

Better

A Study in Hebrews

At the very beginning of the book of Acts, just before He is about to ascend back into heaven, Jesus tells His followers that they will change the world. Jesus' followers, a group of jacked up, uneducated, freaked out, Galilean peasants, had no clue what to do next. They gathered together in a stuff room on the roof of a house to pray.

After several weeks of praying, God showed up in power. And, these freaked out Galilean peasants stepped out in the market place with supernatural boldness. They proclaimed the Gospel and 3000 people became Christians in one day. Once again, Jesus' followers had no clue what to do. What are we supposed to do with all these people? How are we going to make sure that these new Christians grow? How can we continue to bring Gospel to more people in our city, country, and world?

The early church's answer to that question was Life Groups. The early church met in groups of 10 to 20 in various houses throughout Jerusalem. And, in these groups, men and women lived life together, they studied God's Word together, they challenged each other to grow together, and they lived on mission together.

What was true then, continues to be true today. Real growth, life changing growth, happens in the context of Life Group Communities. I became a Christian the summer after my freshman year of college. And, at the first Christian event that I attended, I met a group of guys who would take me under their wing. We didn't have formal times when we met together. But, we lived life together, we challenged each other, we encouraged each other, and we grew spiritually together. Later that same year, I got plugged into a college ministry. They invited me to be a part of a Life Group on campus. This Life Group was significantly more formal. We met for an hour and a half every week. We walked through a lesson, sometimes with a video. Both of these Life Groups, one more informal and one more formal, were integral in me growing in my faith as a young believer. From then until now, I have been in some sort of Life Group Community and the Lord has consistently used that community to draw me closer to Him.

Our dream at Fellowship is that every neighborhood and people group in Southwest Missouri would have some sort of Life Group Community. This is our dream because we long to see lives changed in Southwest Missouri and life change happens in Life Groups.

This curriculum is designed to make our Life Groups as effective and life changing as possible both for the participants and for you, the leaders.

CONTEXT OF A LIFE GROUP

Life Groups that flourish have three characteristics in common:

1. They are vulnerable. In our world of social media and staged instagram pictures, almost nobody has a place to be real. Our Life Groups must be a place where people can be real. They must be places where people can share the hard, messy, ugly parts of their lives, in addition to the fun, exciting, and easy parts. Leaders, this starts with you. Your Life Group will only be as vulnerable as you are.
2. They are compassionate. In our world of marketing, people feel used almost constantly. Almost nobody has a place where they are genuinely cared for. Our Life Groups must be one of those places. They must be places where people don't need to be fake, but where they can know that they are cared for. Leaders, this starts with you. You must genuinely care for people in your Life Group.
3. They are exciting. In our world of cynicism, almost nobody has a place where they can be genuinely excited about what God is doing in and through them. Our Life Groups must be one of those places. They must be places where our eyes are lifted out of the ho hum of our daily lives to the bigger picture of how God is changing us and changing our world through us. Leaders, this starts with you. No one will be more excited about your Life Group than you.

CONTENT OF A LIFE GROUP

We have all been to Life Groups that are nothing more than sterile Bible Studies. A fill-in-the-blank question here and a Sunday School answer there. And, we have all been to Life Groups that are essentially just hanging out. Frozen espresso drinks are great but coffee shops and various levels of caffeine don't change lives. Real Life Groups, Life-changing Life Groups have deep relationship and challenging engagement with God and His Word. You must have both.

The following curriculum is designed to foster both engagement with God's Word and deep community with those involved in the Life Group. Every Life Group will have four parts:

1. Connect (10 min). This usually happens at the very beginning. Much of this will be informal as people are eating cookies or just hanging out for the first several minutes. But, some should be formal. You should try to begin every Life Group with a fun or funny introductory question.
2. Discuss (35 min). Every Life Group will spend some time in God's Word. This should happen through reading a passage of Scripture and asking open-ended questions to discern what that passage means and how it applies to our life. For each passage, this curriculum will give you around 7 questions to choose from. You do not need to use all these questions. They are meant to give you tracks to run on as you plan your Life Group.
3. Relate (25 min). Every Life Group will have time when those who come can be real and vulnerable about their lives. This should be done in all male or all female groups. The two questions that should guide this time are: What has been the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week? and What has been the biggest struggle this week? Remember, leaders, you must lead out in this. This is intended to be an opportunity to confess sin/temptation and celebrate growth. And, leader, you will need to model vulnerability and engaging in heart issues not simply surface issues.

4. Impact (5 min). Every week, your Life Group should pray about people that they are going to invite next week. Life Group is not an island. It is a launching pad for impacting people. That starts with this part of Life Group.

IMPACT OF A LIFE GROUP

There are some people in your Life Group who will become Christians because of your leadership. There are others who will be challenged to live on mission for a lifetime and they will. There are others who will become missionaries in their workplaces or overseas because of what they experience in your Life Group.

Leading a Life Group is a weighty responsibility. We prepare well for Life Group because the potential for impact is so great! But, the ripple effects of leading a Life Group this year could be felt to the ends of the earth and into eternity. Welcome to a great adventure!

