

The Talmid



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

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STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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HOSEA: A MESSIANIC MAN

Hosea, the prophet, shared his name with other prominent characters in the Bible—some good, some not so good. Names are often significant in the Old Testament, certainly more so than they are in our culture. For us a name is a means of getting someone’s attention or distinguishing and identifying one person from another. What a name means is sometimes a point of curiosity or a cute motto for a plaque or coffee cup, but hardly an element that conveys essential information about a person.

My parents named me Edward (“Guardian of the King’s wealth”), not because they were making a theological asser-

tion but because for whatever reason they liked the name. My friends bought me one of those coffee cups with an inscription that supposedly defines *Edward*, but it says nothing about the Hebrew etymology of the name and instead has some flattering aphorism that I can only wish were true. The point is we use names without necessarily thinking about what the name means. In the Scripture, however, names often made a statement.

Names sometimes conveyed something about the nature, character, or behavior of the one so named. “**You shall call His name JESUS: for He will save His people from their sins**” ([Matthew 1:21](#)). That *Jesus* means “**Jehovah saves**” is certainly a significant statement given the purpose of the Savior’s birth. Interestingly, the Greek name for Jesus corresponds to the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which is a lengthened form of *Hosea*, meaning “**salvation**.” Joshua, the successor to Moses, sometimes went by the shorter name **Hoshea** ([Numbers 13:16](#); **same as Hosea in Hebrew**) and certainly his career of delivering the nation victoriously into the Promised Land corresponded to the name. But, on the other hand, **Hoshea** was also the name of Israel’s last king, who ironically delivered the defeated nation into exile from the Promised Land ([2 Kings 17:6](#)). So what’s in a name, after all?

Whether or not **Beeri** and his wife named their son *Hosea* either in hope or in anticipation of what he would do when he grew up is ultimately irrelevant.

That **Hosea's** name means “**salvation**” is not a clue to the meaning, theme, or purpose of his prophecy, but it nonetheless is a fitting appellation to sum up his prophecies that so wonderfully declare God's sovereign grace in dealing with the undeserving. Salvation—that's a statement! Whether intentional or not, his name encapsulated his message.

Hosea's name says a lot, but it doesn't say it all. There is more to a man than his name—even when the names are as transparent as those of Old Testament characters. Much of **Hosea's** message relates to his personal life that became such a public one. But before considering the intimate details of that connection, we need to go over some basics about his office and place of employment or ministry that will help shape our understanding of the significance, sobriety, and authority of his message.

His Profession

Ironically, notwithstanding the very public nature of **Hosea's** home life that provided the main points for his sermons, the Bible reveals very little about who **Hosea** was. Apart from identifying his father **Beerl**, the Scripture says nothing more about **Hosea's** lineage, unless the **Beerl** of [Hosea 1:1](#) is to be identified with the **Beerah** of [1 Chronicles 5:6](#). If those two are the same, **Hosea** would be of the tribe of Reuben. But that is speculative and ultimately irrelevant apart from confirming his northern roots.

The details of his lineage are immaterial because of his profession: Hosea was a prophet. Of the three anointed or messianic occupations—prophet, priest, and king—only the prophetic office was unrestricted regarding pedigree. Priests had to trace to Levi; kings (at least those of the southern kingdom) had to trace to Judah, and even more specifically to the family of David. So whereas priests and kings were born to be priests and kings, prophets became prophets only by the special call of God.

Interestingly, whereas priests and kings could not cross over into the spheres of the other's operation, prophets could be priests, kings, or anything else. For the prophet, everything depended on God's call. Understanding something about the prophetic profession or office is prerequisite to understanding the significance of **Hosea's** ministry. Significantly,

understanding something about the prophetic office enhances understanding about how **Hosea** contributes to the declaration of the gospel. The very fact that Hosea was a prophet points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Messianic Occupation

I've already referred to the prophetic office as a messianic occupation. The noun *messiah* is based on a verb meaning “**to spread a liquid over.**” The liquid most often used was olive oil, and the objects were both things and people. Most of the anointed objects had some function in the ceremonies of worship rituals. For instance, [Exodus 29:36](#) instructs that the altar should be anointed after a sin offering.

