

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

**Dig Deeper Study Tools**

- Author's Purpose
- Context
- Structure
- Linking Words
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- Narrator's Comment
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## Hebrews—Jesus Is Superior

**STUDY 1** (For Sermon on 5 October 2025)**Hebrews 12:1-4** **Hold Fast, Look to Jesus****STUDY 2** (For Sermon on 26 Oct 2025)**Hebrews 12:18-29** **Hold Fast, Come in Awe**

## Background

- Hebrews' author is unknown, likely a second-generation leader after the apostles (2:3)
- Recipients were not mentioned. They were likely Jewish, persecuted and discriminated against for their faith (10:32–34)
- Returning to Judaism, a legal religion in Rome, would spare them from persecution.
- Hence its warnings **not to fall away** (2:1–4; 3:12–4:13; 5:11–6:12; 10:26–39; 12:25–29)
- Instead, it's a call to **hold fast** to their faith in Jesus (3:6, 14; 4:14; 6:18; 10:23).
- It's likely a sermon in written form, described as a “word of exhortation” in 13:22. “Exhort” appears four times (3:13; 10:25; 13:19, 22) and “exhortation” three times (6:18; 12:5; 13:22)
- It was possibly written before the temple's destruction in AD 70. 12:4 could suggest a date before Nero martyred the Christians after Rome's great fire.
- It is laden with OT thoughts: “Thirty-five quotations from a Greek translation of the Old Testament and thirty-four allusions work to support the development of Hebrews' argument. In addition, the writer offers nineteen summaries of Old Testament material, and thirteen times he mentions an Old Testament name or topic, often without reference to a specific context.”<sup>1</sup>
- To help the readers step back and see God's sovereign hand amid their sufferings.

## Message

- Hebrews is also a “word of exhortation” because God is a speaking God.
- His voice is “living and active” (4:12).
- Today if we hear His voice, we must pay heed (3:15).
- As long as it is called ‘today’, we must “exhort one another” (3:13)
- To listen to God's voice in His Son is to read OT in light of its fulfilment in Jesus Christ (1:1–2).
- Otherwise, to revert to OT sacrifices and rituals would deny Christ.
- Given the temptation to return to Judaism, the writer reminds his persecuted readers of the faith of OT saints, their leaders, and the pattern in Jesus' life—suffering comes before glory.
- Its already-not-yet end-time perspective implies the reward promised, the heavenly city, still awaits the believers.
- The theological truths in Hebrews thus serve as the foundation to exhort believers not to fall away.
- The greatness of Christ and His work makes falling away foolish.
- ***Its call is to hold fast to Christ, the superior mediator of a better covenant.***

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, George H.. Hebrews (The NIV Application Commentary Book 15. Zondervan. Kindle Edition.)

## **Broad Outline Aligned to the Sermon Series:**

### **Hold Fast to Jesus, the Superior Mediator of a Better Covenant with:**

#### **A Better Revelation**

- 6 Apr        Hold Fast, Jesus Is God's Final Word (1:1–4)
- 27 Apr       Hold Fast, Jesus Is Superior to Angels (1:5–14)
- 4 May        Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Incarnate Son (2:1–18)
- 11 May       Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Builder of God's House (3:1–6)

#### **A Better Rest**

- 25 May       Hold Fast, Believe and Enter His rest (3:7–19)
- 1 Jun        Don't Doubt, Enter His Rest (4:1–13)

#### **A Better Representative**

- 8 Jun        Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Perfect High Priest (4:14–5:10)
- 15 Jun       Hold Fast, Mature in Jesus (5:11–6:3)
- 22 Jun       Hold Fast, Don't Fall Away (6:4–12)
- 29 Jun       Hold Fast, God is Unchangeable (6:13–20)
- 6 Jul        Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Eternal High Priest (7:1–28)
- 20 Jul       Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Inaugurator of the New Covenant (8:1–13)
- 27 Jul       Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Anticipation of the Old Covenant (9:1–14)
- 3 Aug        Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Mediator of the New Covenant (9:15–28)
- 10 Aug       Hold Fast, Jesus Is the Perfect Sacrifice (10:1–18)
- 24 Aug       Hold Fast, Jesus Is Faithful (10:19–25)
- 31 Aug       Hold Fast, the Day Is Approaching (10:26–34)

#### **A Better Reward**

- 7 Sep        Hold Fast, God Will Reward (10:35–39)
- 14 Sep       Hold Fast, Live by Faith (11:1–7)
- 21 Sep       Hold Fast, Learn from Abraham (11:8–19)
- 28 Sep       Hold Fast, Conquer by Faith (11:20–40)
- 5 Oct        Hold Fast, Look to Jesus (12:1–4)
- 12 Oct       Hold Fast, Grow through God's Discipline (12:5–11)
- 19 Oct       Hold Fast, Pursue Peace and Holiness (12:12–17)
- 26 Oct       Hold Fast, Come in Awe (12:18–29)