WHO IS JESUS?

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 1:1-3

- What stands out to you about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- Why is it good news that God speaks to us?
- How is God's final word in the Person of Jesus better than his previous words through the prophets of the Old Testament? Does this make the Old Testament unnecessary? Why?
- Which truth about Jesus in this passage is most compelling to you?
- Why is it significant that Jesus is the exact imprint of God's nature? What does it mean that He is the radiance of God's glory?
- Read John 1:1-5. How does the beginning of the Gospel of John add to the picture of Jesus at the beginning of Hebrews?
- How would your life look different if you lived in light of these truths about Jesus?

RELATE

- What was the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week?
- What was your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

- Pray for one person that you can trust the Lord to impact this week.

BETTER THAN ANGELS

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 1:4-14

- What stands out to you about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- Based on these verses, what are angels and what do they do? Why might people be so interested in them during the time this letter was written?
- Read 2 Kings 6:8-17. What stands out to you in this passage?
- What specifically makes Jesus better than Angels? Why is it important to realize this?
- What do you notice about the way that the writer of Hebrews interprets the Old Testament? Why is that significant?
- The Hebrews considered angels to be supremely glorious. What things in your life do you consider supreme? How does the reality of Christ's superiority over all things change the way that you view those things?

RELATE

- What has been the spiritual highlight of this week?
- What has been your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

- Pray for one person that you can trust the Lord to impact this week.

A BETTER SAVIOR

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 2

- What stands out to you about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- What makes salvation in Jesus great? How is it different than other ways that people seek salvation in our culture?
- What are ways that people neglect this great salvation? What are ways people in a church might neglect this great salvation? How do you see culture tempting the church to drift and make concessions spiritually?
- If you had to summarize the Gospel in 30 seconds, what would you say? Why is that Gospel necessary? Why is Jesus' suffering important?
- How did you experience slavery before Christ? Has there been a time when you were especially afraid of death? How has the Gospel brought freedom from slavery and fear?
- Why is verse 17 significant? How does the fact that "Jesus had to be like his brothers and sisters" comfort you? What does propitiation mean and why is that important?
- How has Jesus helped you in the face of temptation?

RELATE

- What has been the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week?
- What has been your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

- Pray for one person that you can trust the Lord to impact this week.

A BETTER MOSES

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 3

- What stands out to you about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- Why is it significant that the writer of Hebrews calls us “holy brothers and sisters”?
- Why does Jesus deserve more glory than Moses? Does this mean that Moses and the law are bad? Why or why not?
- What strikes you about verse 12? What causes you to be most tempted to fall away from the living God?
- Why is it so hard to be honest about our temptations? How have you experienced another Christian exhorting you in a time of temptation? In what practical ways can people in this group encourage you in your walk with the Lord? Can you think of someone in your life that you need to exhort?
- How would you describe the Israelites who left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness? How are you similar to them?

RELATE

- What was the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week?
- What was your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

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A BETTER REST

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 4:1-13

- What stands out to you about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- The writer of Hebrews compares salvation with rest. Why is that a good comparison? What do we rest from in salvation? How does the Gospel give us the ability to have real rest in our day-to-day lives?
- Why do you think the writer of Hebrews has such urgency in this letter? Do you think American Christians have this kind of urgency? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to “strive to enter that rest”? What are some practical ways that we might do that?
- How does the writer of Hebrews describe the Word of God? How have you experienced the Word of God as “living and active”?

RELATE

- What was the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week? What was your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

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A BETTER PRIEST

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 4:14-5:10

- What stands out to you about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- What does it mean to “hold fast to our confession”? Why might someone not hold fast? How does Jesus being our high priest help us to hold fast?
- Why does it matter that Jesus was “tempted in every respect just as we are”? Why does it matter that Jesus remained “without sin”?
- Why is verse 16 significant? What causes you to lack confidence when drawing near to God? How would you define grace? How does grace change the way that you feel about God?
- What is the difference between Jesus as high priest and Israel’s high priests according to our passage? Why does that matter?
- What is significant about the phrase “he became the source of eternal salvation”?

RELATE

- What was the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week?
- What was your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

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A BETTER ASSURANCE

CONNECT

DISCUSS—Hebrews 5:11-6

- What stands out about these verses?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
- How does the writer of Hebrews describe someone who needs milk rather than solid food? What is the mark of someone who is mature?
- How do verses 7 and 8 add to verses 4 through 6? Do you agree with Justin's interpretation of these verses? Read John 10:27-29. How do these verse add to what the writer of Hebrews is saying?
- Why is the writer of Hebrews sure of better things for the men and women reading this letter? How does obeying God create assurance in us?
- When is the last time that you had serious doubts in your faith? What helped?
- The writer of Hebrews calls the promises of God, "a sure and steadfast anchor". How have you experienced promises of God in that way? Which promises of God do you most cling to?

RELATE

- What was the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week?
- What was your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

- Pray for one person that you can trust the Lord to impact this week.