Exodus 29:36 (NASB)

³⁶ “**Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it.**”

[Exodus 40:9–11](#) includes, in addition to the altar, the laver and the entire tabernacle with all its vessels for the purpose of sanctifying the objects.

Exodus 40:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ “**Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy.**

¹⁰ **You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy.**

¹¹ **You shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it.**”

Sanctifying refers simply to the separation of those objects from other things; the anointed objects were set apart for a distinct purpose and use. They were consecrated or dedicated to a particular function. The same meaning applies to the people anointed. The people anointed were usually in some leadership role, either civil or religious leadership: the most common were **kings** ([1 Kings 1:34](#)), **priests** ([Exodus 28:41](#)), and **prophets** ([1 Kings 19:16](#)). In each instance, the anointing was a symbolic gesture of setting the person apart for a special work. The commonly acknowledged association between the olive oil and the Holy Spirit is an important element in the ritual that adds to its significance.

Although the Old Testament uses the noun *messiah* most frequently of kings (**28 out of 39 occurrences**), any

person anointed could be accurately designated as a **messiah**. **Kings, priests, prophets—all were messiahs**. The noun form **messiah** in Hebrew conveys essentially the passive idea of the verb: a **messiah** is one who has been anointed. Being anointed identified the person as being qualified and consecrated for a special task. In other words, there was to be an active demonstration of the office to which the passive anointing pointed. An anointed king was to rule; an anointed priest was to minister; an anointed prophet was to preach. They were all “**lesser**” **messiahs** whose functions pointed to the **Ideal Messiah** who was to come and would fulfill perfectly every messianic operation.

Three marks are common to every messianic function.

An Appointed Position

First, a **messiah** was a *divinely chosen* individual. This was true for **kings** (**Deuteronomy 17:15**). It was true for **priests** (**Deuteronomy 18:5; Numbers 17**). It was true for **prophets** (**Deuteronomy 18:15, 18**). Although not every prophet recounts the details or occasion of his call to the ministry, I would suggest that the detailed record of **Jeremiah’s** call to the prophetic office is paradigmatic for every other true prophet (**Jeremiah 1:4–10**); therefore, it is instructive regarding **Hosea**.

The Lord’s word to **Jeremiah** in **Jeremiah 1:5** is particularly informative: “**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I [appointed] you a prophet to the nations.**” Three verbs express the nature of the divine choice. The Lord said that He *knew* him. This is more than simple awareness or intellectual knowledge. It is, rather, an intimate, special, and selecting knowledge. This knowledge is part of the Old Testament’s vocabulary of election. Humanly speaking, God knew Jeremiah before there was anything to know. The Lord then said that He *sanctified* him. Before he was born, God had set **Jeremiah** apart for the special purpose of being a prophet. His service was divinely determined before he knew what was happening. Finally, the Lord said that He *appointed* him to be a prophet. This verb has the normal meaning “**to give,**” but also has the special sense of appointing or assigning to a specific task. God chose **Jeremiah** to be prophet; He called **Jeremiah**

to be a prophet; and **Jeremiah** was a prophet. So it was for **Hosea** and, indeed, for every other true prophet.

What God determined in heaven happened on earth. There was no slip between the eternal purpose and the temporal fulfillment of God’s intent. There never is. That’s an important messianic lesson, particularly regarding the certainty of God’s purpose in redemption. But it is, as well, an important lesson for everything in life, and for everyone’s life. It was certainly true for **Hosea**. What **Hosea** preached and what he had to endure in connection with his ministry were the temporal manifestation of God’s eternal plan. We may know nothing of the occasion and the details of **Hosea’s** call, but the fact of the call is evident from its consequence. The Lord’s beginning to speak by **Hosea** (**Hosea 1:2**) is irrefutable verification that he was God’s select spokesman, His prophet. Just as God raised **Jeremiah** to speak for Him in the final hours of the southern kingdom, so He raised **Hosea** before Him to preach to the northern kingdom on the eve of its destruction.

