



UPSTATE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

WEEK 6 - *HEBREWS 5:11-6:12* - *SEPTEMBER 16-22*

LEADER NOTES

Today's lesson involves one of the most difficult texts in Hebrews. Hebrews 5:11-6:12 address the issue of spiritual immaturity and ultimately spiritual apostasy. Apostasy is a weird word that many of the people in your class may not know. With that in mind, you should be sure to know the meaning.

Apostasy: the renunciation or abandonment of a religious belief.

Apostasy means to leave the faith. The main issue that this raises for Christians who study this text is, "Can Christians lose their salvation if they commit apostasy?" We need to investigate this text deeply, but ultimately we know the answer to that question is no. Scripture teaches us that Christians cannot lose their salvation. However, this is a sincere warning that we need to seek to understand!

Study hard this week! Challenge your members to never turn back from following Jesus!

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COMMUNITY

OPEN THE GROUP BY CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER AND ALLOWING A MOMENT FOR EVERYONE TO HAVE A PLACE TO BELONG.

START THE GROUP BY TAKING PRAYER REQUESTS, FINDING OUT ABOUT PEOPLE'S WEEK, AND PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DOES IT TEACH THAT CHRISTIANS ARE "ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED?" (FOR HELP: JOHN 5:24, JOHN 10:28, 1 CORINTHIANS 1:6-8) HOW DO WE BALANCE THE PROMISE OF GOD HOLDING ON TO US WITH THE CONSTANT WARNINGS IN HEBREWS TO NOT TURN OUR BACKS ON OUR FAITH?

SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

GENUINE FAITH NEVER STOPS GROWING.

Hebrews 5:11-6:12

11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible, in the case

5 And again in this passage he said, of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. 7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

9 Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. 11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 5:11-6:12.

STUDY NOTES

WEEK 6 NOTES : Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Hebrews 5:11-6:12 is the strongest warning in the entire epistle. The author of Hebrews is writing to a population who hasn't taken their relationship with Jesus and their faith in God seriously. Evidently, the people receiving this letter had a reputation for being spiritual babies, and many of them ended up leaving the faith altogether. The author of Hebrews sees this as a spiritual travesty.

The spiritual immaturity and spiritual faithlessness prevents the author from even continuing on in instruction.

11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

This verse is in reference to the previous section about the superiority of Christ's priesthood. The author stops teaching about the priesthood of Christ because he realizes the population he is addressing is too spiritually dull to even appreciate it. So, the author stops instructions and commences with a warning. This section of Hebrews is a warning about spiritual immaturity and spiritual apostasy.

A Warning to the Spiritually Immature

The first problem the author points out is that many of the Hebrews are spiritually immature. They have evidently been around the Christian faith for sometime, but instead of growing and maturing in their walk with God they're still spiritual babies who demand a great deal of spiritual care and are not able to participate in spiritual work. Notice what the author has to say. (1.) They require spiritual care. "You need milk, not solid food..." Who drinks milk? Babies! Moreover, babies don't feed themselves milk. They need someone else to take care of them. That's the status of the Hebrews. They should be able to care for their own souls, but no, they need constant spiritual nurture. The mark of spiritual immaturity is someone who is unable to pursue spiritual growth on their own. (2.) They are unable to help feed others. "By this time you ought to be teachers..." It is every Christian's responsibility to help grow younger believers and witness to lost people. This is the kingdom work we're called to. The Hebrews were unable to participate in this kingdom work because they hadn't grown enough to help themselves, much less others.

Spiritual immaturity may not seem like that big of a deal. However, the author of Hebrews takes spiritual immaturity seriously for two reasons.

1. You should not presume you will always have the chance to grow in your spiritual walk.

V. 3 says "This we will do if God permits." In other words, God is the One who gives growth. To neglect every opportunity for spiritual growth because you assume God will always give you another chance is the height of spiritual foolishness. We need to take every opportunity to grow spiritually, because we don't know when those opportunities will run out.

2. Staying in spiritual immaturity is the pathway to spiritual apostasy.

The structure of this passage goes from one warning straight into the next. The passage flows from immaturity to apostasy because it's easiest for those who don't take their faith seriously to abandon it in the first place.

A Warning Against Apostasy

Verses 4-8 form a warning to those who have shared in the faith and tasted the goodness of God but then turn their back on God and leave the faith. The result of such apostasy is that it's impossible to restore such a person to faith. This is a serious warning! Who are these people who have turned away and can no longer be restored? There are three interpretive options to consider:

1. These were real Christians who were GENUINELY saved, united with Jesus, and then they turned back on their faith and LOST their salvation.

If option one is correct then this passage is a warning to Christians to never turn away. Option one is not a legitimate reading though because the best way to interpret scripture is with other scripture. Thus, we cannot ignore the numerous passages in the Bible that teach eternal security.

2. This is a hypothetical warning to believers.

If option two is correct then this passage is a way to motivate believers with a warning that is hypothetical and cannot actually happen. The problem with this option is that Hebrews does not seem to believe this is hypothetical. From the very beginning of the letter the author is concerned with people drifting away from Jesus. Option two is not legitimate.

3. This is a warning to people with apparently genuine faith who have not sincerely submitted to Jesus as Lord.

Option three is the most faithful view of this text. This interpretation then serves as a warning to believers to make sure their submission to Christ and relationship with Christ is real. Evidently, there is an association with Jesus which many people enter into that isn't in fact saving. This association gets you close enough to understand the facts of the gospel. It even lets you taste the goodness of God! However, it's not an association where the person sincerely and genuinely sought Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is the association of Judas, one that finds Jesus useful for a season and then abandons Him for personal purposes.

A Better Aim

The author of Hebrews doesn't leave us with just warnings. Instead, he provides a better target for mature Christians to shoot for. Mature Christians should pursue the things of salvation. We should pursue Jesus with earnestness and seek to imitate those who have gone before us in the faith.

For more resources, click [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *How do we totally trust in Christ to save us yet take seriously the command to grow in our faith and never turn back?*
- *What are some intentional steps we can take to grow in our faith?*
- *What does it mean to imitate those who have gone before us? Who are some people you seek to imitate?*
- *What does it mean to “eat solid food” as a Christian? Why do we sometimes settle for “milk” instead?*
- *Have you ever seen someone abandon their faith? How did that process start?*

COMMISSION

AS YOU WRAP UP YOUR GROUP, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EVERYONE KNOWS WE GO INTO THE WORLD ON MISSION FOR JESUS. USE THIS TIME TO FOCUS EVERYONE TO LIVE ON MISSION AS YOU LEAVE.

PURSUING JESUS AND REFUSING TO BACKSLIDE IS PART OF THE REASON WE’RE SO SERIOUS ABOUT BIBLICAL COMMUNITY AT UPSTATE CHURCH. TAKE SOME TIME TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD IN THE FAITH AS YOU LEAVE.

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