


# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 10



# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 10  
MARCH 20, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.




# WEEK 10

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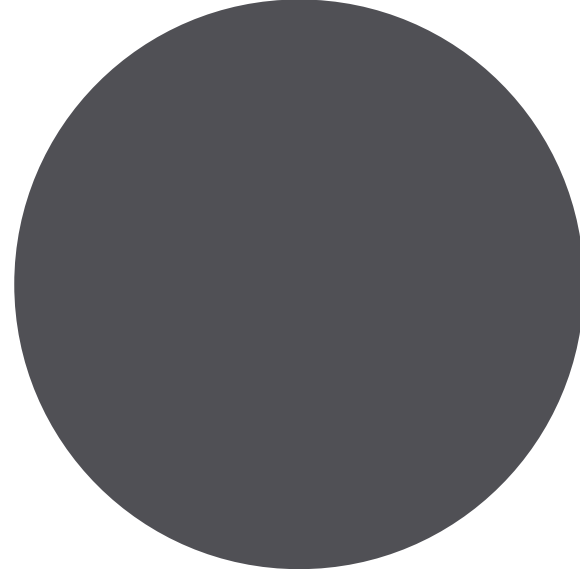
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# DAY 1 LISTENING IS TRANSFORMATIVE

## First read Hebrews 5:11-12a.

Spiritual maturity is about many things. But at the core it's about listening. It's about hearing God—through his Word, Spirit, and people—and obeying him (see also 2:1–4; 3:7–19; 4:12–13). Jesus calls this wisdom. Near the conclusion of *The Sermon on the Mount* he explains, **“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock”** (Matthew 7:24). Listening is transformative.

The writer of Hebrews shifts, at least for a moment, from reflecting directly on Jesus' priesthood to addressing his readers' response to his divine office. He says, **“we have much to say”** (v.11a). In other words, even though **“it is hard to explain,”** he could go on and on about Jesus' nature and identity (v.11b). It's not difficult because Jesus is so enigmatic. Rather the truth is not getting through because of *dull hearing*. The phrase communicates mental laziness and spiritual resistance (O'Brien, 206). This results in a developmental delay. By now many should be teachers, but they still need teachers (see v.12a).

Hearing the good news or **“the basic principles of the oracles of God,”** leads to sharing the news with other people (v.12a). While we never outgrow our need for the gospel, we should outgrow our elementary appreciation for it. We outgrow enjoying Jesus for ourselves. We outgrow only receiving teaching. We outgrow dull hearing. We outgrow, what the writer will later call, milk.

# DAY 1 LISTENING IS TRANSFORMATIVE

1. What does this passage teach us about God?
2. How does “mental laziness” and “spiritual resistance” show up in your life?
3. What basic truths of Jesus are you able to share with others?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*I want to grow. I want to be useful in your kingdom. I desire to share your good news in my home, friendships, church family, neighborhood, and beyond. Free me from dull hearing so that I can live and teach your good news to those around me.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 2 DISCERNING GOOD FROM EVIL

## First read Hebrews 5:12b-14.

Solomon learned to see order in every season. He famously observed, **“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven”** (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Sixties L.A. rock band, The Byrds were famously inspired by this passage adding the refrain “Turn, Turn, Turn” to emphasize the cyclical nature of Solomon’s insight. This isn’t simply the rhythm of the physical world but our spiritual formation.

Hebrews is not against **“the basic principles”** of the gospel or what the writer calls “milk” (v.12). Rather, milk is for the season of childhood. Similarly, “solid food” is not better than milk. But **“solid food is for the mature”** (v.14a). Like Solomon and The Byrds, Hebrews’ author believes there is a time and season for everything. Children should not be expected to **“distinguish good from evil”** (v.14). They need to be taught. But the spiritually mature should. In fact, they ought to teach.

To become more skilled in **“the word of righteousness”** and grow in discernment we have to change our spiritual diet (v.13). *What’s that mean?* Well, it depends on how we define maturity. Several years ago columnist David Brooks identified a shift in our popular conception of maturity—self-discovery replaced self-mastery (*The Art of Growing Up*, 2008). We used to think we were sinners working toward righteousness. Now we think of ourselves as righteous working toward understanding and expression. Scripture dignifies both perspectives—we are sinners who bear God’s image (see Romans 3:23 and Genesis 1:27).

If all we “eat” are ideas of our brokenness or preciousness, we’ll never grow up. The fullness of the gospel diet is only enjoyed when our brokenness is served alongside our preciousness. In other words, when we discern the good from evil in ourselves, then we can see both in every season and situation.



# DAY 2 DISCERNING GOOD FROM EVIL

1. How does Jesus teach and embody this vision of maturity?
2. What “milk” was instrumental in your initial spiritual development? What “solid food” ought you learn to enjoy more regularly?
3. How does the cross and resurrection give us ultimate discernment between good and evil?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Forgive and heal the evil within me. Nurture and grow the goodness of your image. Help me to see the world and every season with the maturity of Christ.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



# DAY 3 THE HIGHEST DOES NOT STAND WITHOUT THE LOWEST

## First read Hebrews 6:1-3.

Spiritual maturity is not about *moving* on. It's about *building* on. When our author instructs his readers to **"leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity,"** he's not telling them to abandon the gospel (v.1). Rather, he's helping them see the power of the gospel. That's why in urging them forward he reminds them of their foundation (v.1 b).