An Authoritative Position

Second, a **messiah** was an *accredited* individual. He had the authority to exercise his office. The prophet’s authority rested in the fact that he was the representative of God before men, speaking the Lord’s word to men. The Hebrew word translated “**prophet**” implies something of the inherent authority in the prophet’s words. It is formed from a verb that most likely means simply “**to speak.**” The word *prophet* evidences the same pattern as the word **messiah** in that it conveys the passive idea of the verb. A prophet, therefore, is one who has been spoken to and who in turn conveys that divine message to men. The only legitimate prophetic word—whether predicting the future, exposing sin, or inviting repentance—was “**thus says the Lord God**” (**Ezekiel 2:4**).

Ezekiel 2:4 (NASB)

⁴ “**I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’**”

Perhaps one of the clearest statements that the prophet was God’s messenger with God’s message is **Haggai 1:12–13**. **Verse 12** actually equates obeying the voice of the Lord God with obeying the voice of **Haggai** the prophet. **Verse 13** identifies **Haggai** as the “**Lord’s messenger**” speaking “**the Lord’s message.**” Alt-

hough miracles and fulfilled prophecies were visible means to validate the authenticity of the prophet ([Deuteronomy 13:1–3](#); [Deuteronomy 18:21–22](#)), his ultimate accreditation was his faithfulness in proclaiming the word of the Lord.

When self-proclaimed prophets voiced their opinions, God forthrightly dismissed them; they had no authority (see [Jeremiah 14:14](#)). But regardless of whether the people received or rejected the prophet's word, if the chosen prophet spoke the word of the Lord, then one way or another there would be evidence that a prophet had been there ([Ezekiel 2:5](#)). The sin, rebellion, and unbelief of the people would often rob a prophet of honor, but they could not nullify his authority. The authority of the prophet was in the Word. At the very beginning of his prophecy, even in the biography section, [Hosea](#) cites evidence of the Lord's speaking to him (see for examples [Hosea 1:1, 2, 4, 6, 9](#); [Hosea 3:1](#)). Significantly, he begins the preaching section of his prophecy, "Hear the word of the LORD" ([Hosea 4:1](#)).

An Energized Position

Third, a [messiah](#) was an *empowered* individual. When the Lord anointed one for some sphere of service, He did not abandon that individual to his own abilities or ingenuity. The Lord always supplied the power for that service, with the ultimate agent of power being the Holy Spirit. This empowering for service would have been the most vivid element in the anointing ceremony. As the olive oil was poured and smeared on the head of the appointed "messiah," so the Holy Spirit came upon him to enable him to perform the ministry for which he was being consecrated, as the passages below illustrate.

Although there is no direct statement of [Hosea's](#) empowerment or inspiration by the Holy Spirit, fulfilling his office responsibilities required it. What we read of this experience in the ministry of some prophets illustrates the common experience of all. Immediately after his call to the prophetic office, [Ezekiel](#) witnessed a mysterious and magnificent vision of God's absolute glory and fell on his face in worship and recognition of self-insufficiency. Then the Lord commanded him to stand, and the Spirit entered him and caused him to stand ([Ezekiel 1:28–2:2](#)).

Contrasting his ministry with that of false prophets, [Micah](#) testified, "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" ([Micah 3:8](#)). The Lord assured [Isaiah](#) in connection with a profound prophecy of the Redeemer coming to Zion, "My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth ..." ([Isaiah 59:21](#)). So the Spirit's empowering prophets enabled them to fulfill their duty of obeying God's commands, to preach with boldness regardless of opposition, and to do so with the confidence of the ultimate success of the word they preached.

