

Fall Focus Series #4 – Hot Topics- Falling Away
Grow Group Leaders Guide

This guide is provided to assist you in leading your grow group. Use the elements of this guide as you see fit for your group.

LEADER PREPARATION

1. Passages to read:

- Hebrews 10:35-39
- Hebrews 11:1-7, 11:32-40
- Genesis 5:18-24
- Deuteronomy 13:4
- Proverbs 29:25
- Romans 15:13
- 1 Peter 1:3

2. Introduction to Hebrews- (adapted from ESV Study Bible)

Author and Date- The author of Hebrews is unknown. He knew Timothy (13:23). He was not an eyewitness of Jesus (see 2:1, 3). The letter was probably written before A.D. 70. Early manuscripts bear the title "To the Hebrews," which reflects the ancient assumption that it was written to Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians who previously had been drawn to the Jewish religion. The author knew his readers and wanted to see them again (13:19).

Theme- Jesus Christ is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant practice. Christians must not forsake the great salvation that Jesus has brought about. They must hold on by faith to the true rest found in Christ, and they must encourage others in the church to do the same.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background- *Hebrews has two primary purposes: to encourage Christians to endure, and to warn them not to abandon their faith in Christ.* These warning passages appear throughout the book (2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 5:11–6:12; 10:19–39; 12:1–29). The author encourages faithfulness, love, and sound doctrine. He does so by carefully teaching the OT in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

The author shows the superiority of Christ and his new covenant over angels, Moses, the OT priesthood, and the OT sacrificial system. These are so inferior to Christ that it is futile to return to them—or to go anywhere else. Rather, believers should hold fast to their faith, because that faith is grounded in the most superior revelation.

The background of such exhortations must have been the readers' need to continue enduring amid persecution and the trials of life (e.g., ch. 12). They appear to have grown less attentive to Christian instruction (5:11–14), and some apparently have ceased regular attendance at their meetings (10:25). The author reminds them of their past faithfulness and love despite persecution (10:32–34).

Ultimately, the author's words of encouragement and exhortation are rooted in his teaching about Jesus Christ. The Son of God became the heavenly high priest, who offered himself as a sacrifice once for all. Christ obtained salvation for all who approach him in faith (6:1; 11:6; compare 4:2), and such faith perseveres until it receives the promised eternal reward (6:12; 10:22, 38–39).

Group Activity:

Objective: Reflect on the group's experiences as they relate to this statement of faith "being exemplified".

Faith is choosing to live as though God's word is true, regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Directions:

1- Ask if anyone in the group has ever felt like abandoning the Lord? Ask if anyone ever wants to go back to an old lifestyle. Ask if anyone in your group walked away from the Lord for a while. What was that time like? What drew you back?

2- Brainstorm ideas/answers on a sheet of paper or whiteboard from the following questions. Have someone in the group write them down.

1- How has your faith helped you deal with hard circumstances?

2- What are some Bible passages that encourage your faith?

3- How do your emotions affect your faith?

4- What are some of the cultural trends that test your faith?

Supplies: Paper, pens or pencils or whiteboard and marker.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Since this is the 4th week of Proverbs 14:12 say it together. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. (ESV)*

STUDY/REVIEW

1. Discussion Helps:

- Invite all group members to participate in the discussion of questions. Don't allow one or two individuals to dominate the discussions. At times ask quieter individuals a question directly to get them involved.
- Keep the conversation going by having participants explain their answers. If someone gives an off-target or untrue (unbiblical) answer, ask them to explain why they believe it is true. Then gently correct as necessary with scripture when possible.

2. Group Discussion:

- Pick any of the questions below for your group discussion
- Notes in italics have been added to assist you in guiding your group to appropriate conclusions.

Consider the three main points from the sermon "Falling Away."

1. What can we learn from the following passages on walking with God?

Genesis 5:24 "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

The author of Hebrews explains a bit about Enoch walking with God by writing that it was "By faith, Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away. "For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God" (Heb 11:5). The reason Enoch was transferred from this life to the next or when God "took him" was because Enoch lived a life that pleased God and because of this he was taken away by God to be in His presence. Who doesn't want to be around very pleasing people? If we please God, we might not get taken away but we'll be in His presence at His return or just after death and if you're pleasing God, you're likely walking with God.

Deuteronomy 5:33 "You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess."

The point of this verse is that if you walk in the way that the Lord commands, it's going to go well. I don't mean perfect but it will be better than if you don't walk in His ways. God will walk with us if we are obedient to His laws and statutes but if we don't God declares "then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will

strike you sevenfold for your sins" (Lev 26:24). Living a longer life can certainly be related to walking in obedience in the ways of God.

Amos 3:3 "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?"

