



# Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church

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*Living  
for  
Jesus*

## **Introduction**

The letter to the Hebrews portrays our Lord Jesus Christ in the most grand of terms. And because Jesus is so great, we are urged to live our lives for him, committed to him in every way, not hardening our hearts, not falling away, but ‘offering the fruit of lips which confess his name .. not forgetting to do good and to share with others.’ (See Hebrews 13:15-16)

The letter to the Hebrews helps us get our perspective on things right. This world is temporary, it is passing away, it is not our real home (11:13-16). Our true home is in heaven where Christ already is.

But that certainly does not mean that our life on earth is unimportant. Quite the contrary. And it will be the main focus of these studies to draw out what a life committed to Christ is like, and to encourage us all to live such a life.

The Christian life is thought of as a long distance race (12:1-3). Just as in a race, commitment is needed. But Jesus has run the race before us. He was tested and tempted in every way just as we are, he but did not sin (4:16) and so is able to sympathise with us and help us. Because of Jesus we can approach the very throne of God with confidence.

But the Christian life is not entirely like a long distance race. The long distance runner in a sense runs his own race, alone; but in contrast the Christian life is not a lonely one. We are saved into a family of believers. We are urged to meet together, encouraging one another, spurring one another on towards love and good deeds - love towards God and towards other people, and good deeds which reflect the love of Jesus to his world. (See 10:24-25)

Many of you will be using these study notes in Home Church Groups, and so will have a special opportunity to put these studies into practice, as we help and urge each other to live lives committed passionately to Jesus, and therefore pleasing to God.

My prayer for this series, is the prayer with which the letter concludes:

*“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen  
(Heb 13:20-21)*

Max Gilbert 2003

## **Week 1**

**THEME: Such a Great Salvation.**

**Day 1 Heb 1:1-4.                    God has spoken to us in his son.**

What is said about Jesus in these verses?

**Day 2 Heb 1:5.                    Jesus and God the Father.**

How does Jesus relate to God? How is this different from the way God relates to the angels?

**Day 3 Heb 1:6-9.                Jesus as God.**

Find the places where God calls Jesus God.

**Day 4 Heb 1:10-14.            Jesus and the created world.**

In what ways is Jesus different from the created world?

**Day 5 Heb 2:1-4                Such a Great Salvation.**

What warning is given here?

## STUDY PASSAGE Heb 1:1-2:4

### To Discuss:

1. Discuss your answers to the question for day 1. (There are a great many things said about Jesus in these verses.) Which one of these things about Jesus stands out most for you?
2. In what ways is Jesus superior to the angels? (v5-13). What things are said about Jesus that could only apply to God?
3. Because Jesus is such a great saviour, the salvation which we have through faith in him, is also “such a great salvation” (2:3).  
How do people know about the reality of this salvation? (2:3-4). What is your experience of this evidence?
4. There is a severe warning given to us in 2:1-3a. What is it?

This letter is addressed to Christians, and so it is speaking about the possibility of even Christians ‘ignoring such a great salvation’. In what ways can Christians ‘ignore their salvation’?

Discuss ways that you, individually, and as a Home Church Group, can ‘pay more careful attention to what we have heard so that none of us drift away. (see 2:1)

**PRAY** for someone else in your group, that he/she might really pay careful attention to his/her great saviour and great salvation. Are you willing to let someone pray likewise for you?

## **Week 2**

**THEME: Jesus helps us in temptation and has freed us from the fear of death.**

**Day 1 Heb 2:5-8. God's purpose for humanity.**

'Son of man' here means simply 'man'. Compare these verses with Gen 1:28. What is God's purpose for humanity?

**Day 2 Heb 2:8-9. God's purpose for humanity.**

If you observe the world around you, do you think God's purpose has been fulfilled? How is it fulfilled in Jesus?

**Day 3 Heb 2:10-11. Jesus is our brother.**

What was Jesus not ashamed of?

**Day 4 Heb 2:14-15. Jesus defeats Satan and death.**

What was Jesus able to do because he shared in our humanity?

**Day 5 Heb 2:16-18. Jesus, our helper.**

Why is Jesus able to help us when we are tempted?

## STUDY PASSAGE Heb 2:5-18

### To Discuss:

1. Discuss how it can help or hinder if a teacher or youth leader identifies closely with his students or youth group.
2. Last week we saw how great Jesus is. He is greater than us in so many ways. Yet this passage describes how much he is like us and why this is so important. Make a list of all the ways Jesus is said to be like us, and how he associates with us.
3. What reasons does this passage give for why Jesus (though he is God) shared in our humanity?
4. Being honest, are there some things that you are reluctant to do for God because of your 'fear of death' (v14). Discuss ways that people in general are 'held in slavery by their fear of death'.
5. Take some time to think about temptations and fears you face in life. What alternatives do you have for dealing with these temptations and fears? In the light of it this passage, what is the benefit of coming to Jesus for help? Where *will* you go for help?