#### **A Better Rededication**

- 2 Nov        Hold Fast, Continue in Love (13:1–8)
- 9 Nov        Hold Fast, Offer Up Your Lives (13:9–16)
- 23 Nov       Hold Fast, Uphold the Gospel Work (13:17–25)

## **How to Read the Book of Hebrews in its Old Testament Context**

### **A. Look for Promises Fulfilled in Jesus.**

1. Jesus as the true Son of David—He is the Messiah, the kingdom OT promised is realised in Him. (1:2 // Ps 2:8, 1:5 // Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14.)
2. Ps 110: 1, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” fulfilled in Jesus Christ (See 1:2, 13; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2).
3. Jesus as the Great High Priest “sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (8:1; See Ps 110:4, “. . . ‘Forever, You are a priest like Melchizedek.’”)
4. Jesus as the Greater Moses and Joshua
  - a. Covenant Fulfilment of Jer 31:31-34 in 8:8-12, 10:15-18; Jesus as the Greater Moses
  - b. Land-Rest Fulfilment of Gen 12:1-3 in 3:12-4:13, Jesus as the Greater Joshua

### **B. Look for OT Events, Institutions, and Persons (Typology) Anticipating Jesus and Heavenly/Eternal Realities.**

1. The fulfilment is always greater than the type
2. In OT, God spoke through Israel His Son (Ex 4:22; Jer 31:9). Now, God has spoken finally and definitively in His Greater Son (1:1-2)
3. Jesus is pre-eminently the better king, priest, and prophet, bringing a better sacrifice, covenant, rest, and promise.
4. Warnings of earthly penalties for disobeying OT Laws anticipate eternal judgment for rejecting eternal salvation in Jesus (2:2-3)
5. Earthly priests and the tabernacle are copies of the heavenly ones (8:5, 9:11).
6. The blood of bulls and goats anticipates Christ’s sacrifice through the eternal Spirit (9:12-14, 23-24).
7. Believers are earthly exiles, looking to a heavenly home (11:13-16)

### **C. Look for End-Time Perspective—Already but Not Yet**

1. “We do not yet see everything subjected to” Jesus (2:8)
2. The present heavens will perish and be rolled up like a cloak (1:11–12).
3. The created things, the present heavens and earth, will be shaken and removed, and only God’s kingdom will remain (12:26–28).
4. Jesus will appear a second time for those awaiting salvation (9:8)
5. Believers are perfected in holiness for all time by Christ’s one offering (10:14)
  - a. Yet, for now, they must persevere in faith amid suffering (10:39-11:40).
  - b. They must pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord (12:4)
  - c. They’re members of the heavenly assembly (12:22-33)
  - d. They seek the city to come (13:14).

**5 October 2025**

**Study 1: Hold Fast, Look to Jesus**

**Hebrews 12:1-4**

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**PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT**

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

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, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

<sup>4</sup>In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

(NIV 2011)

*Notes and Questions*

## **PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK**

What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

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## **GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY**

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

## **GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER**

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

## GROUP: STUDY 1

Recap: Hebrews 1 begins with God's son as His final word. The Son is the creator and sustainer of the universe, the eternal kingly priest who, after making purification for sin, sat down at God's right hand.

Hence, Hebrews 2-5 calls us not to neglect or fall away from so great a salvation.

Hebrews 6-10 shows Jesus as the perfect sacrifice and priestly king who inaugurated the new covenant, transforming God's people through the law inscribed on their hearts.

Thus, Hebrews 10 calls believers to faith and action—let us draw near, let us hold fast, and let us consider how to stir up one another in love and good deeds. With the judgment to come, believers were called to a persevering faith that holds fast to Jesus.

### Immediate Context of Hebrews 12

Persevering faith, Hebrews 11 explains, is the result of trusting God for the unseen eternal rewards based on His word. It's a faith awaiting the glory to be revealed at Christ's return, which far outweighs the sufferings in this life. This faith is highly esteemed by God. It pleases Him. It's an essential instrument of salvation in Christ.

Hebrews 12 further shows us that this faith is anchored in who God is, in His severity and kindness, revealed in His judgment and promises in Christ. This faith will enable believers to finish well in the race marked out for them.

Read Hebrews 12:1-4

### OT Context: Old Testament Scriptures cited/alluded to in this text

vv.1-4	Old Testament Text alluded to or addressing similar concerns
<b>v.1</b> "...throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles."	<b>Job 11:14</b> if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, <b>Isa 1:16</b> Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. <b>Isa 55:7</b> Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
<b>v.2a</b> "fixing our eyes on Jesus"	Contrast with <b>Gen 19:26</b> "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."
<b>v.2b</b> "Jesus...for the joy set before Him endured the cross."	<b>Isa 53:10-11</b> "...he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,...