If I walked with a friend of mine and I started speeding up and tried to leave him behind, then he'd wonder what I was mad at. If I walked behind him and slowed way down, he might wonder if I was hurt or injured. If we were walking together, we might not agree on everything but we wouldn't have to be disagreeable. Christian brothers and sisters can all walk together on the main essentials of the faith (Acts 4:12. Rom 10:9-13) and have grace on the things we don't agree on.

2. What can we learn from the following passages on having a reverent fear of God?

Deut 13:4- You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.

Israel was first instructed not to let a deceiver succeed in leading them astray. No matter how attractive the deception, they were to keep focused on a faithful walk with God according to His truth.

Proverbs 29:25- Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

Many people of good heart but not enough courage live in bondage to the fear of man. They worry far too much about what people think, instead of first being concerned about what God and wisdom say, and what integrity would lead them to do. This is a snare that traps many people. The filter is what God says, what God thinks. Not what the culture says or thinks. Reverent Fear- Caring more about what God thinks than what others think

Philippians 2:12-13- Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Your own salvation: *This tells us to give attention to our own salvation. Sometimes we show great concern for the work of God in others, and not enough for His work in us. We should care about the souls of others, but this care must begin with our own soul. There is a sense in which our salvation is complete, in the sense that Jesus has done a complete work for us. Still there is*

also a sense in which our salvation is incomplete, in that it is not yet a complete work in us.

Illustration: *"The believer must finish, must carry to conclusion, must apply to its fullest consequences what is already given by God in principle... He must work out what God in His grace has worked in." (Muller)*

Ecc 12:13- Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

Solomon came to understand that it was worth it to obey God, and this obedience both pleased God and fulfilled man's destiny.

3. What can we learn from the following passages on having a Dominant hope for the future?

Hebrews 11:1- Now faith is confidence in what ***we hope*** for and assurance about what we do not see.

If you read through this Hebrews 11, you are going to see over and over men and women walking with God, fearing God and having hope for what's to come.

Faith and hope are interconnected. Future blessing and hope, we worship in hope. We die in hope. Trusting in God. For the Christian our whole life should be about embracing this dominate hope we have in the Lord.

Romans 15:13- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

As God fills us with the blessings of His joy and peace in believing, we are equipped to live in this common bond of unity God calls us to.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We are born again to a living hope because we have eternal life in a Savior who has conquered death Himself. The hope lives because it is set upon an inheritance incorruptible that can never fade away because it is reserved in heaven. This is a significant contrast to any inheritance on this earth.

Answer the following questions about Hebrews 10:19-39

- 1) What three-fold appeal is based on what Jesus has done? (22-24)
 - *Let us draw near, let us hold fast, let us consider one another*
- 2) What should we not forsake? (25)
 - *The assembling of ourselves together*
- 3) What's meant by "sin willfully"? What's the consequence of doing so? (26-27)
 - *To knowingly persist in sin (i.e., presumptuous, rebellious sin)*
 - *No sacrifice for sin, certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation*
- 4) Of what is one guilty when they persist in sin? Why should one be afraid? (29-31)
 - *Trampling the Son of God underfoot, counting the blood by which one is sanctified a common thing, insulting the Spirit of grace*
 - *God will judge His people, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*
- 5) What three things do we need to receive the promise of God? (35-39)
 - *Confidence, endurance, faith*

Answer the following questions about Hebrews 11

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
 - *Faith defined - Hebrews 11:1-3*
 - *Faith exemplified - Hebrews 11:4-40*
- 2) What is faith as defined in this chapter? (1)
 - *Confidence in what we hope for, assurance about what we do not see*
- 3) What do we understand by faith concerning the world? (3)
 - *The word of God framed them, they were not made by things visible*
- 4) List the names of Old Testament saints mentioned in this chapter (4-32)
 - *Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Israel, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets*

- 5) What did these "heroes of faith" look forward to receiving? (13-16)
- *The promises, especially regarding the heavenly country and city prepared by God*
- 6) List some of the amazing things done by faith. (33-35)
- *Subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises*
- *Stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire*
- *Escaped the edge of the sword, became valiant in battle, turned armies to flight*
- *Women received their dead raised to life again*
- 7) List some of the things these people of faith endured. (35-38)
- *Torture, mocking, scourging, chains of imprisonment*
- *Stoned, sawn in two, wandering destitute in mountains and caves, afflicted, tormented*
- 8) What did these "heroes of faith" obtain? What did they not? Why? (39-40)
- *A good testimony*
- *The promise (i.e., the Messianic promise)*
- *That they might be made perfect together with us (i.e., salvation, the heavenly city)*
- 9) From this chapter, what do we learn about faith and works?
- *True faith leads to action; faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:14-26)*

APPLICATION ACTIONS

- 1) Consider this statement of faith "being exemplified"; *Faith is choosing to live as though God's word is true, regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.* Are you living a life of faith where you truly believe God's word is true? What current circumstances are you dealing with that may be testing your faith? Do I allow my emotions or cultural trends to affect my faith? Do I need to make any changes or have a further conversation with someone?