**PRAY** Thank God that he has rescued us from the fear of death, and pray that with the help of Jesus our lives will reflect that freedom from fear.

## **Week 3**

**THEME: Today if you hear his voice ...**

**Day 1 Heb 3:7-11. The rebellion of the Israelites.**

This passage is quoted from Psalm 95, which in turn refers to the rebellion of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. Read Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 14:26-30. How did God punish these Israelites when they rebelled against Moses/God?

**Day 2 Heb 3:12-13. Do not have a sinful, unbelieving heart.**

The writer appeals to his readers not to have something. What? What should they do instead?

**Day 3 Heb 3:14-19. The Promise of God's rest.**

Why were the Israelites not able to enter into God's rest?

**Day 4 Heb 4:1-11. God's Rest for his people.**

Is God's offer of rest for his people still open?

**Day 5 Heb 4:12-13. God's penetrating word.**

How does God's word show that it is alive?

## STUDY PASSAGE Hebrews 4:1-13

### To Discuss:

1. How do people hear God's voice today?
2. God's promise of rest for his people still stands (4:1). Why was this promise of no value to the ancient Israelites who came out of Egypt? (Refer 4:3, 6 and the questions for Day 1 and 2) How *can* the promise be of value? (4:3)
3. What things does the passage say about God's rest? (Consider what each verse from 1 to 10 says about it.) In what ways do you experience and/or desire God's rest?
4. The passage says repeatedly "do not harden your hearts". (3:7, 15; 4:7). It also refers to the possibility of being 'hardened by sin's deceitfulness' (3:13). Discuss how 'hardening your heart' might be different and worse than merely 'not hearing' God.
5. Discuss what you and your home church group can do to avoid growing hearts which are hard towards God (consider 3:12-13; 4:1, 11) and, conversely, how you can 'make every effort to enter that rest'.

**PRAY** that we might hear God's voice and enter his rest.

## **Week 4**

**THEME: The danger of falling away from Christ.**

**Day 1 Heb 4:14-16. Jesus the Great High Priest.**

Why can we approach God with confidence?

**Day 2 Heb 5:1-10 Jesus - perfect Son and perfect Saviour.**

How did Jesus' life on earth equip him to be a perfect saviour?

**Day 3 Heb 5:11-6:12. Danger of Falling away.**

What is the writer's purpose in this section? (6:11-12)

**Day 4 Heb 6:13-20. God's promise.**

Why is our Christian hope "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure"?

**Day 5 Heb 7:1-10. Jesus - priest forever.**

Jesus is described as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 5:6; 6:20; Ps 110:4). What does this indicate about Jesus' priesthood?

## **STUDY PASSAGE: Hebrews 5:11-6:12.**

### **To Discuss:**

1. It has been said that the Christian life is like riding a bike - you keep going forward, or you fall off. What are some signs of 'growth' or 'going forward' in the Christian life?

2. Read 6:4-6. Think about someone you know who was a Christian, or appeared to be a Christian, but who seems to no longer follow Christ. Discuss why or how this happened, and how things might have been done better.

3. Discuss why it is generally very hard to bring such a person back to repentance. Do you think we could ever know that a person has 'really fallen away' to the extent that would make repentance impossible (as in v6)?

4. There is a severe warning to us in this passage - that of falling away from Christ and not being able to return. Consider how you should seek to protect yourself, your children and your friends from falling away.

**PRAY** Is there someone you know who seems to be falling away now? Think and pray about what you should do.

## **Week 5**

**THEME: Waiting for Christ.**

**Day 1 Heb 7:26 - 8:6                      Jesus, our high priest.**

Where does Jesus serve as priest and how is his work different from that of an earthly priest?

**Day 2 Heb 8:7-13                      The New Covenant.**

What is *new* about the New Covenant? (8:10-12)

**Day 3 Heb 9:1-10.                      The Old, External Regulations.**

These verses describe the Old Testament temple (tabernacle) regulations. What can you say about these regulations, based on v8-10?

**Day 4 Heb 9:11-15.                      Priest and Sacrifice in the New Covenant.**

In the Old Testament temple (tabernacle), there was a priest who offered sacrifices of animals. In the New Covenant, who is the priest, what is sacrificed, and where is the temple (tabernacle).

**Day 5 Heb 9:16-28.                      Once for all.**

How many times does Christ have to make his sacrifice for sin? Why?

