



HEBREWS

Jesus is **GREATER THAN...SO STAND FIRM**

JESUS IS GREATER THAN... **THE HIGH PRIEST—CHAPTER 5**

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Chapter five is a continuation of the discussion of High Priest in chapter 4. Yet, the author breaks his discussion to offer a warning against ceasing to grow in spiritual maturity. Many Bibles call this a warning against apostasy, which is a renunciation of faith. However, while there may be some of that, it is more a description of stagnancy in faith. It appears that the Hebrews were staying in a place of spiritual infancy rather than growing into spiritual adults and beyond. This message rings true to us today. As we recognize who Christ is, what He has done for us, and what He is and will continue to do, we should be drawn to spiritual growth and maturity out of love and respect for our Lord and Savior. To remain as we are in our faith and action is not the sign of true discipleship. Disciples are continually being transformed day-by-day.

IMPORTANT: As always, we encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by committing the class and the teaching to God in prayer. After this, we encourage you to dig into not only the specific chapter in Hebrews for this week (Chapter 5), but also the book of Hebrews as a whole and the Scriptures at large. As you move through your readings, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is **ONLY AFTER DOING THESE THINGS** that you should approach this lesson plan and perhaps use it as a guide. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

PRAYER

Begin your time with a prayer thanking God for providing us a High Priest who acts on our behalf. Pray to God that we do not fall into a stagnant faith, but instead are growing more and more in our faith, love, and action for Him.

FOCUS

- Jesus is more than qualified to be our High Priest.
- WARNING: Do not become stagnant in your faith.
- Recognize that **JESUS IS GREATER THAN** any earthly High Priest.

LESSON

Discussion Starters (OPTIONAL)

- What would you equate the concept of priest with in protestant churches today and why?
- Is having someone in church leadership who has gone through struggles comforting or disconcerting to you? Explain.
- How would you define "spiritual maturity"?
- Do we struggle even today with finding individuals to teach God's Word even though they have been Christ followers for years? Why do we still struggle with this?

FROM GOD'S WORD

- 4:14-16 (From last week...in review)
 - Key Points
 - The author tells his readers to hold fast to their confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God since Jesus is also our great High Priest (v. 14).
 - The author's discourse on the High Priest in connection with Jesus extends from 4:14-5:10 through chapters 7-10).
 - This is the same High Priest who sees us for who we really are and to whom we must give account, but who also has passed through the heavens and has been tempted in every way on our account.
 - This Jesus (Son of God, Judge, High Priest), is able to sympathize with us in our weakness and understands temptation (though is sinless) (v. 15). How does this make you feel?
 - It is only by this High Priest that we can have confidence and draw near to God's presence without any barrier (namely our sin) standing in our way. It is by grace and mercy that we can stand before God and enter into relationship with Him (v. 16). THAT IS GOOD NEWS!!!
- 5:1-4
 - Key Points
 - The Hebrews author continues his discussion of the High Priest and Jesus by listing some of the characteristics and qualities of the High Priest.
 - What does the author list as the qualifications of a High Priest (not a complete list, but only in relation to Christ's role as High Priest)?
 - Chosen from among men

- Acts on behalf of the people in relation to God
 - Deals gently with others as a fellow sinner
 - Is called by God for the role
- It is important to note here the emphasis on the human nature of the High Priests of old. They were but men who understood weakness. They offered up sacrifices for sins for both the people AND themselves.
 - Why do you think the author stresses this point here?
- It is also highlighted here that the Old Testament High Priest was “called by God”. So, God appointed High Priests through the lineage of Aaron (see Ex. 28:1; 29:1-46). No one could assume this role (as often happened with kings), but it had to come by divine appointment through God.
- For Discussion
 - How do the qualification and characteristics relate to modern day ministers and elders? Do they? How?
 - Have you found church leaders who have dealt harshly with church members rather than gently as fellow sinners? Why do you think that is?
 - How did Jesus fulfill each of the qualifications? Which qualifications did He not fulfill and why? *He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself as He was perfect and became the sacrifice Himself.*
- 5:5-10
 - Key Points
 - In the same way that earthly High Priests did not appoint themselves, so also Jesus Christ did not appoint Himself but was instead made a High Priest by His Father.
 - The author quotes Psalm 2:7 and 110:4 to substantiate his claim. Here, Jesus as High Priest is combined with His status as the Son of God. In Psalm 110, David also calls this High Priest “Lord” who sits at the right hand of God and reigns as High Priest forever. Obviously, David was talking about no ordinary human High Priest. The author demonstrates here how Jesus was being spoken of in ways that the people did not understand or recognize at the moment, but are now fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
 - The big point here is that Christ did not exalt Himself, but was appointed this role by His Father. Read Philippians 2:5-11 and discuss its connection here.
 - Jesus Prayed...a lot. In Luke’s narrative, prayer occurs at every major point in Jesus’ life:
 - At his baptism (3:21)
 - At his selection of the Twelve (6:12)
 - At Peter’s confession (9:18)

