

HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY #5

Hebrews 10:19-25 NIV

INTRODUCE: Background Notes

When a passage in the Bible begins with “Therefore,” our first task is to wonder, *Because of what?* What did the author already present that relates to what we are about to read?

Throughout the book of Hebrews, the author has built an argument that there is now a new way of connecting with God. In the Old Testament, the Jewish community had priests who performed religious rituals to help the people worship God. The rebellion of the people alienated them from God, and these rituals covered their sin by sacrificing an innocent animal as a substitute for the guilty people. These religious rituals did not take away sin permanently, but they foreshadowed that one day there would be a perfect sacrifice to free people from sin completely.

That perfect sacrifice was Jesus. The author of Hebrews uses the imagery of the Jewish temple to show that Jesus is both the perfect sacrifice and the high priest forever. Believers in Jesus can now approach God directly. The question for the readers of Hebrews is whether they will regard Jesus as one more part of their religious rituals or if they will change their practices altogether because they agree that Jesus is better than their old way.



Historical notes as you enter the passage:

- In the Jewish temple, the Most Holy Place was where the high priest met with God, and a curtain separated the priests from the full presence of God.
- The old way of connecting with God involved sprinkling the Israelites with blood, and now in Jesus, bodies are washed with water in baptism, an outward sign that marks the initiation into a wholly new life.

SEE

Let's look closely at the passage and note characters, relationships, locations, time, actions, repeated words, comparisons, contrasts, cause and effect, etc. Make sections and label them. Share aloud as you bold/italicize/underline/highlight on the text.

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¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

DISCUSS

Let's get curious and ask questions that will help us discuss what the author wanted the original readers to understand. Good questions come from key observations. Ask your questions, and the leader will post them as comments on the text. Then we'll answer our questions and the two questions below.

1. Hebrews announces that the blood of Jesus gives believers access to the Most Holy Place by way of his physical body, which is the curtain. Jesus is divine, the perfect way to get close to God, and Jesus is human, experiencing suffering and the full range of human emotion. As the readers think about the very closest place to God they could imagine, why do you think the author wants them to keep in mind both the divinity and humanity of Jesus?
2. Because of the close access to God described in verses 19-21, the author offers three invitations: *let us* draw near to God with assurance (v. 22), *let us* hold unswervingly to hope (v. 23), and *let us* stick together and encourage one another (vv. 24-25). Which of these three invitations do you think the readers found most welcoming? Most challenging? And why?

Central Truth
(work together to write one short sentence that captures the big idea of the passage)

APPLY

1. Spiritual Invitation: What is God saying to you through this passage?

Believing that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice and high priest forever gives followers of Jesus confidence to approach God without fear of punishment, rejection, or being ignored. Jesus already did the work, so closeness with God does not depend on our ability to clean ourselves up or reach a certain emotional state that makes us spiritually acceptable. No matter what our surrounding culture or even our religion may tell us about how to make ourselves valid before God, JESUS IS BETTER!

In what ways do you exclude yourself from closeness with God based on your actions, your view of yourself, or what others think about you? In what ways do you assume you are included in God's family based on anything except simply the work of Jesus? Approach God confidently and confess these false ways, thanking God for accepting you because of Jesus.

2. Missional Opportunity: What action can you take this week in response?

Hope is more than a feeling and unity is more than good intentions. The author of Hebrews believes that Jesus as our high priest means that we can patiently trust God to care for us and take action in the face of pain, brokenness, injustice, etc. We can also trust Jesus to unify our community as we encourage one another to keep going despite suffering and struggle. For the early church, community cohesion was an important coping response to the adversity they were facing.

What makes it difficult to believe that healthy community is possible through Jesus? What practical steps can we take together to "hold unswervingly" to our hope in Jesus? What can we do this week to encourage one another and "spur one another on toward love and good deeds"?

Name	Spiritual Invitation	Missional Opportunity
