

One of the biggest factors that connects or isolates us as people is when we feel seen, or understood. When we think people can't understand what we think, feel, or go through, we tend to distance ourselves. Oftentimes when we realize someone knows how we feel, we automatically feel less burdened. That's why we connect with people who are from the same places, have worked similar jobs, shared similar pain. We feel less alone when we feel connected. This also can be one of the reasons we feel easily distant from God. We know God is holy, and we know we are not. We know Jesus is sinless, and we are sinful. We know God calls us to obedience, and we by nature lean to disobedience. Before we leave here today, we want you to know, and understand, that Jesus understands. Just because he didn't sin doesn't mean it wasn't hard. He's the savior that looked on the needy crowd with compassion. He's the savior that hung on a cross while asking God to forgive people because they didn't know what they were doing. Jesus doesn't just love the perfect, sinless, eternally sanctified version of you. He loves the broken, struggling, disobedient mess you and I are on a regular basis. Because He's good, and because he's been where we've been. God still absolutely calls us to turn from our sins and draw closer to Him, but there is empathy and mercy in His voice in the process.

Today as we are in week 3 of All Things New, we are looking in the book of Hebrews about our response to our Sin, Jesus' response to our sin, and us responding with Maturity. Hebrews is one of the books of scripture we don't actually know who held the pen. Some theologians and scholars think it may be the apostle Paul, but Paul is like the DJ Khaled of scripture, he never puts out anything without shouting his own name a few times. Either way we know it's scripture, and that means it's true, it's profitable for teaching, understanding, and growth. So let's dive in.

Response #1: Acknowledgment & Awareness

Hebrews 3:12-13 (NIV) See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

There is no better time to draw close to God than TODAY

You can't live in the past of your failures, and Tomorrow's repentance isn't guaranteed. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day the Father stands arms wide waiting on the prodigal. Today is the day to choose life over death. Today is a blessing and a welcome hope. Don't let your Today go by.

14 We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. 15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

Choosing Sin Is Ignoring Belief

The author of Hebrews spends lots of time reminding us of the shortcomings of Israel, and reminding us how closely we can also come to those same shortcomings today. Israel had an unbelieving heart. Not that they always stopped believing in God, but rather they believed that

other things were worth pursuing over God. Which is why he warned the Hebrew people to watch out for each other.

Hebrews 4:11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

The reality is, if we let scripture truly be our guide, sin won't deceive us. If we let scripture be our guide, we would have to fight hard to choose disobedience. If we let scripture be our guide, the rest of God will be our natural destination.

Response #2: Jesus Responds With Empathy

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.

Our faith is never based on how strong we are or how good we are. It isn't based on our families or our church. Our faith isn't based on our social status or job. Our faith is based solely on who our high priest, our savior is. The fact that Jesus is the one who handles our sin and stands between us and God, that's all that matters. That is where we find our firm foundation. Not only that He is a good savior, but that He is loving, and empathetic to our lowly position as well. Look at this next verse.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Don't brush that off. Don't take that lightly. Jesus can EMPATHIZE with our weakness. Empathy means someone knows and understands how you feel. Jesus felt what we felt. The days where it's all too much, he felt that. The days where the struggle didn't seem worth the effort, he felt that. The days of loneliness, frustration, sadness and all the other things we would think of weakness, he felt that. Because he felt those things, he loves us all the more, and gives us gentleness and grace beyond what the law would extend. He looks at our hard days and REMEMBERS what those were like. Not only our weakness, but our temptations and struggles. That verse says He was TEMPTED in every way. Most of us, we look around the room, and we think, "there's no way these people have been tempted like me." We think, "they haven't felt what i've felt." We think "They haven't thought what i've thought." We can't imagine the people in this room feeling and thinking and being tempted the way we have been, let alone Jesus. Let alone our savior. Let alone THE PERFECT SON OF GOD! He was tempted in all these ways, but here's the important part, HE didn't sin. Not only do we have a savior who knows what we've gone through, we have a savior who shows us that we can have victory over the temptations we face.

This isn't just information to make us feel better, it comes with instructions too!

