

## Leader Guide

### The Journey Series

# “The Covenant” Hebrews 8:1-13

**Main Point:** The better priesthood of Jesus means the old covenant has been surpassed by a new covenant that actually enables us to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

**SERIES OVERVIEW:** We live in a time when everything in our culture seems to be shaking and changing. Terrorism, racial conflict, Ebola and family disintegration threaten life as we know it. Like Christians in the 1st century, we wonder what we can do. As the instability of life increases, we may find our faith wavering. Hebrews inspires us to trust the One sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high as the anchor for our soul.

**PASSAGE BACKGROUND:** The book of Hebrews is a sermon preached to a people who were tempted to back away from their faith because of the trials they faced. Throughout the book, the author intersperses strong exhortations to keep their faith in Christ with rich teaching explaining why Jesus is so worthy to be trusted. They were converts from Judaism, so the author compares the Old Testament heroes and systems they respected with the person and work of Jesus, and shows them how much greater Jesus is.

In Hebrews 8:1-13 the author sums up his discussion about Jesus' High Priesthood by emphasizing that since Jesus ministers in Heaven, He is greater than the Old Covenant priesthood. And because Jesus' priesthood is better, it means that He must operate within the guidelines of a different covenant than the old Levitical priests. The author then goes on to cite Jeremiah 31 where the prophet demonstrates that God had always been moving toward a New Covenant to surpass the Old. Jesus' death and resurrection inaugurate this New Covenant.

#### CONNECTING:

The purpose of these questions is to draw your LIFE Group members into closer, more authentic community by sharing about a struggle that is common to all of us (1 Cor. 10:13). Hebrews (and the whole New Testament) is written to different groups of Christian who have one struggle in common: turning away from belief in Christ because of suffering. By sharing, fellow strugglers feel less alone in their battle, and are encouraged by the fact that they and their brothers and sisters are still holding on to Christ in spite of difficult circumstances.

#### UNDERSTANDING:

**Question #1:** The purpose of the Law was to serve as a reminder or a signpost pointing all humanity to the fact that *none* of us are able to be righteous on our own attempts (Romans 3:9-12; 23). We all break off into different methods for achieving righteousness and erasing our inherent, palpable guilt and shame. It could be religion, working hard, staying in shape, being accepted by others, achieving fame, amassing wealth, or having a great marriage and family, among many other things. But none of these “Laws” bring the release we crave. This dilemma of the Law is there to point us to our only, true hope: righteousness that comes through faith in Christ and His work on the cross (Romans 3:21-25).

**Question #2:** The Law will not pass away until Heaven and Earth pass away (Matt. 9:5<sup>1</sup>-20). It is still in force. We have to be wary of the antinomian (against law) heresy that was rejected strongly by the Church when it anathematized Marcion in the 2nd century. He (and unwitting modern adherents today) so emphasized the gospel and the New Testament that he rejected the Old Testament and its laws as rubbish. This certainly flies in the face of Jesus' and Paul's teaching (Matt. 5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) and the words of the Holy Spirit through David (Psalm 19:7-14). What the New Covenant teaches is that believers in Christ now have the Holy Spirit inside of them who enables them to obey God's laws (which are summed up in the 2 Great Commandments - Matthew 22:34-40). In this way, the law is not *externally* impressed upon us (a duty-driven obedience that is impossible for us to maintain on our own strength). Instead, the law is *internally* active within us. We experience God's love and acceptance and are motivated by this love to obey Him and are empowered to do so by His Spirit.

**Question #3:** Because the Holy Spirit is now within us, we inherently know God and His truth. We are internally convicted when we sin so we can run to Him for forgiveness and cleansing. Nobody needs to remind us of this need to confess. Nobody needs to remind us of what is good and right and holy (things in keeping with the perfect law of God). The Holy Spirit does this reminding for those who are true believers. It must be said as well, that God does also use our brothers and sisters as supplementary means of accountability through counsel and teaching and caring.