## **STUDY PASSAGE Hebrews 9:11-28.**

### **To Discuss:**

- 1.** Heb 9:11 speaks of “the good things that are already here.” Discuss in what ways you can already experience heaven now. Conversely, describe what are you looking forward to as a person who is waiting for Jesus to return (v28)?
- 2.** What did Jesus do and what effects does this have on us? (v11-14). Why did Jesus have to die? (v22) What do verses 23-28 say about what Jesus is doing now?
- 3.** Jesus came to earth once, and he will come again (v26b-28). What is the essential difference between these two comings?
- 4.** Discuss what v27 says about death and judgement. What would you say to a person who is not sure whether to accept Jesus as her Lord and Saviour, and thinks that she will wait till after death - if Jesus is real, she can decide to trust him then.
- 5.** Has this reading and discussion affected your relationship with Jesus? In what way?

**PRAY** Thank Jesus for what he has done for us.

## **Week 6**

**THEME: Spur one another on towards love!**

**Day 1 Heb 10:1-4. The Law/Sacrifices are a mere shadow.**

How do we know that the ritual sacrifices of OT worship had no lasting value?

**Day 2 Heb 10:5-10. The sacrifice of Christ.**

What are the differences between the sacrifices of the OT testament, and the sacrifice of Christ?

**Day 3 Heb 10:11-18. The New Covenant.**

What are the features of the new covenant? (A covenant describes the way that God relates to his people)

**Day 4 Heb 10:19-31. Let us draw near to God.**

Why and how can we draw near to God? (v19-22.)

**Day 5 Heb 10:32-39. Standing firm when persecuted.**

Why did the people who received this letter joyfully accept the confiscation of their property?

## STUDY PASSAGE Hebrews 10:19-39.

### To Discuss:

1. How would you respond to someone who said, “I don’t need to go to church to be a Christian?”

2. Hebrews 7:1 - 10:18 is a long section which describes Jesus and his death for us, once for all. Then Heb 10:19-25 urges us to respond to Jesus in many ways. How should we respond, according to this passage?

3. Read Heb 10:24 carefully, thinking especially about the words “consider”, “spur on”, “love” and “good deeds”. “*Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*” (NIV)

Where does the image of ‘spurring on’ come from? What sorts of actions could be counted as ‘spurring on’ towards love?

Spend some time actually doing this, ie *plan* how you can spur one another on.

4. What is the warning given in v26-31?

5. What is the encouragement given in v32-37? If someone *really* believed that she “had better and lasting possessions” (v34) what difference would that make to the way she used her earthly possessions? or her life? Think of specific examples.

**PRAY** Thank God that he has not saved us as individuals, but as a fellowship, so that we may spur one another on.

## **Week 7**

**THEME: Such a Great Cloud of Witnesses.**

**Day 1 Heb 11:1 Faith.**

How is faith described in this verse?

**Day 2 Heb 11:2-7. Three Old Testament Greats.**

Which three OT great ones are mentioned here? What do they share in common?

**Day 3 Heb 11:8-19. Abraham.**

What things did Abraham do which showed his faith?

**Day 4 Heb 11:20-29. Moses.**

How did Moses' parents show their faith?

**Day 5 Heb 11:30-39. A roll call of unnamed heroes of faith.**

Can you recognise any of the unnamed heroes of faith?

**STUDY PASSAGE: Heb 11:1-16, 32-40.**

**To Discuss:**

1. Who is your favourite character from the Bible? Describe what impresses you about him/her? Are there any Christians who have made a big impact on your life?

2. Discuss the ways Abraham showed his faith. What was the fruit of his faith?

3. Comparing 11:1 and 11:13, what do you think it means to say that they were still living by faith when they died?

Look up Gen 23:4 as an example of Abraham describing himself as an ‘alien and stranger’. What does this mean about whether or not God had fulfilled his promises to Abraham? (Heb 11:15-16)

What encouragement for us does the author draw out of the fact that all these faithful people have not yet received what God had promised? (11:39-40)

4. What do you think was the point of listing this roll call of the faithful from the Bible? What effects does it have on your own Christian life to know that so many like this have gone before you.

**PRAY** for a faith which remains sure of what we hope for, through bad times and good times.

## **Week 8**

**THEME: Fix your eyes upon Jesus.**

**Day 1 Heb 12:1.                    Such a great cloud of witnesses.**

Look back over chapter 11 and recall the names and deeds of some of these witnesses.

**Day 2 Heb 12:2-3.                Throwing off.**

What do these verses urge us to throw off?

**Day 3 Heb 12:2-3.                Jesus - author and perfecter of our faith.**

These verses urge us to fix our eyes upon Jesus. What aspects of Jesus' person and work are highlighted for us here.

**Day 4 Heb 12:4-11.                God is our father.**

What aspect of God's fatherhood is described here?

**Day 5 Heb 12:12-13.                Response to God's discipline.**

How are we encouraged to respond to God's discipline?