16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

This verse should be one of the biggest reliefs in scripture. This should be a declaration of hope and victory. The author of Hebrews says let us approach the throne of grace with confidence. WALK IN LIKE YOU KNOW SOMEBODY! Walk in like you know the owner. Walk in like you got family. Walk in like you got keys to the place. We don't need to approach God like sniveling failures. We don't need to approach God like He might change His mind. We need to approach Him with confidence because of who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done.

Specifically we approach God to receive mercy, and to find Grace in our time of need. Not that we need to find grace when things are going smoothly. Not that we should only approach when we are holy, tithing, fasting, and have perfect attendance, but that we approach the throne of grace when we are in NEED!

Let me show you not only why Jesus being our savior is so beautiful, but also why it's so important that He is our high priest

Hebrews 5:1 Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. **2** He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. **3** This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. **4** And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

This was a role that people held as a sacrificial responsibility. People did this service for a time and then, when that time was up, someone else took it on. But the thing that we all understand is people aren't perfect. People that are supposed to handle things on behalf of God and his people aren't perfect either. Hang out with our pastoral staff you'll see it's true. Look at church history period, you'll find this to be the case. Even the most faithful person called by God into this ministry is still a fallen sinner. **And oftentimes the people that pursue this work are looking for a platform for themselves rather than following a calling of God.** But thank God for Jesus

5 In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

God placed this role and responsibility on Jesus for our behalf. He took all that endured because God loved us enough to put Jesus through the things He went through. As we mentioned in last Sunday's message from this same passage of scripture

Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. **8** Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered **9**

and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

We all know that we can't save ourselves. We know that we can't earn our salvation, but we should never forget that obedience comes with salvation. The call and responsibility to submit our lives, wills, and actions is directly tied to the gift of salvation we receive.

This may sound pretty shocking to some of us, but y'all, this is literally a foundational basic principle of the gospel. Obedience isn't the warm fuzzy sexy thing to preach. Repentance and submission isn't that attractive on a tshirt. But it isn't just our world today that isn't trying to hear it, even in the time of the book of Hebrews they were struggling with it as well.

Response #3: Responding With Faithful Maturity

Hebrews 5:11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

We are in that time of year where everyone wants fresh things and new things. In church culture we want to pick our theme words for the year, and have a fresh revelation from God. A new direction. A new growth, but listen church. **New growth is built upon foundations of established biblical growth.** You aren't going to be able to have new growth or revelation in understanding until you actually have what you already know grounded and in place. How can you expect God to give you more, when you aren't faithful with what He's given you now?

Luke 16:10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

We need to be solid enough on the foundational things that we can actually grow in what God has for us next

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death and of faith in God, 2 instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

The author of Hebrews tells us that:

Who Jesus is

Repentance

Basic Faith

Religious Traditions

Prayer

Death

And Eternity

All these things are things we should be secure enough in our understanding that we aren't still needing to be taught on them. We should be firm enough in our understanding that we can grow deeper. Some of you may be thinking, "but y'all haven't preached on all that." or "I missed that Sunday." Please know and understand that you individually are responsible for your personal growth and development. Y'all know that song from Rent? 525,600 minutes? That's how many minutes are in a year. If you hear a 40 minute message 50 Sunday's a year, that's 2,000 minutes. A 40 minute message on Sunday is not gonna be enough for you to grow and be disciplined alone. A shepherd's job isn't to spoon feed sheep. A shepherd shows them where the pasture is, and tells them to eat. Y'all got to invest in your own spiritual growth.

You are never going to be perfect and get it all right, and God isn't going to abandon you when you fail, but He does call us to actually follow through with what He teaches!

Hebrews 6:10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. **11** We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. **12** We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Worship Team Comes Up

Invitation:

1 John 1:8, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

- Have you acknowledged that you're sinful this morning?
- Is your heart hardened towards God, if so, why?
- Is your heart hardened toward life, but blaming God?

Hebrews 2:17 For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. **18** Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

- Do you believe that what Jesus did on the cross is enough to cover your sins? Or, do you believe that there are "sins" that you will have to stand for?
- Are you scared to go before Jesus in prayer? What are you attempting to hide?
Sidenote, Jesus already knows about it.

James 1:4-8, "**4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. **6** But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7**

That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **8** Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”

- Currently, are you being spoon fed or are you feeding yourself?
- Are you being faithful with what God has already given you?
- Are you seeking maturity? If so, what are you doing to do so?

(Address the non-believers in the room)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” - 1 John 1:9