



HEBREWS

HPUMC BIBLE READING PLAN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 2



CONVERSATION STARTER

What is the nicest or most meaningful thing someone has ever done for you?

JESUS, THE GREATER HIGH PRIEST

Long before they officially became a nation, the people of Israel stood before God at Mount Sinai as God invited them to become a kingdom of priests on His behalf (Exodus 19:5-6). God's people were called to be a blessing to the nations, to mediate God's presence to the whole world. After they entered the promised land, the Levites—one of the twelve tribes—were set apart as the official priests of Israel. These priests were responsible for maintaining all the ways God was worshiped—rituals, feasts, sacrifices, etc. They wore garments of white cloth and gold jewelry to remind the people of Eden, where God's presence dwelled with humans. They were meant to be a walking reminder of God's beauty and glory.

Only they weren't. From the start, Israel's priesthood seemed doomed to failure. By the time of Jesus, corruption was rampant. In Matthew 23, Jesus calls the priests hypocrites, saying, "You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean."

We are left wondering, *will there ever be a priest who will be a true bridge between heaven and earth and unleash God's blessings on humanity?* Hebrews answers with a resounding **yes**.

Unlike Aaron and the other High priests, Jesus "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (v. 15), and therefore, he can serve as our perfect mediator. He is the priest par excellence who stands in the gap to offer atonement for our sins, intercede for us with the Father, and bring God's blessing and presence to earth.

When Levitical priests offered sacrifices, they were not fixing the *problem* of sin. They were administering God's forgiveness and grace, yes, but they could not ultimately heal the human condition.

But Jesus can! Jesus fixed the problem of sin by offering himself as a once-and-for-all sacrifice. For those who trust in Jesus, there will never be a need for another sacrifice because Jesus' blood covers all. **Jesus is our perfect high priest—truly complete and lacking nothing.**

Jesus is the high priest of the greatest temple there ever was—Creation! Genesis 1 paints a picture of the whole earth as God's [Temple](#). In the beginning, God's dwelling place was with man; Heaven and Earth were completely overlapping. Hebrews tells us that Jesus not only sits at the right hand of God, but he is also the high priest in the temple made by God, not human hands. In other words, Jesus rules over the temple of creation!

In this way, Jesus represents God's presence with us. Because of Jesus, God's presence is no longer limited to a specific city or people group, but exists, as it was always meant to, as a gift for the whole world.

In Jesus, you have a mediator who stands in the gap between you and God, who keeps you anchored to the heart of heaven, so you can be fully with God. You have a priest who sacrificed his life so you could experience the mercy of God's forgiveness. Because of Jesus, we can find reconciliation, not just with God but with other people. Because of Jesus, we can create communities of justice and mercy, love and peace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Righteousness means right relationships with God and with others. What does righteousness require of you this week in all the different environments you inhabit? In other words, what does it look like for us to live in a way that promotes justice and mercy, sacrificial love, and forgiveness as we learn to trust in Jesus?
3. Hebrews 6:19 describes Jesus as the anchor of our soul. What are we often tempted to tether ourselves to apart from Jesus? How might it give us hope to view Jesus as the anchor that holds us steady in the storms of life?

4. The author of Hebrews wants us to know that we can trust Jesus fully and forever. Is there an area of your life, a relationship, or a situation where you are hesitant to trust Jesus right now?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Jesus serves as our great High Priest, standing in the gap between us and God, drawing us to the heart of the Father. Because of this, we can experience true forgiveness and mercy. We don't need to be afraid to be open and honest before God, calling to light the areas where we've missed the mark and desperately need God's cleansing touch. In this way, Confession can be a healing practice that draws us closer to God and to one another. For this practice, we recommend finding a quiet place where you can sit with God without distractions. Start by praying the prayer of confession below, asking God to highlight anything God wants to bring to your attention. Remember, this practice is not about shame, but about asking for God's forgiveness and reminding ourselves of God's endless mercy and abounding love for you.

Lord, we confess our sins before you. We confess that we have fallen short of your glory and your intent for our lives. Open our eyes that we may see ourselves with clarity and truthfulness, that we may have eyes to see all of that within us that is not pleasing to you.

Lord, we confess to you that we have not loved as we ought. We have been impatient with others with whom we could have been patient. We have disregarded those you have called us to serve. We have chosen the selfish way when you have called us to selflessness.

Lord, we confess that we have not tended to the care of our souls. We have been too busy to pray. We have been too quick to speak and too slow to listen for you. We have filled our lives with all kinds of noise instead of patiently waiting like sheep for our shepherd's voice.

Lord, we confess our need of you. We need your grace. We need your patience. We need your guidance. We cannot see beyond the moment. We cannot worship you as we ought. As we begin this solemn journey toward the cross, we call upon your mercy and your love for our salvation. Amen.