

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Dig Deeper Study Tools

- Author's Purpose
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Hebrews—Jesus Is Superior

STUDY 1 (For Sermon on 9 November 2025)

Hebrews 13:9–16 **Hold Fast, Offer Up Your Lives**

STUDY 2 (For Sermon on 23 November 2025)

Hebrews 13:17–25 **Hold Fast, Uphold the Gospel Work**

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.”¹
- 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.***

¹ 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).

9 November 2025

Study 1: Hold Fast, Offer Up Your Lives

Hebrews 13:9-16

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT

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

⁹ Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

¹¹ The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

(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?

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.

Believers are thus called to faith and action, to a persevering faith that holds fast to Jesus, in view of the coming judgment.

Persevering faith, Hebrews 11 explains, is trusting God for rewards unseen based on His word. It's a faith awaiting Christ's return, triumphing over the sufferings in this life, and highly esteemed by God, instrumental to salvation in Christ.

Hebrews 12 further shows it's a call to finish well the race marked out for us. This is faith in who God is, a Holy God in His severity and kindness, revealed in His judgment and promises in Christ.

Immediate Context. Hebrews 13:1-8

Hebrews 12 ends with verses 28-29, calling believers to a holy living by worshipping God in His holiness with reverence and awe. Hebrews 13 describes what this holy living looks like. Indeed, if Christ is far superior to all, a life of worship, ascribing His worth, is a life of right living. Heb. 13:1-8, punctuated with imperatives, calls us to this life

Heb. 13:1-4 call believers to continue or "hold fast" to brotherly love by practising hospitality and visiting the brothers in prison. V3-6 add that they are to live morally upright lives, to avoid greed, and be content that God is with them as their helper.

Vv. 7-8 is a call to remember and imitate the godly lives of their leaders who preached the Gospel to them. These leaders were likely the first generation of leaders and apostles who had already passed on (see Heb. 2:3), just as they were to remember the OT heroes of faith in Heb. 11, while vv. 17, 24 is a call to obey and honour their present leader.

This call ends with v.8 declaring that ***the Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever***. This implies the apostolic message their leaders had taught them in the past remains relevant, in the present and for the future. This leads to vv. 9-16, the call to centre their lives on the Gospel and vv. 17-25, the call to support Gospel workers and Gospel growth.

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

vv.9-16	Old Testament Text alluded to or addressing similar concerns
vv. 11-12	Ordination of Priests...burning of animal bodies outside the camp as a common practice Exod. 29:14 But burn the bull's flesh and its hide and its intestines outside the camp. It is a sin offering. On the Annual Day of Atonement Lev. 16:15-16 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. . . Lev. 16:27 The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and intestines are to be burned up.
v.13	All that are unclean must stay outside the camp, excluded from God's dwelling with His people: Num. 5:2-3: "Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has a defiling skin disease ^b or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body. Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them."
v.15	Psa. 50:14, 23 "Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, . . . Those who sacrifice thank offerings honor me, and to the blameless I will show my salvation...." If Psa. 50 was in the mind of the author, Ps. 50:16-20 could have been the backdrop of Heb. 13:1-6.

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. For the readers not to be carried away by strange teachings from Judaism with its unprofitable ceremonies and food laws, how should the believers' hearts be strengthened (v.9)?
2. What privilege do believers in Christ have that those who serve at the altar of the old covenant's system do not have (v.10)?
3. What does v.12 say is the reason Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem's gate (like OT unclean animal bodies burned outside the camp on the Day of Atonement in Lev 16:27)?
4. According to vv. 13-14, what will empower us to bear the cost of identifying with Jesus?

Comments

The message of Hebrews on the greatness of Christ, as one superior to Moses and Joshua, as the eternal high priest in the order of Melchizedek, is a call to hold fast and worship Him, so as not to fall away from Him.

As Hebrews 12 calls us to this reverential worship worthy of His greatness, Hebrews 13 is a fitting conclusion to the whole Epistle, reminding us of the marks of such a holy and reverential life.

If Heb. 13:1-8, with its list of imperatives, is a call to holy living, the foundation that undergirds such a call is laid out in vv. 9-25 as a faith response to the unchanging

5. What sacrifices should believers offer that will please God (vv. 15-16)?

Christ and His sacrifice.

This means *offering up our lives to God by i) guarding and centring on the Gospel (Study 1) and ii) supporting the Gospel work in the church (Study 2).*

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 is experiencing God's grace through the altar of Christ's cross superior to mere external pieties of observing the food laws and the altar of the Old Covenant? (vv. 8-10)

Our faith and confidence in doing so rest on the unchanging Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever (v.8). He is our high priest, who has entered heaven and accomplished our eternal redemption.

7. How does the comparison of the Day of Atonement (v.11; Lev 16) with Christ's crucifixion outside Jerusalem (v.12) help you appreciate the superiority of Christ's atonement on our behalf? (vv. 11-14)

This text brings us back to His work and calls us again to dwell on Him deeply by finding our centre, our reliance, identity, worship, purpose, joy, and fulfilment in Him through a life offered in

8. How do you think praising God *continually* and doing good to others help us hold fast to Christ with faith that pleases God? Vv.15-16. See also Heb 11:6.



BIG IDEA

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

continual praise
and service.