Because he was a true prophet representing the one true and living God, [Hosea](#) shared these marks with every other of his messianic colleagues. The certainty of his divine call, his God-given authority, and his Spirit-enabled ministry added weight to what he preached and what he practiced. [Hosea](#), like all his divinely called and inspired counterparts, was a preacher and reformer whose agenda was to motivate the people to repentance and to direct them to obedience to God's covenant demands. Israel, then, was to look, to hear, and to heed. We, now, are to do the same, since his message is the Word of God that abides forever.

A Messianic Anticipation

A picture is worth a thousand words—so they say. I'm not sure that we can make such a precise equation, but there is no question that pictures effectively communicate ideas and that illustrations can effectively aid our understanding. Just consider how many toys or appliances have been assembled by the owner's looking at the pictures rather than reading the instructions. Instructors often use visual aids to grasp or hold their students' attention as well as actually to impart the desired information. Sunday school teachers have for years used flannel-graph stories, object lessons, and wordless books with colored pages to teach youngsters about the gospel. Graphs, charts, and more sophisticated analogies aid even adults, with their greater attention spans and more advanced knowledge, to learn more easily.

From the beginning of His revelation, God has communicated in comprehensible ways. It is not surprising, therefore, that God, the most effective teacher ever, would communicate His truth with analogies, pictures, illustrations, and object lessons to clarify the profound and vitally important revelation He was graciously giv-

ing, not the least of which was the revelation of the **Messiah**. The Lord Jesus Himself, the Master Teacher, often pointed to something in the real world—whether a fig tree or a temple stone—to make a spiritual point. Similarly, the apostle John in the book of **Revelation** relies heavily on symbols to convey his message. So pictures are not just an Old Testament method of revelation.

When those pictures are also predictive, we call them types. It is beyond the scope of this study to review the nature and the hermeneutics of typology except to emphasize that typology is not an interpretation technique arbitrarily imposed on the Old Testament in an effort to rescue it for Christian relevance. Rather, it is a method of divine revelation. Let me put it simply in terms of “X” and “Y.” If *X* is the picture and *Y* is the truth, God was saying to look at *X* in order to understand something about *Y*. Much of what we read in the Old Testament is God’s using *X*’s to teach ultimate truths about *Y*. The principal thing to remember is that *X* does not equal *Y*. So *X* is the type, the object lesson that foreshadows or predicts the actual, future realization of the pictured truth. *Y* is the antitype, the future realization to which the type points. The type represents and resembles the antitype. This does not mean that *X* loses its significance or usefulness in communicating the truth. We can still look at the picture and learn about the reality. The key point is that Christ is the ultimate reality: He is the Ideal behind—or perhaps I should say above—all the visible impressions.

These Old Testament picture prophecies, or types, fall into **three categories: people, things, and events**. For now our interest is the people. Certain people were types of Christ not because of their personalities or character traits, but by virtue of their office. **All prophets, priests, and kings** were lesser **messiahs** and types of the **Ideal Messiah**. All the features that mark them for their offices are perfectly and ideally true of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was chosen in the covenant of redemption to be the only redeemer of God’s elect. He was accredited with heaven’s approval and authority to perform all the duties of the anointed Mediator. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit for His work as the Savior.

The Westminster Confession of Faith summariz-

es well the evidence of Scripture:

“It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King.... The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure ... to the end that ... He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator and surety. Which office He took not unto Himself, but was thereunto called by His Father, who put all power and judgment into His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same. (8.1, 3)

A **prophet**, a **priest**, and a **king** are essential needs for the human race, whose sin necessarily separates its members from God and precludes them from approaching God on their own. Before the fall, Adam, the head of the human race, enjoyed a perfect communion and fellowship with God, his Creator. But with the fall came a tragic and drastic change in human nature and the loss of any relationship with the Lord. Iniquity separated mankind from God, and sin hid God’s face (**Isaiah 59:2**).

