

# WEEK 5

HEBREWS 5:11-6:20

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL ARE THE KEYS TO  
SPIRITUAL MATURITY THAT COMPELS INTO A LIFE OF SERVICE

## Preface

In the previous weeks...

- Week 1-3: Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation to the world, deserving of our utmost attention. He is the promised Son of God who shared in our humanity and became the pioneer of our salvation. We are made holy and welcomed into His family through His faithfulness and obedience to suffer and die for our sins while being our High Priest.
- Week 4: We are warned to hold fast to our hope in Jesus and strive to enter the promised eternal rest by pursuing a relationship with God and living in obedience to His Word.

This week...

- We are warned against complacency in our spiritual growth, emphasizing the need for a correct understanding of the gospel to be taken forward to maturity. Spiritual maturity is demonstrated through a life of service while awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises.

Side note: Go to the “**Go Deeper**” section for a separate set of questions about the topic of “losing salvation” (Heb. 6:4-8) and explanations on the “elementary teachings” (6:1-3) and “two unchangeable things” (6:13-20). You may consider using two sessions to discuss this passage in greater detail.

## Observation

1. What were the author's frustrations toward the original audience?

2. What are the three pairs of basic principles laid out in Heb. 6:1-3?

*Leaders' note: 1) Faith and repentance, 2) washing and laying on of hands, 3) resurrection and eternal judgment. More explanation can be found in the “Go Deeper” section.*

3. In Heb 6:4-8, how did the author describe and compare the experiences of a believer?

4. In Heb 6:9-12, what were the author's encouragements for the readers?

5. What are the “two unchangeable things” referred to in Heb. 6:16?

*Leaders' note: 1) **The promise of God**, signifying the reliability and steadfastness of God's word, and 2) **the oath of God**, emphasizing the certainty of God's commitment to fulfill what He has promised.*

# Interpretation

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1. Based on Heb. 5:11 to Heb. 6:3, what are the marks of spiritual maturity and what might have hindered the original audience from maturing?

*Leaders' note: Recall Heb. 5:14, Heb. 6:1; **taking forward** the “elementary teachings” to maturity.*

*Hindrances: no longer try to understand (5:11), **not training themselves** to discern good from evil (5:14).*

2. How do the “elementary teachings about Christ” (Heb. 6:1-3) lead to spiritual maturity?

*Leaders' note: A correct understanding of the gospel is foundational to spiritual maturity. The gospel has a **transformative power** that changes our hearts and will lead to a **fruitful life and active love for others**.*

3. How would you summarize the author’s desires for the believers based on Heb. 6:7-12?

*Leaders' note: Several key ideas include, producing a crop / living a fruitful life (v.7), continuing to love God and His people by helping them (v.10), diligently pursuing God in faith (v.11), imitating those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised (v.12).*

4. How does the life of Abraham and the “two unchangeable things” (Heb. 6:18) provide hope and encouragement amidst the strong warnings (Heb. 6:8, 6:12)?

*Leaders' note: The life of Abraham showed his **unwavering faith and endurance** and **God’s faithfulness** in fulfilling His promises. The “two unchangeable things” signify **God’s promise and His character as an anchor** for the soul (v.19), to encourage believers as they persevere to grow in spiritual maturity.*

# Application

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1. What are some elementary teachings that you need to be reminded of or take to heart?

*Leaders' note: A good example of the criterion on basic Christian beliefs is looking through the Doctrinal Statement on the Island ECC website and the major Christian creeds (e.g. Apostles’, Nicene, Athanasian).*

2. What difficult questions, life struggles, and temptations could lead us or others in our community to abandon our faith in Christ?

3. How have we seen ourselves growing in spiritual maturity through serving others?

## Optional Prayer Exercise: Prayer of Praise

Praise is the act of complimenting God for **who He is** (e.g. our Creator, our Father), for **His attributes** (e.g. all-knowing, all-powerful), and for **His characters** (e.g. compassion, merciful). The act of praise is not affected by circumstances nor by what we have or what we lack. God's character remains true throughout the past, the present and the future.

