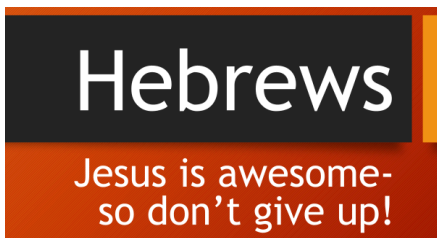


Books of the Bible Series

Hebrews

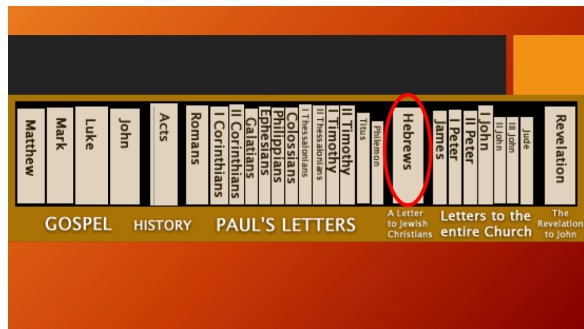
David Sommitz
July 28, 2024

We will talk about Hebrews today, starting with the punchline: Jesus is awesome so don't give up!



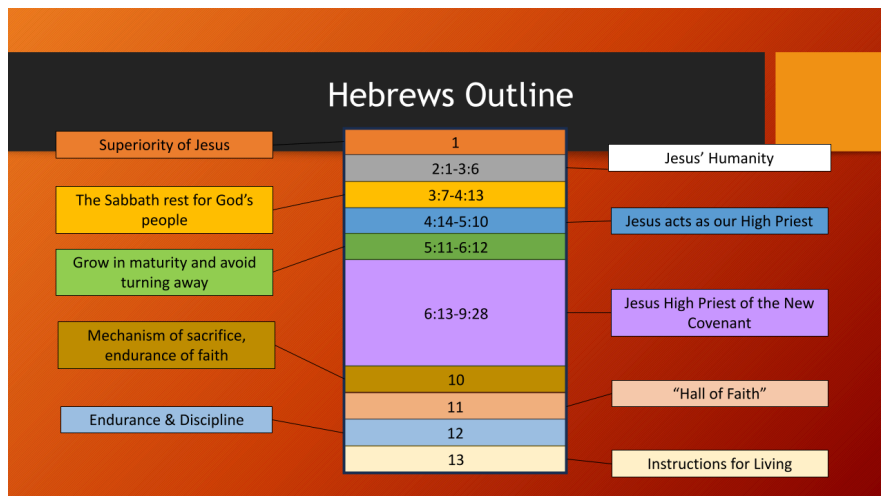
This is one whole idea, not two separate ideas. We don't say don't give up. And we don't just say Jesus is awesome. However simple this might appear, these two ideas together are difficult to understand and believe, especially when we're in the middle of something and tempted to give up. At the end today, I'd like to ask you what this looks like in your story: What about Jesus inspires you not to give up? Keep this in mind as

we continue.



Here is the library of New Testament books that we've been covering. Hebrews is a thick book and likely grouped with Paul's other letters. Most likely, Paul is the author who wrote this to an audience of Jewish Christians about 20 years after Jesus's resurrection. These are people who alive before Jesus died, rose again, and established the New Covenant. This covenant shift was huge for them..

Inductive Bible Study



Here is a rough outline of this rather complex book: We could use at least 45 minutes to cover each of these topics above, but my approach today is to use inductive Bible study.

To review, there are three parts of inductive study:

Inductive Bible Study

1. **Observation:**
What does the passage say?
2. **Interpretation:**
What does the passage mean?
3. **Application:**
How does this apply to my life today?

Raw observation: what do we see in the text?

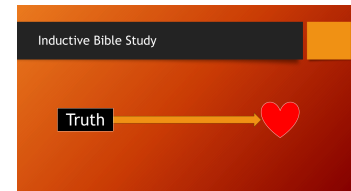
Interpretation: what do these observations mean?