Six bricks, if you will, constitute the substructure of life with God. It's not an exhaustive list, but he highlights repentance (from sin), faith (in God), cleansing, prayer, resurrection, and judgment (v.1-2). These are the basics of the Christian story. As **"God permits"** we're to grow, cultivate, and build on this foundation. That's precisely the purpose of a foundation, *isn't it? To build?*

Once we've laid something strong below the surface, we are able to build up. In fact, C.S. Lewis points out in his book *The Four Loves*, "The highest does not stand without the lowest" (v.20). Maturity does not come without a foundation. Solid foods become edible only after we learn to digest milk. Spiritual life is unstable without a firm foundation. But once that foundation is laid, it's time to **"go on to maturity"** (v.1).

Paul puts it this way to the church in Colossae, **"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving"** (Colossians 2:6-7). The roots of salvation beneath the soil, cause life above the soil to flourish.

# DAY 3

## THE HIGHEST DOES NOT STAND WITHOUT THE LOWEST

1. Why do you think God cares about your growth?
2. What are some specific ways you'd like to grow in maturity?
3. In what respect is the gospel the 'lowest' foundation? How is it also the 'highest' point of our faith?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*May the truths of your Word ground my heart in love, humility, and joy so that I can grow more and more like your Son every day.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 4

## ABANDONING GOOD NEWS

### First read Hebrews 6:4-6.

A caution about falling away from God is the writer's third specific warning. In chapter 2 he warned about neglecting God's salvation (v.1-4). In chapters 3 and 4 he warned about failing to enter God's rest (3:7-4:13). But this third warning has a weightiness which the first two don't. In this case the writer says restoring someone is "impossible" once they've been enlightened and experienced the heavenly gift, the Spirit, God's word, and power (v.4-5). The reason is because "falling away" is equated to crucifying Jesus a second time and **"holding him up to contempt"** (v.6). Most bible teachers agree this is a warning against apostasy.

Apostasy is the abandonment of the gospel. It's a complete rejection of what was initially received. In context the warning reminds us again of Israel, wandering in the wilderness. Their cautionary tale is at the center of all three Hebrews admonitions. Through demonstrations of the Spirit, word, and power, God invited his people into salvation and rest. Yet they fell away and failed to repent (3:19). And there's a finality to their failure. That's the sobering tone of this passage.

When we reject the core reality of God's character (love) and work (atonement), we abandon God himself. This is irreconcilable. You can not have the blessings of God--salvation, the Holy Spirit, the good word, and eternal power--without God. As one preacher has plainly put it, *God is the good news.*

# DAY 4

## ABANDONING GOOD NEWS

1. How do divine warnings demonstrate divine love?
2. What do you think is the difference between apostasy and the common struggle to trust, love, and obey the Lord?
3. Why do you think apostasy is tantamount to crucifying Christ a second time?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Left to myself, I would daily fall away. Yet in you I'm safe and don't have to fear. Moment-by-moment you hold me in love, safeguard my soul in your Spirit, and hide me in the hope of your Son's victory.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



# DAY 5 CULTIVATING FERTILE SOUL

## First read Hebrews 6:7-8.

A vivid agricultural metaphor compares two people we've just met. First, the mature (v.1-3). They're like **"land that has drunk the rain ... and produces a crop"** (v.7). Second, the apostate (v.4-6). They're like land that **"bears thorns and thistles ... it's end is to be burned"** (v.8).

There's one explicit difference and one implied between the two. Explicitly, the mature "receives a blessing from God," and the apostate is "near to being cursed" by God (v.7,8). The wider context offers a more subtle distinction. You see, the gospel of grace saturates the entire chapter. While the mature person builds on **"the elementary doctrines of Christ,"** the apostate is **"crucifying again the Son of God"** (v.1,6). One soul is blessed and receives the gospel. One is cursed and rejects the gospel. So the question is, *how do we cultivate fertile souls?*

Jesus used an agricultural metaphor too (see Matthew 13:1-23). A sower plants seeds in various soils. Only one soil yields lasting fruit. This soil is unhindered by Satan, endures suffering, resists urges of this world, and ultimately **"hears the word and understands it"** (Matthew 13:23). Good soil, like unhardened hearts, is about listening (see 4:7 and 5:11-12). Listening cultivates humility. Listening embraces faith. Listening welcomes blessing and is always open to receiving good news.


# DAY 5 CULTIVATING FERTILE SOUL

1. Do you believe God speaks? What does it mean to listen to God?
2. What's God saying to you this week?
3. How does the gospel shape a listening heart?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*I desire a heart that welcomes the rain of your Word with faith, humility, and trust. Your Word is healing. Your Word is life-giving. Your Word yields fruit. Your Word makes me more like your Son. Graciously give me ears to hear and understand.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



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To receive updates about this reading guide and discover more gospel resources to help you enjoy the truth and beauty of Jesus, please visit [churchinthesquare.com](https://www.churchinthesquare.com).





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