first (old) covenant?

It couldn’t change people. It could make them aware that they needed to be changed, but it couldn’t make that change happen.

7. What is better about the second (new) covenant?

People are forever changed when they enter into the new covenant. For instance, didn’t your life change radically when you became a believer? Didn’t you begin to have a hunger to read your Bible? Didn’t you begin to want to associate with other Christians? Didn’t you start to feel guilty about sinning? Didn’t sin just make you miserable?

Why did all that happen? Because you were fundamentally changed on the inside. God’s laws became written on your heart, not just in your head. When you asked Jesus to be your Savior you became a member of the family of God, and as a member of that family, your spiritual DNA now matched Jesus’ spiritual DNA.

If none of the things I just mentioned above sounds like you, then you should be asking yourself right about now...”Am I a true believer in Jesus?” “Have I just learned the facts about Christianity without really coming face-to-face with Jesus?” “Am I one of those who are in desperate need to Jump Off The Fence?”

## Jesus is Better

*“And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” (:11&12)*

8. (:11-12) What is the end result of the new covenant?

Some day, when every person has had the opportunity to respond to Jesus Christ, we will live in a world where everyone knows God. We will live in a world where there is no sin. That’s the end result of the new covenant.

*“When He said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.” (:13)*

9. (:13) What happened to the old covenant when the new covenant came along?

It faded away. It was no longer necessary, like the rotted plants we dig out of the garden when spring arrives. It had no substance, no reason for being alive anymore. Something better had arrived.

Does that mean we no longer have to obey the Ten Commandments? Does that mean we can sin if we want to, because we no longer have to keep the old covenant? Paul answers that in Romans 6 with a resounding “NO!” Romans chapter 6 could be titled “The New Covenant for Dummies” ...because Paul explains in ringing words that once we join with God in the New Covenant we are not set free to sin....we are set free to not have to sin.

### **APPLICATION:**

10. Do you live under the old covenant or the new covenant? Are you trying to obey the Ten Commandments and failing? Or have you given your life to Jesus, realizing He is giving you the freedom to not have to sin?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better than the Old Temple**

Hebrews Chapter 9 - Questions

1. 9:1-10 How was the tabernacle/temple set up?
2. What was wrong with the tabernacle and the temple?
3. 9:11-13 When Christ entered the heavenly tabernacle, how did He enter?
4. 9:14 What are we able to do once the blood of Christ has cleansed us from sin?
5. 9:15 What does it mean when it says we are “set free” from sins?
6. 9:16&17 What has to happen first before a will can be put into effect? Why?
7. 9:18-22 How is the Old Covenant the same as a will?
8. 9:23-24 When the tabernacle and then the temple were built, what were they copies of?
9. 9:25-26 How many times did an Old Testament High priest have to enter the Holy of Holies to cleanse the people from sin in the old temple?
10. How many times did Jesus have to enter the heavenly temple in order to cleanse people from sin under the New Covenant?

## Jesus is Better

11. 9:27 What is the one thing every person can count on happening in this life?  
What happens next?

12. 9:28 Any exceptions?

### **APPLICATION:**

13. Today there is no temple in Jerusalem. Where is the temple of God today?

14. Can people get a good glimpse of Who God is by watching your life?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Better than the Old Temple**

Hebrews Chapter 9 - Discussion Notes

1. (:1-10) How was the tabernacle/temple set up?

With definite regulations and organization. The first room was called the Holy Place and had a lampstand, and a table of showbread. The next room was called the Most Holy Place and had first a golden altar as you entered, then inside was the ark of the covenant, which contained manna, Aaron’s staff and the stone tablets of the covenant. The ark was covered with cherubim, golden symbols of the angels who guard the covenant.

2. What was wrong with the tabernacle and the temple?

As long as the first tabernacle and temple were standing, they were a testimony to the need for a better tabernacle and temple, because the things which were done there had to be done over and over again. They were simply a place to practice external regulations – which would help the worshipper know there was something better coming.

3. (:11-13) When Christ entered the heavenly tabernacle, how did He enter?

He entered with His own blood, able to cleanse once and for all those who wished to be cleansed. And He entered once. He would never have to bring that blood to the presence of God again. Once was sufficient for every sin that ever had been committed, and every sin that ever would be committed. Any person, anywhere and living in any time, could look in faith to Jesus and be cleansed of all – all – sin.

4. (:14) What are we able to do once the blood of Christ has cleansed us from sin?