Application: how do these observations apply to our lives?

I think this approach is useful because as soon as I read or listen to someone, I am immediately drawing conclusions and applications before I even finish listening.

Observation

When you observe something, we want pieces of truths to permeate our hearts and transform our hearts. But our problem is something Hebrews mentions: we tend to have hardened hearts which can prevent us from really seeing truth and really taking it in. Hardness is like a cloudy haze which makes the truth minimized or distorted into something different or **even opposite** from what it is. The inductive method, especially the observation part, is really trying to pry open the hardness in our heart and let the truth penetrate it.



(This approach might be useful when reading work emails, too!)

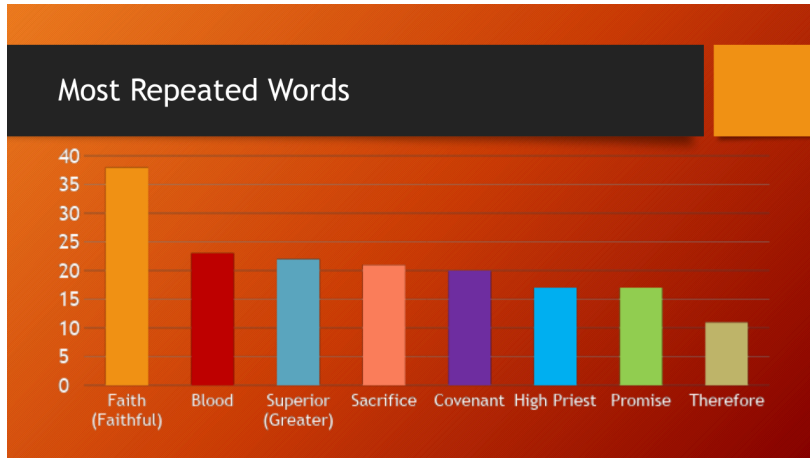
To use this today, first I want to make a few raw observations and exercise the discipline of withholding interpretation.

Old Testament References

- Old Testament referenced or quoted at least 35 times
- Two quotes repeated three times
 - "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (5:6, 6:20, 7:17)
 - "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (3:7, 3:15, 4:7)

Our Scripture reading today was from Jer 31:31-34. This is an example of the first thing I notice about Hebrews which is the use of Old Testament references, often quoted word for word.

Next I want to observe the most repeated words in Hebrews:



Even the word “therefore” is important and used 11 times, which we will discuss later.

Here are some passages I would categorize as “cautions.” Actually, as soon as I categorize something, I’m veering into interpretation so I have to be careful here.

These verses are taken out of context here, but here is the list;

Cautions

- 2:3 “how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?”
- 4:11 “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience”
- 6:4-6 “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened... and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance.”
- 10:31 “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”
- 12:25 “See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?”

It’s tempting to talk about the meanings of these verses but since I’m only making observations now, let’s continue.

The word **therefore** is useful because it joins two ideas together. There are 11 of them in Hebrews that have context maybe worth exploring:

Therefore

2:1 – “We must pay the most careful attention, **therefore**, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”

3:1 – “**Therefore**, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus”

4:1 – “**Therefore**, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”

4:11 – “Let us, **therefore**, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”

4:14 – “**Therefore**, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”

6:1 – “**Therefore** let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity”

Therefore

10:19 – “**Therefore**, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart”

12:1 – “**Therefore**, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders”

12:12 – “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. **Therefore**, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.”

12:28 – “**Therefore**, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

13:15 – “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, **therefore**, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise”

When making observations, I sometimes feel silly because I'm just recording information. I have to remember that it's actually a discipline to just make observations!

Interpretation

Now, I'm adding my interpretations, so be mindful and wary of this:

Old Testament References

- Old Testament referenced or quoted at least 35 times
- Two quotes re: Emmanuel!
 - "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (5.6, 6:20, 7:17)
 - "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (3:7, 3:15, 4:7)

What can we say about the Old Testament observations? The biggest thing that stands out to me is **Emmanuel**: this shows us that not only is Jesus the next "thing," he's been part of it throughout the whole Bible.