## **STUDY PASSAGE: Hebrews 12:1-13.**

### **To Discuss:**

1. Think of a very long and difficult task that you have done (or perhaps something you have seen a friend or relative do.) What sort of things kept you going? What sort of things were a hindrance? How did you deal with them?

2. In v1, the author describes the Christian life as a long distance race. In the race there are things which can hinder and entangle us. In what ways do you find this a helpful description of your Christian life? Discuss what sort of things can hinder and entangle us in our Christian lives? How can we go about ‘throwing them off’?

3. In this race, we are to ‘fix our eyes upon Jesus’ (v2). This can be understood in two ways: (i) he is the ‘goal’ or ‘finish line’ towards whom we are running; and (ii) he is a fellow runner, example or helper in the race. Discuss practical ways in which we can ‘**fix** our eyes upon Jesus’. How can we assess whether or not our eyes are fixed on Jesus?

4. In v4-11 the description of the Christian life changes from a race, to that of Father and son. How are the hardships of the Christian life described here? Discuss some hardship you have faced and how these verses did or could have helped you to ‘endure this hardship’ (v7). Do you think that this description applies to all the hardships you face?

**PRAY** that Christ might perfect our faith (v2) and that we might persevere in the race.

## **Week 9**

**THEME: Our God is a Consuming Fire.**

**Day 1 Heb 12:14-17. Don't miss the grace of God.**

Why was Esau rejected?

**Day 2 Heb 12:18-21. We have not come to Mt Sinai.**

Read Exodus 19, and note how Heb 12:18-21 refers to that chapter.

**Day 3 Heb 12:22-24. We have come to the Heavenly Jerusalem.**

Does this say we will one day come to the heavenly Jerusalem, or that we have already come to it?

**Day 4 Heb 12:25-27. Do not refuse God!**

What happened to the Israelites when they did not listen to God on Mount Sinai? (Refer Numbers 14:20-23). What is the warning to us?

**Day 5 Heb 12:28-29. Our God is a consuming Fire.**

Why should we 'worship God with reverence and awe'?

## **STUDY PASSAGE: Hebrews 12:14-29.**

### **To Discuss:**

- 1.** Think of three words or phrases you would use to describe God. What do these words mean to you?
  
- 2.** Read verses 22 - 24 carefully and discuss what they mean. Exactly what do they mean about our current position with God and with other Christians? In what ways do you experience this as a reality?
  
- 3.** From this passage, describe the consequences of refusing God, or disobeying him, for (i) Esau (v14-17); (ii) the Israelites (v18-21, 25); (iii) us (v22-24, 25-28).
  
- 4.** Verse 29 describes our God as “a consuming fire”. Did any of your phrases in Question 1 mean anything similar to this? Why would God be described like this in the light of this passage v14-29?
  
- 5.** Why should we be thankful and worship God with reverence and awe? (v26-29) Discuss ways that you can do these things, both as a group and as individuals.

**PRAY** Thank God for what we have received and are receiving from him, and that he might enable us to respond to him as he desires.

## **Week 10**

**THEME: The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.**

**Day 1 Heb 13:1-3. Entertaining strangers.**

What are the four groups of people referred to here. How should we relate to each group?

**Day 2 Heb 13:4-8. Love of money.**

What reason is given for avoiding the love of money?

**Day 3 Heb 13:9-14 Our true home.**

Why can we look in hope beyond the troubles we may experience now? (v14)

**Day 4 Heb 13:15-20. Christian Sacrifice.**

In the OT it was animals that were sacrificed to God. What are the sacrifices that Christians are to continually offer to God?

**Day 5 Heb 13:20-25. A final prayer.**

What does the prayer in v20-21 ask of God?

## **STUDY PASSAGE: Hebrews 13:1-25.**

### **To Discuss:**

**1.** Verses 1 to 4 refer to various categories of people: (1) brothers (ie fellow Christians); (2) strangers; (3) prisoners; (4) mistreated people; (5) spouses. Think of people you know in 2 or 3 of these categories, and, without identifying them, discuss how Christians do (ie actually) relate to such people.

**2.** In what ways do you think our attitude to money (v5) affects our willingness to relate to people as verses 1-4 indicate that we should? Do you think people are sometimes *afraid* to be generous with their money and to be loving towards people?

**3.** What reasons does the writer give for why we *can* be fearless in our generosity and love towards people (v5b-8)? Do you find these reasons convincing or adequate? Why or why not?

**4.** Discuss how verses 11-14 sum up what it means to be a Christian and to live a life committed to him.

**PRAY** a prayer based on verses 20-21.

## **HOW TO USE THESE NOTES**

- 1.** Read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. Make a note of your answer and any difficulties you have.
- 2.** The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
- 3.** The study passages follow the morning and evening sermon series. You may find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
- 4.** Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word.
- 5.** Use this guide for family or personal Bible reading, and if you would like to join a home group, please see one of the ministers.

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