We are able to serve the living God! Dead people can’t serve a living God. Only living people can serve a living God. The blood of Jesus Christ moves a person from death to life. Life that lasts forever. A person made alive by the blood of Jesus can never die. “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” (the words of Jesus, recorded in John 11:25, KJV)

## Jesus is Better

5. (:15) What does it mean when it says we are “set free” from sins?  
People who have jumped off the fence and wholeheartedly believed in Jesus are free, no longer prisoners to sin. They no longer have to sin. Yes, they can still sin if we so choose, but they don't have to anymore.
6. (:16&17) What has to happen first before a will can be put into effect? Why? Someone has to die before a will can be put in place and an inheritance passed on. Why? Because the inheritance belongs to the giver of the inheritance, and can only belong to the receiver of the inheritance if the writer of the will has died.
7. (:18-22) How is the Old Covenant the same as a will?  
The Old Covenant offered a gift to the recipient. The gift of a relationship with Almighty God. The gift could not be passed on unless a death took place first. The rituals performed in the Old Temple were for the purpose of helping each person involved to realize a death was coming which would forever pass on to them the right to become the children of God. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God.” (John 1:12 KJV)
8. (:23-24) When the tabernacle and then the temple were built, what were they copies of?  
They were copies of the temple in heaven. Moses was given specific instructions about how to build the tabernacle, and then Solomon followed those same specific instructions as he built the temple, because the tabernacle and then the temple were to be a mirror image of what already existed in heaven. Look at Revelation chapters 4 and 5 to see a small glimpse of what the temple in heaven has always looked like.
9. (:25-26) How many times did an Old Testament High priest have to enter the Holy of Holies to cleanse the people from sin under the Old Covenant?  
Once a year, every year. Again and again.
10. How many times did Jesus have to enter the heavenly temple in order to cleanse people from sin under the New Covenant?  
Once.
11. (:27) What is the one thing every person can count on happening in this life?  
What happens next?  
Death is guaranteed. Then judgment, or reckoning for what was done in this life comes next. Not something anyone wants to have happen – but there is no choice. A reckoning is what God demands.

## **"Jump Off the Fence!"**

### **A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

12. (:28) Any exceptions to this rule?

Sort of. After death, the person who was already judged in this life does not have to go through another judgment.

In other words, if a person waits until after his death to make a reckoning to God of the things he has done, he must appear before that Holy God and will have no way to pay the price necessary for the evil he has done. He will be condemned to Hell.

But, if a person decides in this life to allow God to judge him, declare his punishment, and then allows God to take that punishment Himself, then there is no need for that already pardoned person to appear before God for judgment. The reckoning has already taken place. The price has already been paid. II Thessalonians 5:9

#### **APPLICATION:**

13. Today there is no temple in Jerusalem. Where is the temple of God today? Today each individual believer in Jesus Christ is the temple of God. The Holy Spirit resides within each believer.

14. Can people get a good glimpse of Who God is by watching your life? One of the purposes of the old temple was that it was a place anyone in the world could come and get a glimpse of what God was like. The worshippers who gathered at the temple - who celebrated holidays, made sacrifices, ate certain food, dressed in a certain way - were shining lights to the rest of the world. They shone the truth of Who God was to the watching world. Does that describe you today? You are the temple of God. Is it showing?

## Jesus is Better

### Better Than the Old Sacrifices

#### Hebrews Chapter 10 - Questions

1. (:1-2) If the Old Testament sacrifices had been able to take care of people's sin problem, what would have happened?
2. (:3-4) Could the blood of bulls & goats take away sins?
3. (:5-7) What could take away sins?
4. (:8-9) What came first? What came second? Which was better?
5. (:10) What finally was able to make people holy?
6. (:11) How often did the Old Testament priests have to offer sacrifices?
7. (:12-14) How often did Jesus – the best priest ever – have to offer a sacrifice? What did He do after He offered that sacrifice?
8. (:15-17) Where did the Holy Spirit say this?
9. (:18) Once someone's sins have been forgiven by the sacrifice of Jesus, is there ever a need for a sacrifice again?
10. (:19-25) Therefore, since a true Christian is completely, forever forgiven, what is the true Christian able to do?
  - (:22)
  - (:23)
  - (:24)
  - (:25)

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

11. (:26-29) What is left for the one who sins by being aware of the truth, but still rejecting Jesus?
12. (:30-31) What do we know for sure God will do with those who reject Jesus?
13. (:32-34) What had some of these “fence-riders” gone through?
14. (:35-38) This was not the time to \_\_\_\_\_, but a time to do the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. (And what was the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_? - see John 6:29)
15. (:39) This writer is not one of those who shrink back – what does he want his readers to do?