Cautions

- 2:3 "how shall we..."
- 4:11 "Let us, therefore, fix your thoughts on Jesus"
- 6:4-6 "It is impossible for you to be enlightened... an enlightened... an repentance."
- 10:31 "It is a dream..."
- 12:25 "See to it that you do not refuse him who warns you..."

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
Proverbs 9:10

To interpret the **cautions** I mentioned above:

I notice there are always words of reassurance and confidence. We are not to respond with fear. See Prov. 9:10

Hebrews is talking about the person of Jesus. If there is zero fear, however, we are missing something.

Interpretation of the "THEREFORES"

Therefore

- 2:1 – "We must pay the most careful attention, **therefore**, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."
- 3:1 – **Therefore**, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus"
- 4:1 – **Therefore**, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it."
- 4:11 – "Let us, **therefore**, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience."
- 4:14 – **Therefore**, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess"
- 6:1 – **Therefore** let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity"

Therefore

- 10:19 – **Therefore**, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart"
- 12:1 – **Therefore**, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders"
- 12:12 – "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. **Therefore**, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees"
- 12:28 – **Therefore**, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."
- 13:15 – "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, **therefore**, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise"

2:1 – "We must pay the most careful attention, **therefore**, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."



Since Chapter 1 is about God speaking in many ways but now it is through Jesus, we need to pay close attention to what Jesus says and does and what he is like: this is how we will know what God is saying to us

3:1 – “**Therefore**, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus”

Jesus faced a fully human experience

Therefore

Fix our thoughts on Him

What comes before Heb 3:1 is about Jesus’s humanity and his suffering. Therefore we should fix our thoughts on a relevant person and in order to make good choices.

4:1 – “**Therefore**, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”

4:11 – “Let us, **therefore**, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”

God offers us true rest

Therefore

Make every effort to rest

Verses 1 and 11 are similar: I see that Jesus offers us true rest, a really good thing, and therefore we should make every effort to go after this good thing.

4:14 – “**Therefore**, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess”

We have an excellent advocate

Therefore

Hold fast to our faith

There are many mentions of Jesus as high priest. A prophet brings God to people and a priest brings people to God. Jesus as a high priest brings us into God’s presence and furthermore, he is advocating for us. His excellent advocacy is a good reason to hold fast to our faith: it is a faith worth having.

6:1 – “**Therefore** let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity”

There are deeper things to understand about Jesus

Therefore

Grow in our understanding

Because I feel a little insulted by this verse, I suspect it was written by Paul. He is saying a weird complex idea that makes me stop and think about it. He is saying we need to milk and then solid

food and then he says to stop laying a foundation with basic things that don't seem very basic to me. I think he's saying we as we grow in maturity we therefore grow in our understanding.

10:19 – “**Therefore**, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart”

We have confidence to enter God's presence

Therefore

Worship God with sincerity

This is interesting because we are given this confidence, we should respond with sincerity.

12:1 – “**Therefore**, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders”

Stories of God's goodness are everywhere

Therefore

Throw off everything that hinders

This is from Chapter 12, following Chapter 11 which lists heroes of the faith. But notice that Samson is included in Chapter 11, a story that is way crazier than anything TMZ could come up with. Samson is not a good person but God's goodness is pervasive in his story. This “therefore” means because there are stories of **God's** goodness everywhere: it's not about our goodness but it's about God and that is why we should throw off everything that hinders.

12:12 – “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. **Therefore**, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.”

God disciplines us as children

Therefore

Use God's discipline to grow

I am grateful to Pastor Eric's lessons on discipline because it helps me parent our children. We are claiming children as our own when we discipline them. If I am being disciplined by God, that is good because He is claiming me as His own. Moreover, it's not punitive but helpful and we shouldn't therefore resist it.

12:28 – “**Therefore**, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.””