<b>v.3</b> “Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners”	<b>Isa 53:3</b> He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
<b>v.4</b> “...you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”	<b>Gen 4:10-11.</b> Abel’s blood cried to God from the ground against Cain, who killed him for his righteous life and worship of God. Abel’s faithfulness to God cost him his life. <b>Isa 53:12</b> ... he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

## OBSERVATION



What do you notice as you read this passage?  
(The answers for this *observation segment* are usually straightforward, drawn directly from what you can see in the text given.)

1. What imagery is used in v.1 to teach believers about faith?
2. What are believers told to do in the race?
3. What will empower believers to finish well (v.2)?
4. What is the purpose of considering how Jesus endured His suffering (v.3)?

## Comments

Remember Lot’s wife in Gen. 19:26! She looked back longingly to the city of Sodom and Gomorrah and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Remember also Heb. 10:38-39, “but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”

The athlete imagery in v.1 reminds us that the Christian race is a call to



5. What is expected of believers in their fight against sin (v.4)?

discipline, focus, simplicity, and perseverance.

It's a call to recalibrate our hopes and expectations, to re-examine our desires and ambitions in this life, by looking to Jesus' past example, present exaltation, and coming glory.

## INTERPRETATION



What is the meaning and significance of your observations?

(This segment requires you to reflect on what you have observed in the earlier segment)

6. How does it encourage you that we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses in the race God has marked out for us?

It's a call to forego even good things which are unnecessary to the race and the glory of God.

7. How is Jesus being the pioneer and perfecter of faith good news for us? (Consider Heb 5:8-9, 6:20, 10:14)

It's a call to resist the allure of temptations, however and whatever they look, feel, taste, promise and offer.

8. What do you think gave Jesus the joy to endure the cross? (Consider Heb 2:9-13, see also Isa 53:10-11)

It's a call to deny self, to take up the cross and crucify our self-serving, self-preserving, self-exalting, and self-indulging tendencies.

It's a call to discipleship, to live like Jesus,

9. What made it worthwhile to fight sin, however costly it may be (v.28)? (Consider what you've learnt from the message of Hebrew so far)

through Jesus,  
for Jesus, and  
towards Jesus,  
whatever it may  
cost.

It's a call to  
enduring faith,  
to hold fast  
Jesus, our  
superior  
Sacrifice, Priest,  
and King.



#### BIG IDEA

What is the main message of the passage?  
(Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas)



#### APPLICATION

Why did the Holy Spirit give us this text?  
(Considering the big idea and the Holy Spirit's intent  
helps us make applications faithful to the text.)

10. What is the Christian race about? What does finishing the race well mean to you?

11. What obstacles or challenges do you face that may derail you or cause you to be weary and lose heart?

12. What can you do to lay aside excess weight that entangles, to fix your eyes on Jesus, and finish well in the race?

### **GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS**

- Pray over the challenges and obstacles that were shared.
- Pray for one another to have Christ's joy in whatever our circumstances may be.
- Pray that God will empower us to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, so that we will not grow weary and lose heart."

**26 October 2025**

**Study 2: Hold Fast, Come in Awe**

**Hebrews 12:18-29**

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**PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT**

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

<sup>18</sup>You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” <sup>n</sup> <sup>21</sup>The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” <sup>o</sup>

<sup>22</sup>But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup>to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup>to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup>See to it that you 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 him who warns us from heaven? <sup>26</sup>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.” <sup>f</sup> <sup>27</sup>The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

<sup>28</sup>Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup>for our “God is a consuming fire.”

(NIV 2011)

*Notes and Questions*

## **PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK**

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What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

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## **GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY**

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

## **GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER**

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

## GROUP: STUDY 2

The immediate context

Hebrew 12:5-17

While Christian life is a race, God does not just leave us to it. He is at work moulding us into Christlikeness because He loves us. He allows suffering not to punish but to discipline and train us in holiness of heart. So, let us not lose heart when we're disciplined. It proves we are truly His. For without holiness, no one will see the Lord (v.14). Avoid Esau's complacency. He traded his inheritance for short-term gratification.

Read Hebrews 12:18-29

### OT Context: Old Testament Scriptures cited/alluded to in this text

<b>vv.20-40</b>	<b>Old Testament Text cited or alluded to</b>
<b>vv.18-21</b> "you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire"	<b>Exod. 19:12</b> And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. <b>Exod. 19:13</b> No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' <b>Exod. 19:16</b> ...there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. <b>Exod. 20:18</b> Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off <b>Exod. 20:19</b> and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."
<b>v.22</b> "you have come to Mt Zion"	<b>Isa. 24:23</b> Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.
<b>v.23</b> "You've come to God, the Judge of all"	<b>Gen. 18:25</b> ...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" <b>Psa. 94:2</b> Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!
<b>vv.27-28</b> "his voice shook the earth..." "I will shake not only the earth..."	<b>Exod. 19:18</b> Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire ... the whole mountain trembled greatly <b>Hag. 2:6</b> For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.
<b>v.29</b> "For our God is a consuming fire"	<b>Exod. 3:2</b> "And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed." <b>Exod. 24:27</b> "To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain."