**APPLICATION:**

16. The writer of this book has shown us that Jesus is better than:
  - 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)
  - 4)
  - 5)
  - 6)
  - 7)
  - 8)
17. Have you jumped off the fence and given your life wholeheartedly to Jesus?

## Jesus is Better

### Better Than the Old Sacrifices

Hebrews Chapter 10 - Discussion Notes

As I began teaching this series on Hebrews I dreaded reaching this chapter because I knew there were verses here which seemed to say a person could lose their salvation. From so many other places in scripture I was convinced that was not a possibility...but what was I going to do with these verses in Hebrews 10?

Today I looked at those troublesome verses. Imagine my surprise and pleasure when I realized that what I had learned in Hebrews up to this point helped me to look at those verses in the right way, and suddenly they presented no problem at all.

Look at Hebrews 10:26-29 and see what I mean:

*“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:26-29)*

You can see that a swift glance at this passage might convince the reader that sinning after salvation could plop a believer right back into a hopeless unsaved condition.

But now that I know, after 9 chapters of seeing it again and again, that this letter was written to people who were riding the fence, not sure whether or not to accept Jesus Christ as the Lord, afraid to face the persecution which would surely come when they totally committed themselves to Him, I clearly see that the above verses are simply saying: Anyone who sins by rejecting Christ as the only way of salvation has no hope of anything else or anyone else ever being able to save him. Rejection of Christ leaves the hopeless sinner in a hopeless situation...there is no other sacrifice for sins.

How cool is that?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

Now let’s walk through this passage verse-by-verse and make sure the whole context of the passage supports my relieved thoughts:

*“For the Law, since it has only a shadow of good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?”*  
(:1&2)

1. (:1-2) If the Old Testament sacrifices had been able to take care of people’s sin problem, what would have happened?  
Sacrifices would have stopped being offered.

*“But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* (3&4)

2. (:3-4) Could the blood of bulls & goats take away sins?  
No.

*“Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me; in whole burnt offerings You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.’”* (:5-7)

3. (:5-7) What could take away sins?  
Jesus Himself. Doing God’s will in His own body.

*“After saying above, ‘Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them’ (which are according to the Law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will.’” He takes away the first in order to establish the second.”* (:8&9)

4. (:8-9) What came first? What came second? Which was better?  
First: The law – blood of bulls and goats being offered for sins.  
Second: Jesus - The sacrifice of His own body – once and for all

*“By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* (:10)

5. (:10) What finally was able to make people holy?  
Only the sacrifice of Jesus actually made people holy. The sacrifices required by the law were only able to point to a time when holiness could be achieved.

## Jesus is Better

*“Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;” (:11)*

6. (:11) How often did the Old Testament priests have to offer sacrifices? Every day, over and over again, unending. They never sat down.

*“but He, having offered once sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” (:12-14)*

7. (:12-14) How often did Jesus – the best high priest ever – have to offer a sacrifice? What did He do after He offered that sacrifice?  
Once, and only once. And then he sat down.

*“And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them.’, He then says, ‘And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’” (:15-17)*

8. (:15-17) Where did the Holy Spirit say this?  
Jeremiah 31:33&34. Why does the writer bring this up? It was another proof that the sacrifice of Jesus was what God had in mind all along.

*“Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.” (:18)*

9. (:18) Once someone’s sins have been forgiven by the sacrifice of Jesus, is there ever a need for a sacrifice again?  
Nope.

*“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day approaching.” (:19-25)*

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

10. (:19-25) Therefore, since a true Christian is completely, forever forgiven, what is the true Christian able to do?
- (:22) Draw near to God with a clean conscience.
  - (:23) Live with hope.
  - (:24) Spur on other believers to do the most they possibly can with their lives
  - (:25) Gather together in church faithfully, regularly, to love one another and spur one another on.

*“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of Grace?” (:26-29)*

11. (:26-29) What is left for the one who sins by being aware of the truth, but still rejecting Jesus?

Certain judgment by fire (see Revelation 20:11-15)

*“For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (:30&31)*

12. (:30-31) What do we know for sure God will do with those who reject Jesus? Judge and punish eternally.

*“But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.” (:32-34)*

13. (:32-34) What had some of these “fence-riders” gone through?