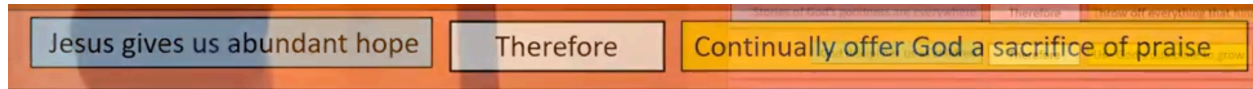
We have been given something eternal

Therefore

Worship with reverence and awe

This goes back to one of the cautionary ideas which suggests that we worship with reverence and awe because we are confident in God.

13:15 – “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, **therefore**, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise”



We come from a place of confidence and not fear. This talks about Jesus going outside the city to be killed as a sacrifice, similar to the way sacrifices were historically done. We should see abundant hope from this and through this, a continuous sacrifice of praise flows.

Summary of Making Interpretations

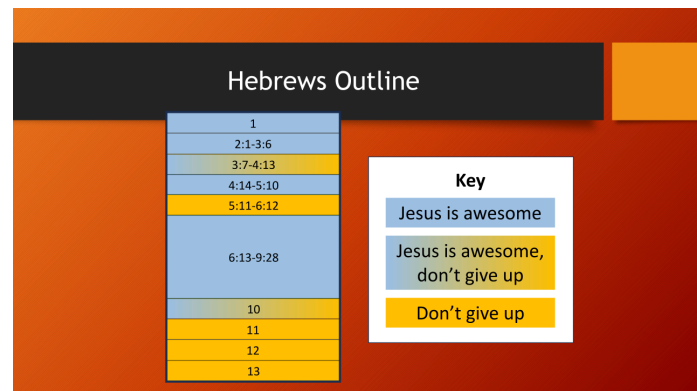
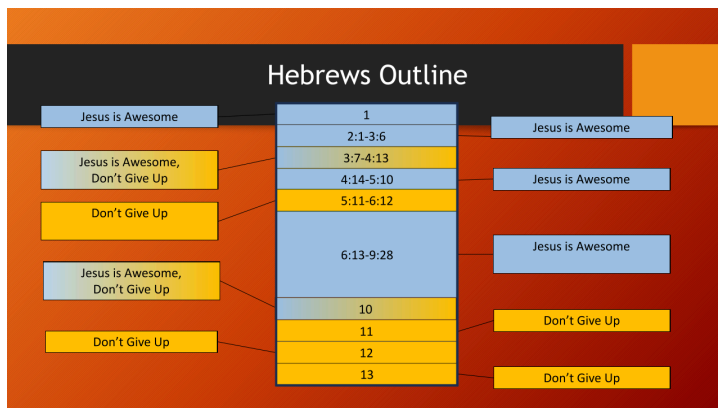
So this wraps up the examples of interpretations. I want to emphasize that the best way to do this is in a group so we can get constructive feedback from others.

The **blue squares** are the **starting idea**: the awesomeness of Jesus’s character or “Jesus’s Awesome Ideas”

The **yellow squares** are our responses to the ideas. They represent the idea “Don’t Give Up.”

The Yellow and Blue squares together help me piece together my thesis of Hebrews.

Once I have this, I can go back to my outline and add to it:



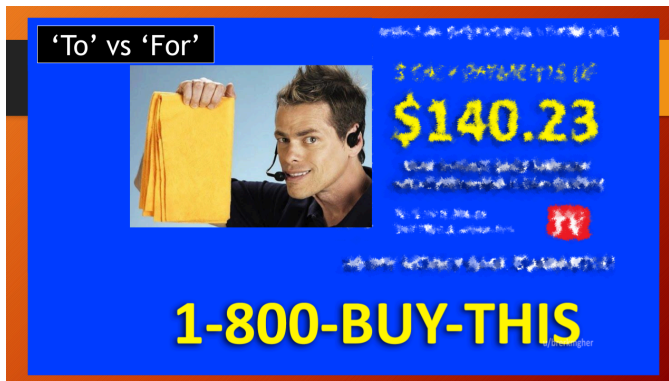
As I zoom out, you can see there is blue first and then I add the yellow as an application. “Jesus is Awesome” is the starting point over and over, not “Don’t Give Up.” First, he tells us Jesus is

Awesome” as our anchor. Then follows my response which is “Don’t Give Up.”