Isaiah 59:2 (NASB)

²“**But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.**”

When Adam fell, he and all his posterity lost the knowledge of God that must be renewed if there is to be salvation from sin (**Colossian 3:10**). Humanity needed **a prophet** to reveal God. When Adam fell, he and all his descendants lost the righteousness and true holiness enjoyed at creation (**Ephesians 4:24**). Mankind needed **a priest** to reconcile it to God. When Adam fell, he and all his seed became prey to the enemy of the soul who had power to hold them subject to bondage (**Hebrews 2:14–15**). Mankind needed **a king** to reign, to subdue every enemy of the soul. What was needed, God in His wondrous and amazing grace provided in the person of His own dear Son, His and our **Messiah**. As the ultimate and ideal **Messiah**, the Lord Jesus Christ brought together in His single person all the common features shared by the lesser **messiahs** and all the specific duties and responsibilities of each of the three distinct offices. The Lord Jesus Christ did it all.

Our focus here is specifically on the prophetic of-

fice. The Lord Himself initiated this messianic anticipation with His promise to Moses that He would raise up “a Prophet” ([Deuteronomy 18:18](#)), and statements in the New Testament testify to the expectant arrival of that ideal prophet (see, for instance, [Matthew 21:11, 46](#); [Luke 7:16](#); [John 7:40](#)).

Every passing prophet increased the anticipation for *the Prophet*: When will He come? In one sense, every prophet shared the mission of **John the Baptist**, the greatest of the prophets before *the*

Prophet, to prepare the way for His coming. As the fullness of time approached, the expectancy intensified. Remember that **John** was conducting such a remarkable ministry that some wondered and questioned if he was the promised Prophet ([John 1:21](#)). He set the record straight by identifying himself as the voice of one crying to prepare the way of the Lord; he made it clear that he was a pointer to Christ ([John 1:23](#)). That is the mission of every prophet, and by the very fact of his being a prophet he achieved that mission.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism succinctly defines how Christ carries out the prophetic office:

“Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation” (question 24).

Put simply, a **prophet** is God’s representative to man. Who better than the very Son of God, Himself God, could represent God to man? Speaking of the Lord Jesus in prophetic terms, [Hebrews](#) declares that God spoke in various ways through the prophets but has now revealed His final word to man by His Son ([Hebrews 1:1–2](#)).

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB)

¹ “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

Although all the Old Testament prophets, including Hosea, were spokesmen for God and men of God, how imperfectly they represented God when compared to the Lord Jesus, who was “**the bright-**

ness of His glory and the express image of His person” ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). Similarly, Paul said of Christ that He is “**the image of the invisible God”** and that “**in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”** ([Colossians 1:15](#); [Colossians 2:9](#)).

The bottom line, then, is this: Jesus Christ is the **Ideal Prophet** because Jesus Christ is God. The proof that Jesus of Nazareth is the **Ideal Prophet** was and is overwhelming. Christ’s preaching, teaching, and working during His earthly mission constituted what we call His *immediate* or direct prophetic work. He consistently claimed the divine source of His message, predicted the future accurately, and performed the necessary signs and wonders to confirm His election, authority, and ability as *the Prophet* with the last and final Word from God. To Him, all the prophets bore witness.

Every *lesser messiah* was a type—a picture prophecy—of the ideal **Messiah**. It was said of **Joshua** and his attendants that they were “**a wondrous sign”** ([Zechariah 3:8](#)). As priests, they represented and pointed to the coming Christ. The same can be said of **Hosea**, the prophet. As one of the *lesser messiahs*, **Hosea** contributed to God’s revelation of the gospel by his status as a prophet as well as by the messages he preached. The Lord says to look at a prophet and to learn something about Christ.

