

# LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

Hebrews 4:14-16

## LEADER'S STUDY

### Jesus is Our Great High Priest

#### Hebrews 4:14-16

#### What is happening?

The writer is explaining to Jews who followed Christ that they no longer needed a high priest to make intercession for them with God. This went against all their training and experience as Jews, and it would have been hard for them to grasp. But it was true, because Jesus had performed the solemn duty of atonement for sin one last time, for all time, for all mankind.

In the Jewish religion, no one could approach God in the temple's Most Holy Place except for the high priest, and even he could only do this on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). If anyone else were to enter, or if the high priest dared enter at any other time, it would result in immediate death. The annual rite began with the high priest performing a ritual washing of his body, putting on special garments, and sacrificing a bull as a sin offering for himself and his family. All of that was done *before* he could enter the Most Holy Place, where he would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed goat on the Ark of the Covenant in propitiation for the sins of the nation. The priest would also lay hands on a second goat, the "scapegoat," to confer all the sin of Israel upon it. The scapegoat would then be taken out into the wilderness and released, symbolizing that the sins of the people were forgiven and forgotten, removed from God's presence.

#### Where is the gospel?

The sacred Day of Atonement ceremonies had to be repeated annually, because the blood of bulls and goats can only ceremonially take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Only the blood of the spotless Lamb of God can actually remove it (John 1:29). The writer stressed that for those who trusted in Christ, their sins were forgiven, completely and forever; there was no need for any further intercession. And though most Christians today are not Jews, the same truth applies to us. Jesus has paid the price fully for *our* sin; and because of that, *we* can approach God with confidence. Not confidence in ourselves, but in the sufficiency and completeness of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. Our entrance fee into God's throne room has been entirely and forever paid by Christ's blood.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: To what does Christ's sacrifice on my behalf entitle me? How can I be sure I've truly been forgiven, my sin entirely deleted from my account? Is it presumptuous to go to God and ask for forgiveness for the same sin over and over again? Can I count on Jesus hearing me, even when I'm not walking as closely with Him as I should? How is God calling me to think and to live differently? How does this change my perspective today? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on these truths as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to "follow Him" and make clear "I" statements about how you are going to align with Him.

**Some helpful scriptures:** Leviticus 16:1-34; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 2:14-18; 7:23-28; 9:11-28; 10:19-25. What other places in scripture speak this same truth?

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## INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ Hebrews 4:14-16  
and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation. Read it again in the NLT or other thought-for-thought version to get a different perspective.

Consider the historical context:

- 1- Who was this written to? (Jewish Christ-followers in the early 1<sup>st</sup> Century)
- 2- What was the reason for writing this? (to encourage those who were wavering in their faith)
- 3- What did the writer stress in these first four chapters? (That Jesus was superior to everything in the Jewish law and tradition.)

For a description of the yearly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, read Leviticus 16:1-34.

Try to summarize the passage in your own words.

What does all this have to do with Gentile Christians in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America?

## POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group

**What does it mean that our great high priest has "entered heaven"? (hint: see Hebrews 9:24, Romans 8:34, 1 Peter 3:22)**

**To what are we encouraged to hold firmly?**

**What is significant about the phrase in v. 16, "the throne of grace"?**

**What seems to be the main point of these verses?**

**Since there's no longer a temple, how do we "draw near to the throne of grace" today?**

**A key term in this passage is "high priest." In the Judaism, the high priest was the supreme religious leader. What does that suggest about Jesus, our High Priest?**

**What did you discover or learn about God and His character from this passage?**

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

**What are some practical implications of having Jesus as our high priest?**

**Beside the fact that His sacrifice is superior to anything a human priest could offer, in what other ways is Jesus superior to every pope, priest, bishop, imam, lama, or other leader in any religion?**

**How important is it to Jesus that we draw near to God in prayer?**

**What is your "I will" statement?**  
(Encourage everyone to steer clear of "we" or "us" or "Christians" statements)

**With whom are you going to share what you have learned?**  
(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth, and it blesses the one who hears it.  
Rom 10:17)

**Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?**