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.)

9. What old and unhelpful practices of self-reliance and self-sufficiency do you need to forego? (v.9)

10. How can you centre your life on the gospel to be strengthened by its grace and truth? (vv.9-10)

11. How can we offer our lives unreservedly to God as we consider Christ's sacrifice for us (vv. 11-14)?

12. What will help us persevere in praising God, professing Him, and doing good to others always? (vv. 15-16)

GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

- Praise God that our Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, that He is our eternal High Priest, who lives to intercede and save us forever.
- Take a moment to worship and thank Him
- Rededicate the group to Him, that the group will hold fast to Him, to centre its group life on Him, to praise, proclaim and serve Him as a group.

23 November 2025

Study 2: Hold Fast, Uphold the Gospel Work

Hebrews 13:17-25

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT

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

¹⁷ Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

¹⁸ Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. ¹⁹ I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

²⁰ Now 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, ²¹ 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.

²² Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly.

²³ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

²⁵ Grace be with you all.

(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?

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 13:1-16

Heb. 12:14 reminds us “without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Heb. 13:1-16 explains practically what it means to live in holiness to the Lord, and not to fall short of God’s grace in Christ, by centring our lives on the Gospel of Christ’s sacrifice for us. Today’s text will further show how to live for the Gospel through its community.

Read Hebrews 13:17-25

OT Context: Old Testament Scriptures parallel to in this text

vv.17-25	Old Testament Text cited, alluded or parallel to
vv. 17, 18	Exod. 18:20-21 Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. 21 But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.
v.18	1 Sam. 12:2-3 . . . I have been your leader from my youth until this day. 3 Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? . . .
v. 20	Jesus’ indestructible life Ps. 110:4 . . . “You are a priest forever according to the manner of Melchizedek.” Jesus the Great Shepherd King Gen. 48:15 “...the God who has been my shepherd all my days...” Ps. 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd . . . 2 Sam. 5:1-2 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “...the Lord said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, . . .’” The Blood of the Eternal Covenant Exod. 24:8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”
vv. 20-22	1 Sam. 12:23-24 As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. 24 But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. . . .

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 is the reason for believers to trust and submit to their leaders (v.17)? Consider also vv. 7, 22.
2. What should believers do for their leaders? (vv. 18-19)
3. What did the author desire for the believers? (vv. 20-22)
4. What happened to Timothy, a brother and servant of the Gospel? (v.23)

Comments

Heb. 13:8 reminds us, Jesus is the same today, yesterday and forever. Though the Old Covenant has become obsolete, the new Covenant in Christ hasn't and will not.

This brings us back to Heb. 1:8, 10-11:
But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; . . .

He also says, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, . . . But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

Believers are to find strength not in their old ways, but feed on Christ by "eating" at His "altar", living a life of worship through the eternal Lord Jesus.

The key means of doing so is through the Gospel that proclaims the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom, passed down by His first witnesses, the Apostles. Hence v.7 calls the first readers to remember

5. How should the readers relate to other believers? (vv. 24-25)

these founding leaders, who faithfully taught the Gospel.

And today's text will show us that the means God has appointed to continue the work of the Gospel through the church is still His Word-based servant leaders, through their faithful witness to the Gospel. Hence, this call in v.17 for believers to trust and submit to their leaders is a call to support the growth of the Gospel by supporting its workers.

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 would you describe the interdependent relationship between leaders and members in vv. 17-19?
7. How are God's eternal will and saving power revealed through the author's prayer for the believers in v.20-21?
8. Why do you think the author asks the readers to bear with his word of exhortation, even emphasising its brevity? (v.22)

This leadership is thus based on the pattern set in V.7. Its authority is derived from God's word, and a Christlike life. This authority is legitimate only to the extent that it is subjected to God's word and bears witness to Christ, God's Final Word (Heb. 1:2).

This leadership is grounded in Christ's accomplished work, model after Him, our Great Shepherd, sustained by the prayer of His people, and focused on doing His will (v.18-20).

9. How would you describe God's will and intent for the relationship between leaders and members in the church based on this text?

Heb 13 sums up the call and function of this biblical leadership. It's a call to equip, exhort, and encourage believers to offer up our lives in holy living, centred on the Gospel, as our reverential worship to our God and our Great Eternal Priestly-Shepherd-King.

BIG IDEA



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

We can hold fast to our Superior Lord Jesus because God has ordained that our faith be mutually sustained by this gracious provision of His within the Body of Christ. The call to hold fast to Christ is a call to not forsake this sacred assembly, but become an integral part of its life, worship, fellowship, and proclamation.

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.)

Let us do so with thankfulness and awe, for we *"have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, ...to thousands upon thousands of angels..., to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven."* (Heb. 12:22-23, 28)

10. How can you pray for our leaders?

11. If you are a leader, how can you improve your service to God's people?

Glory to His Gracious,
Great, and Glorious
Name!

12. What else can you do to support and participate in the growth of the Gospel in the church?

GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

You may do the following as a DG:

1. Take turns to share with the group your takeaway from the Book of Hebrews. What has God impressed on your heart through its message?
2. Pray for one another over what has been shared.
3. Close with thanksgiving and pray for God to sustain each one that we may all hold fast to the Lord Jesus all our days.