

Small Group Leader Guide

Hebrews 1-4| Do We Want to Hear What Jesus Has to Say?

Prepare: Things to do before your small group gets together

- **Think** of the best advice you've ever received. What made it good advice? Was it timely? Practical? Was it timeless? Was it biblical? How have you used that advice? **Give thanks** for godly wisdom that is both timely and timeless. **Praise Him** for His goodness that provides timeless counsel that convicts, encourages, compels, and affirms.
- **Read** Hebrews 1-4, noting the emphasis on how God speaks to us, and how we should listen. **Invite** God to lead you in your preparation, guiding you to develop a small group experience that will speak to the needs of every person who participates. **Submit** your heart to God's conviction, that you may be exhorted to experience anew the timely activity of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
- **Preview** this material and engage with God's Spirit as He guides your study.
- **Pray** for your small group members by name, asking God to use you to be a teacher of influence for each person in your group, for the glory and cause of Jesus. **Seek** God's wisdom in leading your small group to apply God's word to their lives. **Commit** yourself to the Lord, that you would live what you teach.

To The Point – What to impart to your small group

Key Verse: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Hebrews 1:1-2, ESV)

Objectives: Through your time exploring this passage, your small group members will:

Explore the biblical exhortation to hear what God is saying.

Discuss the ways a person is able to listen to God, and what it means to listen.

Apply the biblical principles discussed in an effort of preparation to receive what God intends to share in the weeks ahead.

Encounter: A suggested plan for your small group experience

Conversation Starter: Advice

Ask What was the best advice you have ever received? What made it good? How did you use the advice?

Allow Groups to respond.

Say We are launching a new series called "What Jesus Said..." where we will be looking at some of the important things that Jesus addressed and what He says to us about those issues. As an introduction to this series, in our time together now, we are going to look at the question, "Do we want to hear what Jesus has to say?"

Open in prayer for your time together.

How God Talks Today (Hebrews 1:1-4)

Before Reading the Scripture, Ask...

What are some ways that people say (whether you agree with them or not) that they hear from God?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *Through prayer*
- *Through reading the Bible*
- *Through a worship song*
- *Through a sermon*
- *Through "signs" (meaning indications or interpretations of phenomena or the occurrence of events or circumstances perceived to be timely or relevant)*

- Through "gut instincts" or "following their heart"
- Through nature
- Through other people

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

Ask

According to this passage, how did God previously choose to speak to people? What does this mean?

Long ago, he spoke to people through prophets. This means that God communicated directly to and/or through chosen people to convey information and express relationship with His creation (and particularly to Israel).

Who are some of these prophets, how did God speak through them, and what types of messages did God typically say through them?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *Abel - Jesus identified him as the first prophet (Luke 11:51), whose spilt blood testified to the rebellious nature of man that seeks to kill those who speak for God.*
- *Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses - God spoke directly to these patriarchs who then responded in obedience. They testified to the holiness of God, His provision, and His sovereignty. The messages delivered by the prophets were often first communicated orally.*
- *Joseph and Daniel - God spoke through dreams, which He then empowered His prophets to interpret.*
- *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah - God revealed His plan for Israel, for humanity, for the present and for the future. God regularly led His prophets to record their messages in books that were then read by the leaders then and circulated for public readings.*
- *Samuel and Nathan - God used prophets to influence kings and reveal His judgment over the most powerful leaders.*
- *John the Baptist - The prophets often spoke of the Messiah, of the person of Jesus, the Savior of humankind, of Jew and Gentile alike.*

How does God speak to people now, according to this passage? What is significant about these details revealed in this passage, related to how He speaks today?

Today, God has chosen to speak through Jesus. Allow the group to respond about what is significant to them.

Responses may include:

- *The Son is the Heir of all things - God speaks to us through the One who has endless resources - physical, intellectual, relational, and of course, spiritual.*
- *The Son is the co-creator - God speaks to us through the One who spoke the universe and all things in it into existence. He is author and sustainer of life.*
- *The Son is the radiance of the Glory of God - God speaks to us through the One who is a mirror of God's holiness.*
- *The Son is the perfect imprint of God's nature - God speaks to us through the One who alone articulates perfectly the goodness of God in all matters of life and faith.*
- *The Son made purification of sins - God speaks to us through the One who alone has the power to overcome sin.*
- *The Son Sits at the right hand of the Father - God speaks to us through the One who the King of Kings.*
- *The Son is Superior to the angels, with a name most excellent - God speaks to us through the One who is the Lord of the heavenly host!*

Uniquely Able (Hebrews 2:14-18)

What do verses 14-15 show about the extent to which Jesus went to be able to identify with us?

Verse 14 shows that Jesus willingly took upon Himself the nature of flesh and blood (which was not natural to Him), expressly to die.

For what purpose did Jesus do this?

Verse 15 explains that in dying, Jesus overcomes death for all of those (us) who have this flesh and blood nature that makes death such a fearful inevitability. He disarms Satan from his most powerful weapon (which is death).

What do verses 16-18 reveal about how or why Jesus is uniquely able to speak to us about the matters of our lives?