My **conclusion** is that *when I feel tempted to give up, I need to meditate more on Jesus to help me persevere.*

Application

Once we’ve made our interpretation, we can apply it: What should I do about this? Remember that Hebrew is written for us but not TO us. It’s written to first-century Jewish believers.



For me, it reads like a bad infomercial that tries to convince me of something I need that I didn’t realize I needed:

I think we need to exercise some imagination and ponder how to come up with an analogy for us at the Village in 2024:



First, it gives us hope! My introduction to college basketball was in 1997, the year that AZ won the national basketball championship. As an 8 year year old, I thought that we would win every year!

We could turn our hope into idolatry but I’d like to harness this hope to recognize that Jesus is the only real hope we have.

However, since 1997, we have had 27 years

of losing which helps me understand where the Jewish people were after waiting centuries for their messiah. If college basketball is my hope, it’s discouraging. I’m tempted to give up but I don’t give up.

Permanence:



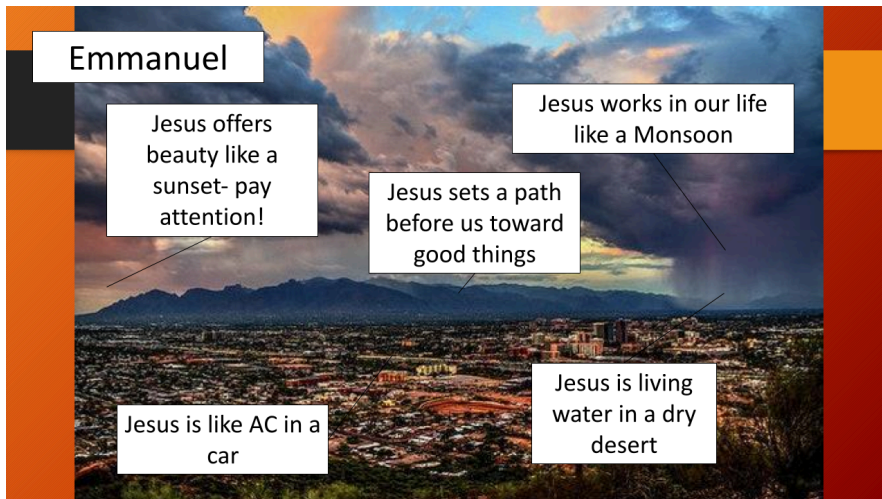
Somehow, I feel safe and at home knowing that Jim Click is still out there selling cars. Lately, though, I've noticed that he is getting old but still out there pitching cars. Yet I see his mortality is closer and that Jim Click will soon need replacing. This is discouraging but there is a person who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is awesome because of his permanence.



Next, remember when we spent time honoring Pastor Rod who conveyed something about the trinity to me. We had two tournaments recently (chess and scrabble) where I think Rod placed himself as the villain so he could inspire us even more. He kind of laid down his life to enhance our enjoyment. He also writes little vignettes on Facebook about his wife, which are numbered randomly. This was like Jesus loving and delighting in his bride, the church.

Hebrews says Moses was great but Jesus was better. At the Village, we can take these things and point them to Jesus.

In Mid Kids, we were talking about Jesus being like things in Tucson:



Living water: Jesus comes where and when we most deeply need him.

Sunset: we have to be OUTSIDE to see this fleeing beauty.

Monsoon: Jesus pushes the debris of our sin around in powerful ways

Mountain Trails: Jesus sets a path before us in ways so we can walk towards him

Air conditioners: Jesus does things, but not in the way we want him to.

Seeing all these things, makes us not give up.

How does Jesus's awesomeness inspire you to persevere?