- At Jesus' transfiguration (9:28-29)
- In his teaching the Lord's Prayer (11:1-4)
- In teaching on prayer (18:1-14)
- Before Peter's denial (22:32)
- Before His crucifixion (22:39-46).
- The point here is that Jesus reverently approached His Father with heartfelt (tears) and earnest (cries) prayers and requests regularly. He leaned on the Father and only did what the Father told Him. Jesus submitted to the Father and waited in expectation for His answer.
- Jesus' reverence to the Father is why His prayers were answered. Jesus now stands to intercede for us and help us talk to the Father (Romans 8:34).
- Jesus, God's Son, learned obedience. Though He was fully divine, He was also fully human. In His human state He remained sinless (4:15; 7:26) and therefore was always obedient to the Father.
 - As a human, He gained knowledge and wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52) and knew firsthand what the cost of obedience was through His suffering.
 - Jesus "learned obedience" as He grew in wisdom and stature through the temptations and suffering He endured. Therefore, He knows our struggles personally. What a great God we serve!!!
- As Christ was made perfect through obedience to the Father (as He lived as a child through adulthood without sin), so we too will be made perfect through obedience to the Son as the source/author of our salvation (He took our sin as it was impossible for us to remain sinless) and High Priest (our intercessor and mediator to the Father, He brings us into God's presence).
 - Meditate on this for a moment in silence (read it again if you have to or put it into different words).
 - Jesus' "learned obedience" to the Father was demonstrated through His life without sin through temptation and suffering.
 - Our obedience as sinners is to give our lives over to the one who made us perfect, holy. This is something we COULD NEVER DO!!! Our life should be lived in praise and thankfulness (not obligation) for the salvation given to us that is free, but wasn't cheap!
 - Pause for a prayer of thankfulness and praise.
- For Discussion
 - Do we ever "exalt ourselves" to positions of authority? Do we truly allow God to "call us" or appoint us to roles or do we ever "help" Him along in the decision? Explain.
 - How is Jesus' prayer life an example to us? Do we pray enough? Why or why not?

- Jesus' obedience through temptation and suffering had to happen because of our lack of obedience. He therefore brought us life (an undeserved gift) instead of death (a deserved punishment) through His death and resurrection. How does this make you feel?
- 5:11-14 (continued next week...)
 - Key Points
 - Chapter 5:11-6:20 is an interruption in the discussion of Jesus as High Priest. The author is compelled to tell his readers to not become stagnant in their faith and hope, but instead to endure and grow in their faith.
 - In verses 5:11-14, the readers are rebuked for their lack of spiritual maturity. This is very strong wording here as he tells them they are still babies in their faith when they should be spiritual adults. He is essentially scolding them.
 - He tells them they are "dull of hearing" which means they are sluggish (6:12) and content with where they are. It appears they have lost the reverence and awe of who Christ is, what He has done for them, and how they should live and mature in that faith and hope.
 - To drive the point even more, the author uses the metaphor of food and how it nourishes and helps us grow. The food we eat changes as we grow older. It is the same with our spiritual growth process. As we grow, our spiritual food is supposed to become more substantial, which ultimately helps us discern between good and evil.
 - OBJECT LESSON: Bring in some jars of baby food to class and some spoons for everyone. Have everyone taste the baby food (pick some good ones!) and ask them if they would be satisfied eating that (and only that) for the rest of their lives. Then ask them "Why are we often okay eating spiritual baby food?"
 - For Discussion
 - Do we struggle in the church today with spiritual immaturity? How and Why?
 - What would be indications of being "dull of hearing" or spiritually immature?
 - Don't read our Bible constantly to know God deeper.
 - Don't pray regularly to build our relationship with Christ.
 - Don't have God conversations with brothers and sisters regularly and "give up meeting together" (10:24-25).
 - Don't serve or share or faith regularly.
 - Accept God's grace but do not live a transformed life.

- Expect others to tell us what the Bible says rather than discover it ourselves.

REFLECTION

- Does knowing Christ as our great High Priest motivate you toward spiritual growth? Explain.
- Why do we often grow stagnant in our faith?
- Do you feel you are in a time of spiritual growth or spiritual stagnancy? How can we, as a class and brothers and sisters, encourage each other toward growth and transformation?

PRAYER

LESSON OUTLINE – Here are the lessons we will be studying the weeks to come.

- INTRODUCTION (January 5)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 12)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 19)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...But Still Human–Chapter 2 (January 26)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Moses–Chapter 3 (February 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 4 (February 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 5 (February 16)
- THEREFORE, Don't Fall Away–Chapter 6 (February 23)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Melchizedek–Chapter 7 (March 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Law–Chapter 8 (March 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Tabernacle –Chapter 9 (March 16)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Sacrifices–Chapter 10 (March 23)
- THEREFORE, Have Faith–Chapter 11 (March 30)
- THEREFORE, Stand Firm–Chapter 12 (April 6)
- THEREFORE, Offer Acceptable Sacrifices–Chapter 13 (April 13)
- CONCLUSION (April 27)