They had seen and experienced persecution already, perhaps because they were friends with people who had made commitments to Jesus. It was probably those painful experiences which caused them to climb up on the fence in the first place. They had visited those who had been imprisoned, and even seen their own goods confiscated, simply because they had sympathized with true believers.

## Jesus is Better

*“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if He shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” (:35-38)*

14. (:35-38) This was not the time to shrink back, but a time to do the will of God. (And what was the will of God? - see John 6:29) The will of God is always: believe in Jesus.

*“But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.” (:39)*

15. (:39) This writer is not one of those who shrink back – what does he want his readers to do?

He wants his readers to jump forward...off the fence...into the arms of Jesus, committing the rest of their lives to living wholeheartedly for Him...no matter what may come as a result of their decision. He wants them to **JUMP OFF THE FENCE!!!!**

### APPLICATION:

16. The writer of this book has shown us that Jesus is better than:

- 1) Angels
- 2) Moses
- 3) Sabbath
- 4) High Priest
- 5) Melchizedek
- 6) Old Covenant
- 7) Old Temple
- 8) Old Sacrifices

17. Have you jumped off the fence and given your life wholeheartedly to Jesus? What could possibly keep any person anywhere from jumping off the fence after they saw all these irrefutable arguments for the superiority of Jesus? The only thing which ever keeps anyone from Jesus, after all, is sin.

“...Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Jump Off The Fence!!!! - Have Faith**  
 Hebrews Chapter 11 - Questions

1. (:1&2) What is faith?
2. (:3) What is one thing all of us take by faith?
3. (:4-38) After reading through these verses - please answer:....
  - What were all these Old Testament people having faith in?
  - What action was the proof of their faith?
  - What was the result of their faith?
  - What do all these people have in common?
  - The first three people in this list are very different from the rest...who are they and how are they different?
  -

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Result of faith?</b>
:4	Abel	
:5	Enoch	
:7	Noah	
:8	Abraham	
:20	Isaac	
:21	Jacob	
:22	Joseph	
:23	Moses	
:29	The people	
:31	Rahab	
:32	Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets	
:35	Women	
:36	Some & others	
:37	They	

## Jesus is Better

4. (:39) What were all of these people waiting for which they didn't receive?
5. (:40) What needed to happen before these Old Testament people could be made "perfect", or "complete"?

### **APPLICATION:**

6. Are you living by faith?
7. How can you tell?
8. What has been promised to you which you have not yet received, yet you know you definitely will someday receive it?
9. What is God waiting for?
10. Why was this such a significant message for the readers of Hebrews?

**“Jump Off the Fence!”**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

**Jump Off The Fence!!!! - Have Faith**

Hebrews Chapter 11 - Discussion Notes

It's time to close the sale. The readers of Hebrews have heard all the arguments for the superiority of Jesus – now it is time they took action, made a decision, jumped off the fence.

- In Chapter 11 they are going to understand they need to take a step of **faith**.
- In Chapter 12 they will see they need to have **courage**.
- And in Chapter 13 they will be given instructions on how to keep going....fall in love with and learn to serve with the group of believers who will be their **church**.

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.” (:1&2)*

1. (:1) What is faith?

This is a good place to try to define faith in each person's own words. All of us are going to phrase it a little differently, but the important thing is to understand that faith is not just a feeling. Faith is an action you take based on something you know is true.

A good illustration of faith begins with a chair. If you take a chair and put it in front of you, you can spend as much time as you want examining the chair to be sure it is well-built. You can step back and get a sense of the beauty of the chair. You can do a little research and find out the history of the chair, who made it, when they made it, what materials they used. You can note the color, the age, the measurements. And when you are through looking at the chair you can be completely assured that it is a good chair, one which would hold you up if you sat on it, perhaps even one you would want to have in your home.

So. Is that faith? Do you have faith in that chair if you have examined it well and are assured it is a good chair?

No. You have faith in that chair if you sit in it. You have faith in that chair if you buy it.

Faith is an action based on what you know is true. Just knowing the facts is not enough. Faith involves something you do because of what you know.

## Jesus is Better

The writer of Hebrews is now going to take his readers on an arm-chair tour of a history they know very well. He's going to remind them of their own ancestors, and of the lives they lived because of faith.

*“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”*

(:3)

2. (:3) What is one thing all of us take by faith?