In his messianic role, he signaled the coming Christ. His presence among the people heralded that One who was certain to come. **Hosea** was one of God’s installments on the prophetic line leading purposefully and unfailingly to the **Ideal Messiah**. **Hosea** was a contributor to messianic expectancy; therefore, we are to look at **Hosea** and learn of Christ. There is a sense in which every Christian is to be a sign of and to Christ. By our lives and words, we are to represent Christ and to point to Him. As a prophet, **Hosea** was a *little messiah*. As Christians, we are “**little christs.**”

Continued in next edition...

CORAM DEO

(Before the face of God)

We must never limit God in the methods that He uses to speak to us, but from my experience and observation, I believe there are three main ways that God speaks to us today:

- 1. His Word**
- 2. His Holy Spirit**
- 3. Other believers in Christ Jesus**

The person who desires to hear from God, and who wants to put him or herself into the best position to hear from God, will follow one of these three methods. In these ways God routinely, daily, and consistently speaks to all people who seek Him.

Listening to God Through the Bible

It is no accident that the Bible is so routinely called the **Word of God**. The Bible is God's foremost way today of communicating with us.

In the Bible, we have the complete revelation of God. He doesn't need to add anything else to this book. Through the ages, the revelation of God was an unfolding truth by God about Himself. In Jesus, that truth was fulfilled. As Jesus said of Himself, He didn't come to change anything about the law or the commandments; He came to show us by His life's example how to fully live out God's plan in our lives. (See [Matthew 5:17](#))

God's Word is for all people because it speaks to the basic human condition. The Bible addresses every emotion, human relationship dynamic, problem of the heart, aspect of the psyche, temptation or desire, heartache or joy, or issue of faith, love, or hope.

In the Old Testament, we have God's laws and commands, complete with examples of how God works in relationship to His own law and what happens when humankind disobeys the law (or obeys it). We have songs and poetry that tell us about the nature of God and the nature of people, and the nature of the relationship God desires with humankind. We have promises of God's presence.

In the New Testament, we see how God gave us

His Son, Jesus Christ, to live out God's plan before us—becoming our role model, mentor, older brother and, ultimately, our Savior and the door through which we enter eternal life. We see what happened to the first disciples and apostles as they received the promised Holy Spirit and began to live the very life of Christ Jesus in their society. We find teachings that show us how the Holy Spirit enables us to live a life that is fully pleasing to God the Father, a life that goes beyond mere law because it is based on the spirit of God's law, not the letter of the law.

The Bible covers it all! What a precious gift to us! Whenever we face difficulties, experience heartaches, or have questions, we should go first to the Scriptures. There God will speak to us directly, personally, intimately, and effectively.





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Hebrews 11 – Overview

Part 1

In performing an analysis of the word “**faith**” in the New Testament, some interesting things become readily evident. The book that uses the word “**faith**” more than any other is the book of Romans – 34 times in 16 chapters. Hebrews uses the word “**faith**” 30 times in 13 chapters, but 23 of those uses are in [Hebrews 11](#) alone. Galatians is third with 19 uses and 1 Timothy is fourth with 18 uses. In fact, in the gospels the word “**faith**” is only used 29 times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined, and it is not used at all in the gospel of John which normally uses a form of the word “**believe**”. So, [Hebrews 11](#) uses the word “**faith**” more than all of the books of the New Testament with the exception of Romans. In some ways it seems that it would be accurate to state that [Hebrews 11](#) has to be the greatest teaching in all of the Word of God on the concept of biblical faith. Obviously, there are many other factors to biblical faith that are not contained in [Hebrews 11](#), but certainly it contains a primary and rather concentrated teaching on the nature and outworking of personal faith in the believer’s life.