As our perfect high priest -- who filled this role for our benefit, and not the benefit of the angels -- Jesus alone satisfied God's wrath toward our rebellion against Him. This was no easy feat, for in partaking in human nature, Jesus was in every way tempted, which is expressed as causing Jesus to suffer. Despite this suffering of temptation, Jesus did not sin. Therefore, Jesus is uniquely able to express grace and mercy toward us, due to the depth and breadth of His understanding of our own temptations, all in His unsullied integrity as the perfect High Priest.

How does the truth of verses 14-15, combined with those of 16-18 impact your understanding of Jesus and what He has to say to you?

Allow the group to respond. Encourage participants to see that Jesus wants us to recognize that because of His incarnation, He can identify with us (He has both sympathy and empathy). Because of His death on the cross and resurrection, we can identify in Him. We have victory over our temptations and our sin. We can approach God as His children in Jesus, and not as rebels or strangers. We can go into the audience of God and receive what He has to share with us through Jesus, because of Jesus!

The Heart of Hearing (Hebrews 3:5-15)

The Jewish people shared a unified identity under Moses. Here, the author of Hebrews appeals for readers to identify with Jesus in the same way, but to an even greater degree. What is the distinction between Moses and Jesus, revealed in verses 5-6, and what do these verses say about why it matters to you?

Moses was faithful to God's house as a servant, while Jesus is faithful to God's house as a son. We (Christians) are identified as God's house. Jesus is affirmed as being completely authoritative, completely faithful to us. He is completely sovereign over our best interests.

Verses 7-15 include a clear exhortation to heed the warning of Israel that had hardened its heart and did not enter the Promised Land (described as entering His rest). What does it mean to harden your heart? What are the types of things that potentially cause us to harden our hearts?

Allow participants to respond. If necessary, explain that hardening the heart is explained in verses 10 and 12. It means to determine to hold on to unbelief, to distrust and to choose independence from God. Hardness of heart comes from believing doubts and doubting beliefs, instead of doubting your doubts and believing your beliefs.

How does the "deceitfulness of sin" (v. 13) harden your heart?

Allow participants respond. Highlight that sin does, in fact, deceive. It not only makes promises that it can never deliver, but what it actually does deliver is negative, hurtful, painful, consequential. Sin can cause a person to have a wrong view of self and of God.

What do you think verses 13-14 have to say about the role of community in protecting from hardening of heart?

Verse 13 commands us to exhort one another, to press forward by faith. This call to mutual exhortation is ongoing. There is never a time where exhortation should not take place amongst Christians. Verse 14 explains that we share in Christ. While salvation is a uniquely personal experience, it was never designed to be a private experience. Salvation in Jesus is meant to be shared, and living by faith is best experienced in community. Isolation is not an ideal environment for the Christian life.

Hearing Jesus Today (Hebrews 4:12-16)

What claims about the Bible are made in Hebrews 4:12-13? What do these claims mean?

The many acceptable responses may include:

- *That the Word of God is living. The Word of God is timeless, never irrelevant.*
- *The word of God is active. The Word of God is timely. The Scriptures speak to every life circumstance, either in detail or principle.*
- *The Word of God divides to the soul and spirit. As it has been famously said, the Bible is the only book that reads you. God's Holy Spirit convicts, compels, affirms, encourages, guides, and exhorts.*
- *The Word of God discerns the intentions of the heart. The Bible reveals sin and shows where a person has deviated from God's will.*
- *There is no one who is able to hide from God. Ignorance, disagreement, nor self-deception is a viable defense before the Living Word of God.*

Verses 14-16 return attention to having confidence in relating to God through Jesus. What is the relationship for the Believer between the Bible, hearing Jesus, and relating with God?

Allow participants to respond. Highlight that the words of Jesus (as recorded in the Bible) are not merely historic quotes, but Holy Spirit-empowered messages that are both timeless and timely. God speaks today through His Word, to the needs and circumstances of life. God understands our needs and us far better than we understand ourselves, and He uses His Word to minister to us at the right time in the right manner. The availability of His Word should encourage us that we can always approach God with confidence, with an expectancy of receiving mercy and grace that is appropriate to our situation.

Jesus in Focus

Where in this study do you see Jesus: Christ-like practices, examples, principles?

Among the many acceptable answers:

- *Jesus is much more than your Savior. He is your sovereign Lord. There is never a moment when He is not reigning over you.*
- *God wants you to hear Jesus and find life in His Words.*
- *God offers rest in Jesus, in an ongoing way.*
- *Jesus is the Word - the entirety of the Scriptures are written of Him.*

What are some other Scriptures that come to mind or are relevant to this chapter's themes, teachings, or emphases?

Among the many acceptable possibilities:

- *John 1:1,14*
- *Luke 22:37*
- *Luke 24:27*
- *Matthew 24:35*
- *Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22*

What is one "take-away" for you from this chapter?

Allow the group participants to respond.

Say In the weeks ahead and in our future time together, we are going to look closely at some of what Jesus has to say about important issues that face us personally and as a society or culture. May we heed these words of Hebrews and hear Jesus through His Word, that we may not be deceived by sin, or allow our hearts to be hardened.

Let's close in prayer:

Invite the group to pray for one another. **Pray** over any needs or issues that were shared in your time together. **Pray** over the content discussed in your small group, highlighting the aspects that God's Spirit revealed to your group as important. **Confirm** your plans for your next gathering!