He starts out with something his readers all had in common. They all believed God Himself had created the world. Sometimes, in a discussion about faith, it helps to find commonality. Everyone has faith in something. The question for these readers was not whether or not they wanted to have faith. The question was whether or not they wanted to have faith in Jesus.

*By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.*

*By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.*

*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who<sup>1</sup> comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

*By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of<sup>1</sup> the righteousness which is according to faith.*

*By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.*

**"Jump Off the Fence!"**  
**A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Hebrews**

*Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "in Isaac your descendants shall be called" He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*

*By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

*By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*

*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.*

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.*

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*By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.*

*And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*

*Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.*

*They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treat (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.*

3. (:4-38) After reading through these verses - please answer:....
- What were all these Old Testament people having faith in?  
In a future promise of deliverance from the ugliness of sin.
  - What action was the proof of their faith?  
Each person acted in a different way – all of those in this list took great risk in the actions they took.
  - What was the result of their faith? (see below)
  - What do all these people have in common?  
They all had faith in the promises of God.  
They all lived in the Old Testament times
  - The first three people in this list are very different from the rest...who are they and how are they different?  
They were not Jews.

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Result of faith?</b>
:4	Abel	He was killed by his brother
:5	Enoch	He never died – the Lord took him to heaven
:7	Noah	He built a boat and preached to his neighbors
:8	Abraham	He moved from his home to a

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		strange land. He offered up his son upon an altar.
:20	Isaac	He inherited the promises given to his father. He lived in the place God told him to live. He received the blessing of God, instead of his brother
:21	Jacob	He passed on the blessing of God to each of his 12 sons
:22	Joseph	He expected to be brought back to Israel and gave instructions for his descendants to bring his bones back there if he should die first.
:23	Moses	He chose to be known as a Jew. He chose to speak for God even though he was very afraid. He chose to lead the people of Israel even though they were cruel to him.
:29	The people	They walked through the Red Sea, terrified.
:31	Rahab	She hid the spies from Israel, risking her life.
:32	Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets	Acts of bravery even when they were weak and afraid. Enduring suffering.
:35	Women	Refused to recant their faith, even in the face of torture and death of their children
:36	Some & others	Prison, chains, suffering
:37	They	Great suffering, no home here on this earth.

*"And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised." (:39)*

4. (:39) What were all of these people waiting for which they didn't receive? The fulfillment of God's promise – a Savior from sin.

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*“because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.” (:40)*

5. (:40) What needed to happen before these Old Testament people could be made “perfect”, or “complete”?

The rest of those who would believe needed to also come to faith.

### **APPLICATION:**

6. Are you living by faith?
7. How can you tell?
8. What has been promised to you which you have not yet received, yet you know you definitely will someday receive it?
9. What is God waiting for?
10. Why was this such a significant message for the readers of Hebrews?

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**Jump Off The Fence!!!! - Be Courageous**  
Hebrews Chapter 12

Let's use chapter 12 as an exercise in personal Bible study.

If you are leading a Bible Study group, do not prepare any questions in advance for this chapter. If you are reading through this Bible Study for your own personal devotional time, use this exercise as a learning tool. This may be a great way to continue to read your Bible when you don't have a formal Bible study to follow.

The following verses in chapter 12 have been grouped in sections. Read each section and then come up with either:

- 1) a question you would suggest in a group meeting to get the participants to discuss that section. The question could either be factual – for instance – something you don't understand or don't know about the verses. Or it could be rhetorical – in other words – a question you already know the answer to, but it could stimulate discussion amongst your group.

- or -

- 2) An illustration from your own life or someone else's of what the passage is saying.

I'll start us out with verse 1 and give you an example:

*:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..”*

**Factual Question:** What “great cloud of witnesses” is he talking about?

**Rhetorical Question:** In what way does sin “entangle” us? What sins might do that?

**Illustration:** In December of 1978 we lived in a little farmhouse in Ft. Morgan, Colorado. We were starting a church there and struggling to survive. The house was heated with propane. It was winter, and the wind blew like crazy. It was 20 below one night – and we knew that the propane was about to run out. We hadn't had the money to get the tank refilled that day – we were hoping against hope that the propane would last through the night so that we could figure out a way to take care of it the next day. All we had to do was get through that night. We weren't really worried – we had seen so many miracles in those months in Ft. Morgan – we figured we'd have a wonderful story to tell some day about the propane lasting through the night. We put the kids to bed upstairs and then Ken and I stayed up and prayed together. I remember us sitting on the couch with our arms around each other. We prayed that we would trust our Lord, Jesus, and praise

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Him, and we thanked Him that He had put us in this situation for whatever purpose He had in mind. Then we just sat there and fell asleep.