#### GOSPEL OPPORTUNITY:

At this time share with your group that if there is anyone who feels they have never understood how Jesus Christ provides them eternal peace and righteousness, they can be blessed by Jesus Christ their King and High Priest! Briefly share with them the gospel: 1.) God is our authority (Gen. 1; Rom. 1:18-23) 2.) Each of us have rebelled and sinned against His authority; (Rom. 3:23) 3.) Because of this rebellious sin we are under the penalty of His condemnation and wrath; (Rom. 6:23) 4.) Jesus came to die and rise again to wash away our sins and bear the wrath of God in our place (Rom. 5:6-11) 5.) All we have to do is receive this free gift of grace and eternal life by trusting in Christ alone for our salvation (Rom. 6:23 & 10:9-11). Allow people to share right there with the group that they desire to be saved and then pray over them and have them pray to receive Christ as Savior. Have group members gather around and lay hands on them. Or offer to talk with anyone after group about these things if no one is comfortable to open up in front of the group. Please let me know what happens!! How exciting!!

**LIVING (Leave at least 20 minutes at the end of your group time to cover this section):**

*Many of you have taken your LIFE Group to the next level of transformative community. You have moved beyond being a discussion facilitator and have experienced the challenges - but far greater joys - of being a shepherd who truly cares for the souls of your people. Thank you for feeding God's sheep!*

*Some of you desire to implement the Soul Care principles I have equipped you with over the past two years, but have not been able to yet. I am including a step-by-step plan every week on these Leader Guides to help you take manageable strides forward in turning your group from a fellowship-only or Bible-study only group into a life-transforming community!*

**Special Note on BAPTISM:** Urge any group member who has not been baptized to do so **on March 28th or 29th. The deadline to let us know is March 13th. Please contact me if they would like to take this next step of their faith.**

**Review: What were last week's assignments?**

PROGRAM INSERT: Make a list of the things that get in the way of "drawing near" to God. Ask your group to pray that Jesus will become personally real to you and deliver you from discouragement and shame. Memorize Hebrews 7:26 and praise Jesus Christ for being our anchor of hope through all life's challenges!

ACCOUNTABILITY: Have your people call their partner at least one time this week to pray about drawing near to God and to practice memorizing Hebrews 7:26.

SOUL CARE: Ask them to spend the week praying about the idea of a covenant after discussing it (see "Reflection" from last week's leaders guide). Give them a copy of the [Covenant Tool](#) as a springboard for their own thinking. Your group may choose to use this covenant or come up with one that better suits the group's needs.

**Reflection: Discuss last week's assignments**

PROGRAM INSERT: Ask your members if some of them would be willing to recite Hebrews 7:26 for the group. Have them share what having that verse in their minds in heart meant for them this week. Have others share about the list they made of things that get in the way of "drawing near" to God and if God helped them overcome them to draw near last week.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Have them share if any accountability conversations were helpful.

SOUL CARE: [If you did not do the Soul Care assignment from last week (see "Review" above), *make every effort to do it this week.*] Discuss everyone's thoughts about a covenant. Spend the group time developing a rough draft of a covenant. Use the suggested [Group Covenant](#) for help: "The Nine P's".

**New Follow Up Assignments**

PROGRAM INSERT: As a Christian under the New Covenant, God's laws are "written on your heart and mind". Are you obeying His commands out of love for Him (John 14:15)? What commands are you avoiding? What commands are you actively disobeying? Consider what God might be calling you to do this week to love Him and others more (Heb. 13:15-16). Memorize scriptures that emphasizes this calling and share your resolutions and memory work with your friends and LIFE Group members for support.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Have your members call someone in the group to share the commitments to obedience God is calling them to and to recite Scripture memory.

SOUL CARE: Email out the rough draft of your group's covenant and ask everyone to pray over it and come back to finalize the covenant at the next meeting.

These follow up assignments are the first stage in moving your group toward authentic community using what we call the "GPS" and "Covenant" Soul Care Tools. This 10-week "The Journey" series is the perfect time to implement these tools for the good of your group. Go to [tinyurl.com/p65zrk7](http://tinyurl.com/p65zrk7) to access the GPS implementation tutorial.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Don't forget these Next Steps to spiritual maturity in obeying God's commands: remind your folks to get involved in ways to love and serve others (Hebrews 6:10). They can serve in youth, kids, worship or First Impressions ministries, or as an "advocate" who befriends and supports someone who is currently struggling in their life, or at Hoover School, or through the *many* other opportunities to serve others at Stonebridge. Please have your people contact me if they are interested: [jasonp@stonebridgesite.com](mailto:jasonp@stonebridgesite.com).