

# Group Discussion Guide for Week of 2/16/2020

Riverside Home Group Discussion Guide

Scripture Text from Sunday Sermon; *Hebrews 4:12-13; 5:11-6:12 (NIV)*

**Note:** As Keith pointed out on Sunday while this week we're focusing on the Word of God and its work in our lives, and our role in spiritual growth, the overarching context (which we cover next week) is Jesus as our High Priest. Keep that context at the forefront so we don't move into a works based faith (Jesus is the High priest. He does the "work" we are called to put in effort per this week's passage.)

<sup>4:12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. . . .

**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. <sup>12</sup> 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! <sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

**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, <sup>2</sup> instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup> And God permitting, we will do so.

<sup>4</sup> It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age <sup>6</sup> and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. <sup>7</sup> Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. <sup>8</sup> But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

<sup>9</sup> Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. <sup>12</sup> We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)  
**Know** (what does the text say about God?) **Be** (what does it say about us?) **Do** (what does it call us to do?)

## Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- What projects have you gotten bogged down with and why?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

## Passage(s)

O: What does God's word do as seen in 5:12-13? **Know**

I: How would you summarize the main message of 5:11-6:12? **Be**

**Follow-up:** Instead of debating if someone can lose their salvation (see footnote\*), v.4-5 (of ch.6) offer an amazing description of what happens when you become a Christian. Expand on what is meant by each phrase.

**Follow-up:** What is the promise 6:12 points to?

I: In 6:1 it talks about the foundation in the Christian life of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. Now in 6:9-12 it encourages energetic participation in that life and warns against laziness. How can we balance the truths of God's faithfulness and our own human effort in daily life as believers? (see the second footnote\*\*) **Do**

A: What evidence do you have that the "word of God is alive and active" (4:12) in our church (and in your life)? **Be**  
**Follow-up:** What obstacles keep you from spending time prayerfully and thoughtfully with Scripture and with Jesus, the written and living Word of God, who can touch you gently and powerfully?

A: How is the expectation of the future seen in 4:13 relevant to your daily life RIGHT NOW?

A: What are the marks of spiritual maturity in 5:11-14 and how does your present level of maturity compare? **Be**

A: In 6:10-12 the writer encourages his readers to continue strong in their active love for others. How would you compare your level of energy and enthusiasm for acts of love and service now, compared to when you first became a Christian?

A: How would you describe your faith right now (use terms from the passage)? *Sharp, Dull, mediocre, lazy, growing, moving forward, . . .*

\*\*What do you sense God is saying and **How WILL you respond this week?**

**What one question do you want us to ask of you next week in regard to this?**

\* Helpful perspective from N.T. Wright: "Heb. 6:6 raises an interesting question, is it possible first to become a genuine Christian and then to lose everything after all? To this question Paul, in Romans 5-8, gives the emphatic answer "No!" In Hebrews the writer quickly goes on to say that he doesn't think his readers come into the category he's describing (6:9), but he chooses not to unpack this wider theological question. The normal way of holding what he says together with what Paul says is that the people described in verses 4 and 5 are those who have become church members, and have felt the power of the gospel and the life that results from it through sharing the common life of Christian fellowship but who have never really made it their own, deep down inside. The question the writer poses for all of us is: What might entice us or some within our Christian fellowship to turn our backs on the faith and join in the general tendency to sneer at the gospel and the church?"

\*\* More from N.T. Wright: Ever since the Reformation, many Christians have been taught, quite rightly, that nothing we can do can earn God's favor. Grace remains grace; God loves us because he loves us, not because we manage to do a few things to impress him, or to notch up a few points on some heavenly scorecard. But at the same time the whole New Testament insists that what Christians do matters a great deal. Yes, there are undoubtedly times when, like the children of Israel beside the Red Sea, we need the message that says, "The Lord will fight for you; all you need to do is to be still" (Exodus 14:14). But these are the exceptional moments, the particular situations, often in times of emergency, when there is nothing we can or should do, and we must trust that God will do it all. But the normal Christian life is one of energy, enthusiasm, faithful effort and patient hard work. When Paul tells the Philippians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," he at once adds, "because God is at work in you" (Philippians 2:12-13). The energy to do all that we're called to do comes itself from God working within us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Recommended Follow-up:**

- **Pray:** Pray together, re-read 6:12, and then pray together and spur one another on to growth through prayer.
- **Respond:** Spend this week responding to God's word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week's companion devotional guide.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (2/23/20) will focus on Hebrews 4:14-ch.6. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, as well as journey through this week's companion devotional guide.

## **An explanation on how Riverside structures these discussion guides\*:**

Riverside defines a disciple of Jesus as a **“Know, Be, Do”** person. And since Jesus told us to “make disciples” we use the “Know, Be, Do” framework in our discussion guides.

Riverside leadership regularly asks questions around these areas:

- “What do we need to **know** about God?”
- “Who do we need to **be**?”
- “What do we need to **do**?”

Here is what we mean by “Know, Be, Do” (based on Colossians 1:9-10, see below)

**Know** – *“to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives..., growing in the knowledge of God”* Not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him personally, intimately, and deeply. This is also about knowing the scriptures, knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit, even knowing yourself.

**Be** – *“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way”* Becoming more like Jesus (sanctification). This is about our character and our heart and our motivations, our passions and convictions change the more we get to Know Jesus (and others).

**Do** – *“bearing fruit in every good work, ...”* Knowing Jesus and Becoming like Jesus practically will change our actions. As we grow in these areas we will naturally DO the things that Jesus did while in the flesh on earth (living and loving like Jesus). Some broad categories around DO are evangelism and justice and service.

Notice *“bearing fruit in every good work”* then yields more *“growing in the knowledge of God.”* In other words, while “Know, Be, Do” are three distinct words, they are deeply interconnected.

As a side note, the next chapter states: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:6-8)* To aid in this process Riverside also has a **daily devotional guide available each week.**

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\* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid “go through this guide word-for-word.” There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide relies heavily upon the following resources: Thomas, Mack. *The Complete Bible Discussion Guide: Old Testament and New Testament*, Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study, Zondervan, along with the following group studies specific to Hebrews: Tom Wright (978-0-281-06379-6), Kay Arthur (978-0-7369-2306-4), Wiersbe (978-0781445665), MacArthur (978-0-7180-3515-0).