About 2:00 in the morning we heard the propane run out. It made a sort of popping noise. Suddenly we felt like the loneliest 2 people on the face of the earth. Nobody anywhere knew what we were going through. It was 20 below outside, the wind was howling across our little farm field, and with no heat in the house we didn't know what was going to happen. The kids were still sleeping upstairs. Ken said, "Honey, just go back to sleep and I'll stay awake – and somehow, something will happen. We'll make it through the night." I was terrified. I started thinking that in the morning my kids would be frozen. We both finally fell asleep, arms around each other, on the couch.

The miracle was not that the propane lasted. The miracle was that the house didn't get cold. That drafty old farmhouse never got below 65 degrees. We woke up alive and warm, got a check in the mail the next day, filled our tank, and life went on again.

I tell you this story because that night when we sat on the couch and prayed together and heard the propane run out and felt that loneliness, like there was no one who knew what we were going through, the truth is that there was. Jesus was there, of course. But also there was (I think) a whole cloud of witnesses sitting around us in our living room. There were some believers from Old Testament times. Some of them had been sawed in half for their faith. And there were some missionaries who had given up all in order to serve God on the mission field in Bolivia and Indonesia. There were people of God from all through history who knew what it was to make a sacrifice for God. They were watching us. They wanted us to make it by faith. They had lived by faith themselves, and because of that, they had kept the truth alive, and we were getting our chance to live for God, too.

Now, try coming up with your own questions and/or illustrations for the rest of this chapter:

*:2&3 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."*

**Question or Illustration:**

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*:4-6 “In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:*

*“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
because the Lord disciplines those he loves,  
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”*

**Question or Illustration:**

*:7-11 “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 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.”*

**Question or Illustration:**

*:12&13 “Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.”*

**Question or Illustration:**

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*:14&15 “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”*

### **Question or Illustration:**

*:16&17 “ See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.”*

### **Question or Illustration:**

*:18-24 “You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: ‘If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.’ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear.’ But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*

### **Question or Illustration:**

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*:25 “See to it that yo do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from his who warns us from heaven?”*

**Question or Illustration:**

*:26-28 “At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”*

**Question or Illustration:**

*:29 “...for our God is a consuming fire.”*

**Question or Illustration:**

You can use this method to study any passage in the Bible on your own. Why not choose a book of the Bible today, and decide to work your way through it, a few verses at a time, day after day, coming up with either questions or illustrations? You will learn a lot as you see to answer those questions for yourself, you will see how practical it is as you think of ways it applies in your life, and it will give you quality time to listen to God through His Word.

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Are you reading or studying the Bible every day? Why not? What is keeping you from doing it?

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Hebrews 12:1*

**"Jump Off the Fence!"**  
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**Jump Off The Fence!!!! – Finish Strong**  
Hebrews Chapter 13

We're going to finish up the book of Hebrews with another exercise in personal Bible study.

Simply read the following verse or set of verses from chapter 13, and put them into your own words:

- :1
- :2
- :3
- :4
- :5&6
- :7
- :8
- :9&10
- :11&12
- :13
- :14
- :15
- :16
- :17
- :18&19
- :20&21

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- :22
- :23
- :24
- :25

On Nov. 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City. If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches. To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is an awesome sight.

He walks painfully, yet majestically, until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play.

By now, the audience is used to this ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he undoes the clasps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But this time, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap - it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. There was no mistaking what he had to do. We figured that he would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off stage - to either find another violin or else find another string for this one. But he didn't. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes and then signaled the conductor to begin again.

The orchestra began, and he played from where he had left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity as they had never heard before.

Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that, and you know that, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that.

You could see him modulating, changing, re-composing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them that they had never made before. When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from

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every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, screaming and cheering, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from this brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said - not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone - "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

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No matter what your life has been like up to this point, the question is not how are you going to overcome or forget or cover up all your inabilities or moments of little faith. The question is: Are you Going to Finish Strong? Are you going to live by faith in Jesus for the rest of your life...instead of faith in anything else? Are you going to take the time you have left and see what God can do with a submitted servant of God...no matter what you have or haven't done up to this point?

I'll make you a promise: If you make a life commitment to open your Bible every day and study or memorize or pray as you read, you will finish strong.

## Jesus is Better



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