The author of Hebrews has just concluded this amazing teaching on the high priestly ministry of Christ. It is without question the most concentrated doctrinal teaching on the person and work of Jesus Christ found anywhere in the New Testament. The story of the life of Christ is provided in the four gospels, but the meaning of His life is explained in the epistles from 1 Corinthians through Revelation. The author has ended [Hebrews 10](#) with as many exhortations as he has provided throughout all of the first 9 1/2 chapters and then he gives the strongest warning in the New Testament and probably the entire Bible. It would almost seem that at that point after providing so much doctrine that he would just be chomping at the bit to bring one exhortation after another to these believers. He has reminded them at the end of [Hebrews 10](#) of what they knew much too well – that they were experiencing incredible manifold trials. However he chooses not to do that, but rather he gives them one example after another of people who seemed to exercise genuine biblical faith in the midst of their own personal trials and struggles – some of which were very severe. He speaks of the faith of the early saints, then of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, then Moses, and finally of unnamed Old Testament saints – some of whom endured the most horrific of trials that could even be imagined. [Hebrews 11:35\(b\)-38](#) gives a description of their trials,

³⁵And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

How about that for the Hall of Fame of Suffering? It seems that the author’s message to those who were being afflicted with various trials was that they needed to keep their eyes on Christ and to appreciate that many others had endured what they were having to go through. In some ways that may not seem like much comfort to someone who is undergoing hardships, but it is exactly what the author does. In fact, when we look at the major elements of [Hebrews 11](#), there are no exhortations, no reproofs, no warnings, no promises, and

only one exaltation of Christ in v26. It seems that the primary element is simply a lot of different examples of people who exercised biblical faith in the face of various kinds of difficulty. In just thinking about that simple observation, it becomes readily apparent that for whatever reason the author sees, he certainly believes that these Hebrew believers were waning in their personal faith in God. It does not appear that he is at all talking about faith in Christ for salvation, but rather about faith in God for endurance and perseverance. The one phrase that stands out more than any other in the entire chapter is the phrase “**by faith**”. It is almost as if the author is shouting it. He says it so much – v3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31. He uses the phrase “**in faith**” in v13, and “**through faith**” in v33 and 39. That is 21 times that he speaks about doing whatever needs to be done “**by faith**”. It just seems apparent on the surface that that must be his point. In v1 he gives a brief, but pointed definition of faith and clearly states that biblical faith is not something that is physically tangible, but rather is what is “**hoped for**” and what is “**not seen**”. In v3 he states that real faith gives the believer a spiritual understanding that the lost man simply does not have. The lost individual has no meaningful understanding about life and what is eternal, and to the contrary actually tries to refute the very thing that God has revealed. Then to add fuel to the fire, he gives what is probably the key verse in the chapter in v6 and says,

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Now, just imagine the Hebrew reader coming to this place in the letter. Just think how they may actually have felt about what the author was telling them. On the surface it appears that he was actually making things worse because he said that “**without faith**” that nothing that they were going through at a personal level could be pleasing to God if for whatever reason they did not have and maintain any real faith in God during their trial. Obviously, it is very easy to trust God when all is well – right? However, what happens when the walls cave in? What happens when the severity of the trial trumps an indi-

vidual’s faith? Is God mad? Is He angry and frustrated at the believer? Well, if He was, then it certainly would not add much credence to what the author stated in [Hebrews 4:15](#) when he said,

¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Obviously, Christ endured. Obviously, He suffered. Certainly He understands the nature of the conflict and the struggle during the conflict. It is not just that someone is going through something difficult, but the struggle includes all of the various stress levels that the conflict creates in their life. Having said that, it seems that having a genuine and meaningful faith in God that goes beyond the believer’s initial conversion would be a good thing to have – and that is certainly one of the author’s points. Why should a believer say that they have a real faith in God, but then it never work during the hard times? If that were true, then what good is faith at all?