	<p><b>Deut. 4:24</b> "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The above 3 sets of verses describe God's holiness and His call for complete devotion to Him.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Isa. 33:14</b> "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" Points to God's terrifying judgment on sin</p> <p><b>Mal. 3:2</b> "For he will be like a refiner's fire..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The latter two sets of verses describe God's judgment on sin and God's purifying work on His people</i></li> </ul>
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## OBSERVATION



What do you notice as you read this passage?  
(The answers for this *observation* segment are usually straightforward, drawn directly from what you can see in the text given.)

1. How was Mt. Sinai in the Old Covenant intimidating (v.18-21)?
2. How is Mt Zion in the New Covenant uplifting? (v.22-24)?
3. What is the warning in v.25?

## Comments

*The race believers are running will bring them into God's eternal presence forevermore.*

*What is this presence like? Why did saints of old look forward to it so much? They would forsake earthly wealth and enjoyment, to endure sufferings to enter this celestial city, when all that these OT saints (illustrated in Heb. 11) had known was only the old covenant at Mt Sinai.*

*This is because Heb. 12 shows Mt Sinai is only a faint shadow of the heavenly Mt Zion, which is far superior. Like the old covenant that Mt Sinai represents, it serves only as a sign pointing to the new. Heb. 12 gives us a glimpse of the blessedness of this heavenly city. How encouraging it is that the race believers are called to finish on earth will lead to it!*

4. What was the earthquake in God's presence at Mt. Sinai pointing to (v.26-27)?

5. Therefore, how should we approach God (v.28)?

#### INTERPRETATION



What is the meaning and significance of your observations?

(This segment requires you to reflect on what you have observed in the earlier segment)

6. Why do you think the author contrasted God's terrifying presence at Mt Sinai (vv. 18-21, 26) with God's blessed presence in the heavenly Mt Zion (vv. 22-24)?

7. How does the blood of Jesus speak a better word than the blood of Abel (v.24)?

*So, for believers with eyes of faith, this race is sustained by the reality of this heavenly blessedness. And believers' habitual assembly to worship, encourage and spur one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25) is a foretaste of being in the blessed presence of God and His people.*

*This means the same joy that sustained Jesus as He endured the cross and now sits at God's right hand, that joy is available to believers now. Through faith, believers can now experience the heavenly worship of Mt Zion in the presence of angels and the cloud of witnesses who had completed their race.*

*Heb. 12:23 includes them in "the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven." They belong to the company of Abraham's spiritual offspring, who, like Abraham, are looking forward to the celestial city with eyes of faith. (Noted that the firstborn in v.23 is a reference to Christ. See Heb.1:6. See also how Heb. 2:10-11 parallels Rom 8:29 that Jesus might be the*



8. What is God's purpose in shaking all things (vv. 26-27)?

*firstborn among many brothers).*

*To heighten believers' joy and thankfulness, this text invites its readers to consider the alternative of experiencing the severity of God's fiery wrath, reserved for the unbelieving, that we might appreciate more deeply His kindness.*

9. Why did the author say God is a consuming fire (v.29)?  
(See the OT citation table.)

*The purpose of the author is (i) to warn believers from falling away (v.25) and (ii) to encourage believers (v.28) to gather before God in true reverential worship.*

*For such worship is the (i) mark, (ii) lifestyle, and (iii) witness of a people waiting in faith for the Saviour's return (Heb. 9:28).*

#### BIG IDEA



What is the main message of the passage?  
(Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas)

#### APPLICATION



Why did the Holy Spirit give us this text?  
(Considering the big idea and the Holy Spirit's intent helps us make applications faithful to the text.)

10. How can you thank God as you reflect on the blessings in Heb. 12:22-24, purchased by the blood of Christ, that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel?

11. Share how you can prioritise your weekly assembly with God's people to offer Him your reverential worship. How does it help you?

12. How does the realisation that you live before the presence of God, His angels and His saints in heaven help you resist sin and walk in holiness?

### **GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS**

You may do the following as a DG:

1. Pray over whatever challenging circumstances the members in the group are facing.
2. Then read out Heb. 12:22-24.
3. Sing a hymn together like "Be Still for the Presence of the Lord Is Here" to affirm the group that they are in God's holy presence.
4. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving.