

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: Hebrews

Week of October 5 (Week 5)

Hebrews: Experience Jesus, Not Experiences (6:1-12)



CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

Hebrews 6 invites believers on a journey from foundational knowledge towards perfect faith. The chapter warns about the dire consequences of turning away after coming so close to truth, yet provides encouragement, reminding believers of God's unchanging promise. The ultimate assurance of hope in God's promise acts as a steadfast anchor for our souls, enabling us to weather any storm. (Bible Hub Summary).

SERMON DISCUSSION

Topic:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

OBSERVING AND APPLYING THE TEXT

Hebrews 6:1–3 urges believers to leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. This passage emphasizes the importance of growing in our understanding and application of the faith.

1. Hebrews 6:1 begins with the word “Therefore,” linking back to the previous section (Heb. 5:11-14). When we consider Heb. 5:11-6:2, what is the likely spiritual state of the readers that the writer of Hebrews is addressing?
2. What action did the writer of Hebrews want his hearer to take in 6:1-3?

3. How can we apply the concept of moving beyond elementary teachings in our spiritual journey?

Reflection: Many of the Jewish Christians to whom this letter was written were immature. They should have been teaching others, but they had not even applied the basics to their own lives. They were reluctant to move beyond the basic doctrines of Christianity. They wouldn't be able to understand the high-priestly role of Christ unless they moved out of their comfortable position, cut some of their Jewish ties, and stopped trying to blend in with their culture. Commitment to Christ moves people out of their comfort zones into roles where they can teach others.

Verses 4-6 present a stern warning about the impossibility of renewing to repentance those who have once been enlightened and then fall away. This serves as a caution against complacency and apostasy.

4. How does the writer of Hebrews describe the ones who “have fallen away” in 6:4-6?

Many consider Hebrews 6:4-6 the most terrifying warning in the New Testament—that there can be no second beginning. Who are these people who were “once enlightened” and “tasted the heavenly gift”? Consider the three ways of understanding this passage:

A. Hypothetical

It refers to a hypothetical situation that has never existed and, therefore, is a warning against a sin that is impossible to commit. This is a rhetorical technique used by the author to offer an ominous warning of something that cannot actually happen.

Nevertheless, because of its grim consequences, it incites believers to cling to Christ and to grow in grace. The obvious problem with this view is that if the sin cannot be committed, it is absurd to offer it as an argument against falling to it.

B. Actual

Another interpretation is that those who fall away are actual, bona-fide Christians. They truly repented of their sin, were united with Christ, and were active in the body of believers. Then they fall away. If understood this way, the passage is a dire warning that many genuine Christians will fall away from the faith. Scripture, however, rules out this interpretation. The Bible repeatedly tells us that God keeps us (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:39; 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:6-8; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:3). In 1 John 2:19 and following, John describes apostates who left the church. In leaving the faith, they showed they were not truly part of the faith in the place.

C. Apparent

This view holds that those who fall away are not true believers, but rather men and women who only appear so. This is the most faithful way to interpret the text. It is not a warning for the truly regenerate. Rather, it is a caution for individuals who have tasted the things of Christ but have not become genuine Christians. They are people who have received a thorough exposure to the gospel and have made an ostensible profession of faith, and have been received into the fellowship of Christ. This view is supported by the following:

- The participation in spiritual realities (“enlightened,” “shared,” and “tasted”) of those who fall away parallels the privileged experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness who fell away and died in unbelief. Some of the Israelites who perished in the wilderness were regenerate, but some were unregenerate; both were visible members of the covenant community and thus shared a profound mutuality of spiritual experience.
- Jesus’ parable of the soil (Mat. 13) teaches us there are people who at the beginning look very much like believers, but they are unregenerate. Not only do they look like Christians, but they have remarkable spiritual experiences before they fall away.
(R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews*, 275–76; Albert J. Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, 195–98).

5. How does the agricultural analogy explain those who have “fallen away”? How do other agricultural illustrations in the Bible inform our reading of this warning passage?
6. What are the implications for today’s believers from the metaphor of land that produces thorns and thistles?

In verses 9-12, the author expresses confidence in the readers’ salvation, encouraging them to show diligence and imitate those who inherit the promises through faith and patience.

7. According to Heb. 6:9–10, what is the writer’s (of Hebrews) assessment of his hearers or audience?
8. What is the writer’s charge to his audience in verses 11–12?

9. Why is it important for us to "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised"?

Reflection: "The focus of diligence involves imitation: ". . . but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6:12b). Imitation was of great practical value to those who had no New Testament scriptures to provide adequate standards. Men of God who had learned new moral and spiritual ideas became valuable guides to those less mature." (Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 284)

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE
October 6-10, 2025
Read Hebrews 6

Monday: 6:1 "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity." Ask God to help you grow in knowledge and understanding of His Word, leading to a mature faith.

Tuesday: 6:4-6 "For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened . . . and then fall away, to restore them again to repentance . . ." Pray for those whom you know were exposed to the gospel, experience life with the believing community but walked away. A couple of examples are Charles Templeton and Bart Erhman.

Wednesday: 6:9 "Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation." Thank God for His unchanging promises and ask for a deeper assurance of hope in your life.

Thursday: 6:10 "For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do." Praise and thank God that he does not forget us for all we have done for him and his people even when people may forget our work and labor of love.

Friday: 6:11-12 "And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise." Ask God for wisdom to discern and follow the examples of faithful believers who have gone before you.