In evaluating the whole chapter, it appears that the author has recognized a certain issue that he identifies in [Hebrews 11:6](#) when he states that God rewards “**those who diligently seek Him**”, with the operative word being “**diligently**”. However, the word “**diligently**” is not actually in the Greek text. The NASB actually reads,

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

That translation leaves out the word “**diligently**” or “**earnestly**”. The ESV leaves out the word “**diligently**” and says,

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The YLT does not add the word “**diligently**”, but says,

6 and apart from faith it is impossible to please well, for it behoveth him who is coming to God to believe that He is, and to those seeking Him He becometh a rewarder.

The NIV reads,

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

The AMP reads,

6 But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out].

In the Greek text the word “**diligently**” is not there, but the Greek word is “*ekzēteō*” and it literally means to seek out (*zēteō* - *to seek* and *ek* - *out*). So, it carries with it the idea of seeking after something carefully and diligently. The Complete Word Study Dictionary says that it means “to seek diligently or earnestly after, namely God, with a sincere and earnest desire to obtain His favor”. The Practical Word Studies in the New Testament says that it means “to earnestly seek; to diligently seek; to sincerely seek. It means to seek out God; to diligently seek to find Him and to follow Him.” It is not the idea of looking for something, but really looking for something. One time when my son and his family lived in Texas, my wife took the kids to a mall. Our grandson was still fairly young, just several years old, and they had stopped somewhere for just a moment. When my wife looked around, Sage was gone! It literally scared her to death and she was as frantic as she could be. You can just imagine how “earnestly” she began to look for him. If you lost one of your children, you would seek for them with everything in your power – and that is exactly the meaning that this word conveys.

It appears that one of the primary reasons that the author was addressing this was simply because

many of his readers had probably just been drifting further and further away from an earnest seeking of God in their life, and of all of the times in their life when they needed God’s presence and strength in their life, this was it. They had become dull and somewhat listless in their desire to seek Him. No wonder he had to provide the warnings that he did. Something spiritually strategic was simply missing in their life.

As a kind of introduction to the overview issue of understanding “**faith**” and what it means at a practical level for a believer’s life, [Jeremiah 17:10](#) says the following,

10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

Anyone who is serious in their Christian life about seeking after God needs to examine their true motives. The Lord always looks at the heart first. He examines why a believer does something a certain way before He judges what they actually may do. Doing something spiritual with the wrong motive is a form of hypocrisy and certainly fails God’s test of what being a genuine believer is really all about. The following is a list of basic goals and the corresponding motives that should be associated with them. The list is certainly not comprehensive, but in the overview of [Hebrews 11](#) and especially in the light of [Hebrews 11:6](#) and seeking earnestly after God, it may be a good place to begin.

Goal 1: To earnestly seek after God.

Motive: To make all of our ways pleasing to the Lord.

Goal 2: To meditate in the Scriptures each day.

Motive: To discover both the character and ways of God.

Goal 3: To relate life experiences to Scripture.

Motive: To determine how we have been wrong and what must be changed in our life.

Goal 4: To spend meaningful time in prayer.

Motive: To increase our receptivity to the Scriptural promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Goal 5: To overcome harmful temptations in our life.

Motive: To become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Goal 6: To have full assurance of salvation.

Motive: To go forward in the deeper truths of the Christian life by growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Goal 7: To become totally committed to the will of God.

Motive: To allow the power of the Holy Spirit to work in and through our life.

Goal 8: To develop a continual awareness that God is weighing every thought, word, and action.

Motive: To hunger and thirst for the out-working of God's truth in our life.


In the light of the simple fact that God looks at the heart and searches the heart, it would be good for every believer to take a fresh examination of their life and what it is that they are doing in their life. Is it for God's glory or personal fulfillment? Is it for the advancement of God's kingdom or the advancement of their own personal agendas? Is it for the growth and expansion of the local church, or their own personal recognition? We cannot have meaningful fellowship with God or usefulness in His kingdom apart from the proper motives for what we are doing. So taking a fresh examination of our motives and correcting any that are not Christ honoring will certainly contribute to producing the kind of "faith" that God is seeking in our lives.

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