



Calvary LifeGroup Leader's Guide

Week of 12/5/21

Warm Up

"Therefore, let us be grateful..." That's where the author of Hebrews lands this week in verse 28 as we near the end of this series. We hope Thanksgiving was a great time of gratitude last week, but this Advent season is all about giving thanks as well. In fact, all of the Christian's life can't help but be filled with gratitude as we come to a more complete and clear understanding of the gospel message!

This week, you might take a few minutes to let everyone in your group have a chance to recall and share what has been most significant to them out of Hebrews. What gospel truths can we express thanks to God for in our groups this week?

Icebreaker: We're closing in on the finish of Hebrews! What's one significant thing that has stood out to you from this series?

Discussion Questions for Hebrews Chapter 12:18-29

Read the passage, then select 2-3 questions from below to discuss together.

1. Verses 18-24 describe and contrast two mountains: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. What stands out to you in these comparisons?

It's possible that some in your group may be unfamiliar with these mountains, so it may be helpful to offer a bit of explanation. Sinai is of course the location where God's first ("old") covenant was made with Israel following the events of the exodus from Egypt. Zion is a bit abstract but it is the location where the temple was located in Jerusalem. It can also refer more generally to the city itself. Together, Mount Sinai and Mount Zion are being used as metaphors or symbols to represent the old and new covenants, respectively.

To answer the question, the obvious high-level contrast is between a place of restricted access and great fearfulness in the case of Sinai, but open access and celebration in the case of Zion. In addition, it could be pointed out that Sinai was a tangible experience of the senses for those who were there (i.e., it could be touched), but that Zion is "not...what may be touched" (v. 18) because it is something that will only be fully realized at some point in the future.

Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.

As you think about verses 22-24, what can we be thankful for in this new covenant?

At least one point of this contrast should be to evoke a sense of gratitude for what has been accomplished through Jesus, “the mediator of a new covenant” (v. 24).

2. Verses 22-24 offer a glimpse of the future as a city full of celebration from redeemed humans and angelic beings as God is present in the city. Use your imagination a bit...how does the description of these verses compare with what usually comes to mind when you think about the future?

This is not a comprehensive description of the future, but it does help us understand what’s coming. Some people may already have a clear vision from Scripture of what the future will be like following Christ’s return. Others, though, may have ideas in mind that distort the reality of what’s coming. Suffice it to say this is a far cry from notions of sitting on a cloud while strumming a harp...forever.

3. Imagine you had the highest level of confidence that your future was going to lead to incredible satisfaction, significance, and joy. What difference should that realization make to your life today as you anticipate what’s coming?

This is simply inviting people to think about the present-moment consequence of God’s promises about the future. Scripture’s promises should help us to see our present in a way that allows us a sense of joy and confidence even when our experience is difficult.

4. Verses 25-29 present another “warning passage” in Hebrews. Why do you think the author issues this warning right after the description of verses 22-24?

Hebrews has consistently made the case for something that may seem like a paradox. On one hand, we have open access to the throne room of God through Jesus. Awesome! But we should not think that this access comes without any obligation on our part. The “Therefore” in v. 28 is really important to account for! The gospel teaches us that we cannot earn or deserve the access that Christ gives us, but it also calls us to respond to that undeserved access with a persevering faith. In sum, the blessings of the “festal gathering” in vv. 21-24 are reserved for those who “do not refuse” God’s call on us to faithfulness (v. 25).

5. This passage points us to the reality of a future where only the things of God’s kingdom will endure—only “the things that cannot be shaken” will last (v. 27). What things are you currently engaged in with your time, talent, and treasure that you believe to be “unshakable”?

God’s kingdom will outlast every other kingdom and pursuit. It could be helpful here to remember Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:19-21.

6. Verses 28-29 are a call to respond. What link do you see between gratitude and worship in these verses? Why do you think gratitude is a key ingredient in worship that is acceptable to God?

Gratitude reveals a heart-level response to God's goodness. Worship also includes elements of "reverence and awe," but gratitude is a kind of engine that drives us to worship the God who has acted on our behalf to provide what none of us could have or achieve on our own.

Wrap Up

Isn't it awesome to think that there's something we can give ourselves to in this life that will last beyond this life—"a kingdom that cannot be shaken"! And it aligns so well with this Advent season since we look back to the first coming of our King and look ahead to the King's return.

We encourage you to take time if you haven't already to think through how you will celebrate this Advent season as a group. It's a great opportunity to plan a fun and meaningful experience together that can help your relationships grow deeper.

Next week is our final week of discussion questions for a while as we wrap up the series. We'll have more info next week on when they'll resume in January. Blessings to you all and we are thankful for what you do each week!