

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of August 25th - 31st

Getting Started

1. Blood is a *big deal* in the Bible. In fact, in the English Standard Version, the word for “blood” appears some 382 times (291 times in the Old Testament, and 91 times in the New Testament). Furthermore, the Letter to the Hebrews contains no less than 21 references to blood (that’s nearly one quarter of all the occurrences in the entire New Testament). Here they are: Hebrews 2:14; 9:7, 12 (2x), 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22 (2x), 25; 10:4, 19, 29; 11:28; 12:4, 24 (2x); 13:11, 12. Take a brief look through these texts. What themes do you notice? Whose blood? How is it spoken of? What difference does it make?

Digging Deeper

2. The first reference to blood in the Bible is in Genesis 4:10. What’s happening in this portion of Holy Scripture? What does Genesis 4:10 mean? Though it’s obviously a metaphor, what truth does it convey? What is Abel’s blood “crying” out to God?

Compare Genesis 4:10 with Hebrews 12:24. In Hebrews 12:24, the writer says that Jesus’ blood “speaks a better word than the blood of Abel”. Again, noting the metaphor, what “better word” does the blood of Jesus speak compared to the blood of Abel?

Open Your Bible to Hebrews 9:11-28...

3. Hebrews 9:11 starts with four beautiful words: “But when Christ appeared...”. Take a moment and share around the circle about when Christ first appeared in your life. In order to do this with brevity, so that everyone has a chance to share, try answering this question in one sentence. “*Christ first appeared in my life when...*”.

4. The author repeatedly refers to a place that contains “the true tent” (8:1-5), the “greater and more perfect tent” (9:11-12). What’s he talking about? (*Hint*: If you’re having trouble, take a look at Hebrews 9:23-24). What’s the significance of this?

5. In Hebrews 9:14, we have one of the single most stunning verses in the entire Bible. All three members of the Trinity are here. Can you identify them? What’s the context? What is each member of the Trinity doing (in distinction from one another)? At the same time, what are the three members of the Trinity accomplishing together? Reflect on the wonder of these truths as a group.

6. Verses 15 to 22 describe what is sometimes referred to by theologians as the *necessity* of the atonement (the atonement is the work that Christ did in this life and death to earn our salvation). On the one hand, at the very heart of the atonement is the free and unconstrained love of God himself (see John 3:16; Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:9-10). Undoubtedly, God did not spare one third of the angels when they sinned so he was under no compulsion to save us (1 Peter 2:4).

On the other hand, once God determined to save a people for himself, this *necessitated* the death of Christ. Consider how the writer to the Hebrews explains this in Hebrews 2:17. Where do you see the necessity of the atonement in 9:15-22? Examine these other passages that teach the necessity of the atonement: Matthew 26:39; Luke 24:25-26; Romans 3:21-26. How do these passages make you feel? What do they contribute to your vision of our God?

7. Hebrews 9:26 tells us that at the cross Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”. Moreover, 9:28 reassures us that when Christ returns for his own, he comes “not to deal with sin”. Commenting on these verses, the Puritan John Owen said it this way: “At the second appearance of Christ there will be an end of all the business about sin, both on his part and ours.” What happens in your soul when you ponder a truth like this? What practical course of action does it motivate you to take? Why?

8. The final verse in our passage says that when Christ returns, he will “save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (v.28). Can you honestly say that this is true of you in this very moment? We might safely conclude that the New Testament teaches the doctrine of *salvation by grace through eagerness for Christ*. If this is not you, what ought to change? What do you intend to do about it?