Some practical steps to pray a prayer of praise:

1. Find a Bible passage(s) that can inspire and remind you of who God is, e.g., Psalm 29, Psalm 103.
2. Take turns among members to verbally pray out praise to God, focusing on praising Him for who He is.

# Go Deeper

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## I. **Hebrews 6:1-3** The three pairs of **basic principles** are:

1. Faith and repentance: Repenting of sin and turning from trusting in one's own works to resting on the finished work of Christ are the marks of Christian conversion (Heb. 6:12; 9:14; 10:22, 38-39; 12:2; 13:7).
2. Washing and laying on of hands: These distinctive initiatory rites indicate that one is becoming an active part of the church (Acts 6:6; 8:14-17; 9:12-19; 19:5-6).
3. Resurrection and eternal judgment: Christians have a future hope in the resurrection. They are safe in Christ from the eternal judgment that awaits nonbelievers (Heb. 9:27; 10:27; 11:19, 35).

(Source: The Gospel Coalition)

II. **Hebrews 6:4-8** is a rather complicated passage that may invoke questions, such as "can someone lose their salvation?" If your group would like to wrestle with this question further, here are several questions that might help, taken from "Life Change Series" (NavPress, 1989).

1. In 6:1-3, the writer uses the pronouns "us" and "we." In 6:4-6 he uses "those" and "they." Then he switches back to "us" and "we" in 6:9-12.
  - a. Who are "we" in 6:1-3?
  - b. Who are "they" in 6:4-6? (Are "they" different from "we"?) How can you tell?
  - c. What do you think is the significance of this switch from "we" to "they"? (Does it suggest that the author is talking about a hypothetical situation? Why or why not?)
2.
  - a. By what four phrases does the writer describe the "they" group in 6:4-5?
  - b. Do these four phrases indicate to you that the author is talking about genuine born-again Christians? Why or why not? (Optional: See Romans 6:23, 8:9; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:23; Jude 19.)
3. Do you think "falling away" in 6:6 refers to falling from salvation or from maturity? Why?
4. Can a true believer fall away from salvation? What do Jesus and Paul say about this in John 6:39-40, John 10:27-30, and Romans 8:31-39?

*Leaders' note: You and your care group members may reach different conclusions about this issue. However, we can learn to embrace disagreements and reject divisiveness, and learn to engage in conversations in a Spirit-filled manner that is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.*

### III. Hebrews 6:13-20 side study questions:

1. What promise did God make to Abraham?
2. What were the anchors for Abraham's hope? (Refer to the "two unchangeable things")

*Leaders' note: 1) **God's promise**, through what He spoke, and 2) **the oath of God**, confirming what He said. More details on **Oath** (6:16): "When men swear an oath in order to underline the certainty and solemnity of their words, they swear by someone or something greater than themselves. 'As the Lord lives' was the supreme oath in Israel. Abraham himself swore by God and made others do the same (Genesis 14:22, 21:23-24, 24:3). But, says the author of Hebrews, God has none greater than Himself by whom to swear." (Source: NavPress, 1989; Bruce, F.F., 1979)*

3. Why did God swear an oath with His promise to bless Abraham (Heb. 6:16-18)?
4. What is the importance of the Old Testament references in pointing to Jesus as the manifestation of hope for the people of God?

*Leaders' note: Remember that the original audience of Hebrews was mostly Jewish and they were tempted to go back to Judaism because of the oppositions that they faced. The author has been emphasizing the superiority of Jesus Christ over all Old Testament institutions. Jesus has become the **forerunner of our faith**, entering the "inner sanctuary behind the curtain", allowing us to **come to God directly** and **have the promised eternal rest in God available to us** (recall week 4).*

5. What should be the anchor of our soul?
6. Why is it important to have an anchor?
7. How does this truth shape our hearts and attitudes as we are waiting for God's promises?
8. Where in your life do you need to keep on trusting God's promises?