



Calvary LifeGroup Leader's Guide

Week of 10/31/21

Warm Up

Welcome to November! It might be time for a little calendar housekeeping. This is a good point to begin talking about your plans for the rest of the fall. Will you meet the week of Thanksgiving? What service opportunities do you plan to jump into if you haven't done anything already? Get in touch with us if you need ideas.

This *Greater Than* series will wrap up the week of December 12th. Following that final week, we will not have discussion questions until we begin our next series in January (final dates and details still TBD). We also recommend that your group plan a meal or social excursion (e.g., a nearby hike or not-so-nearby tropical vacation with a staff chaperone!) together sometime between Thanksgiving and the end of the year. This could be a great way to wrap up the fall.

Icebreaker: Depending on when you meet, it's either the last day of October (Happy ~~Halloween~~ Reformation Day) or the first week of November. What are your plans for Thanksgiving?

As we get closer to Thanksgiving and Christmas, please be mindful of what people express about their plans. We say it every year, but it's true that this upcoming "happiest" time of year can be especially difficult and dark for some. Reach out to us if you have concerns about people in your group and aren't sure how to help.

Discussion Questions for Hebrews Chapter 8

Read Hebrews 8 as a group, then select 2-3 questions from below to discuss together. It may be helpful for you to include question 7 this week because it hones in on the main emphasis of the chapter and would likely make for a decent discussion. Question 3 may be good for some groups but might also be good to steer away from if it feels too confusing (or just poorly written and explained) 😊.

1. Based on what we saw last week in chapter 7 and in this week's passage, what do you think the author means in verse 4 by saying that "if [Jesus] were on earth, he would not be a priest at all"?

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and loving others.*

As was pointed out in chapter 7, Jesus' priesthood is of "the order of Melchizedek" rather than of the tribe of Levi. In other words, Jesus was not qualified by his pedigree to serve as an earthly priest because the law required priests to be of the tribe of Levi. Jesus' priesthood is of a different (and superior) kind!

2. What do you think it means in the first 5 verses that earthly priests served "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things"?

The main point here is that the earthly tabernacle and temple was intended to depict what Christ would one day accomplish and fulfill. Christ, as the great high priest, became the perfect, final sacrifice which all the Levitical priesthood was pointing to or anticipating. We could say that the Levitical priesthood and all its rituals were paving the way for the reality of what Jesus would accomplish. The Levitical priesthood created the language and depicted the categories (e.g., *sin, sacrifice, altar, death, blood, atonement, guilt*, etc.) that would allow us to grasp what Jesus would do.

3. People in our day may think of what's going on "down here" on earth as being *really real* and what's heavenly or spiritual as something less than real...it's "*spiritual*" after all. How does verse 5 challenge that notion?

This one is abstract, so choose wisely! As a side note, we should acknowledge that some people see things exactly the opposite, so that the spiritual realm is "real," and the material world is "less real." This was common in the first century and is today as well. Ok, now back to the question...v. 5 tells us that the old covenant practices had a real purpose and intent, but that they were depicting something that would take place in heaven, out of range of our 5 senses. The earthly priests engaged in a kind of rehearsal or enactment of what Jesus would accomplish in heaven after his earthly ministry.

Do you think we engage in practices today at Calvary that might also be "a shadow and copy of the heavenly things"? If so, what examples can you think of?

Again, this is abstract! In the big picture, our corporate worship each week is a kind of "shadow" of the worship taking place around God's throne (Rev 4) and that we will one day participate in ourselves (Rev 7:9-12). On a different level, we might think of the Lord's supper. It symbolically proclaims, "the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26) while the elements themselves represent Christ's body and blood. So, the bread and wine are referring to something beyond bread and wine. Even more, Jesus said he would not partake of it again, "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:29), which likely refers to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19. The Lord's supper, then, is a kind of foretaste or "appetizer" preparing us for a feast (i.e., sharing in the fully realized victory of Christ) at the end of the age.

(If you choose this question, be careful to not inadvertently arrive at the conclusion that things on earth (our weekly worship, the Lord's supper, etc.) don't really matter because they are pointing to heavenly or future realities. That would NOT be a good conclusion!)

4. The text tells us in verse 6 that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant than the old. What can you think of from the passage that makes this new covenant better?

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First, it might be helpful to point out that a covenant defined the conditions of the relationship between God and humanity. The Bible contains two major covenants—“old” and “new.” The old covenant is explained in the law given to Moses, including the 10 commandments and the extensive instructions for the Levitical priesthood. The new covenant was better because Christ perfectly fulfilled what humanity was unable to do. The superiority of this new covenant is described in the quotation of Jeremiah 31 (verses 8-12 of Hebrews 8). Hebrews 8:10-12 are especially critical.

5. If the old covenant had “faults” (see v. 7), what do you think its purpose was? Did God miscalculate humanity’s ability to fulfill it or make some other kind of mistake with it if it had to be replaced?

The case being made in this chapter is that the old covenant and its priests were “a copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (v. 5). The old covenant paved the way for the new in that it presented (among other things) God’s standards for righteousness, God’s means for atonement or forgiveness, and humanity’s inability to live up to what God requires. In these ways, then, it prepared humanity for what Christ would fulfill. Once fulfilled, the new covenant could be established as a replacement of the old. The old was necessary, though, to.

6. The author of Hebrews shines a spotlight on Jeremiah 31:31-34. What significance do you see in the following key phrases from the second half of verse 10 through verse 12? This is similar to question 4. These verses depict how God’s law no longer stand outside as abstract concepts or requirements, but are now internalized in our thoughts, emotions, and will by the power of the Spirit at work in us. The new covenant also brings a greater level of intimacy with God through Christ’s revelation of who God is and the work of the cross that overcame the separation of us from him due to sin. These are available for us to experience now but will be even more fully realized when our Anchor/Forerunner/Great High Priest returns.

7. Gratitude is something that can be cultivated, so let’s give it a shot! What new covenant reality from this passage are you grateful for?

This is an opportunity to step back and think through how awesome it is that we get to live under God’s new covenant! The old covenant was a gift as well, but the new is even better and has made the old obsolete. Is anyone grateful that we aren’t taking our animals to the temple to be slaughtered?!

Wrap Up

Whether you answered question 7 during your main discussion or not, it may be worthwhile to briefly discuss and then in prayer take time to thank God for the new—and “better”—covenant that we get to enjoy. Here are some things you might include:

- The standards of God’s righteousness have now been fulfilled in Jesus.
- The greater level of intimacy with God through Christ’s revelation of who God is.
- The work of Jesus on the cross that overcame our separation from God due to sin.
- The Holy Spirit’s role in writing the law on our hearts and minds.

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