



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

Week 52, Day 1 --- Hebrews 11-13
Week 52, Day 2 --- 2 Timothy 1-4
Week 52, Day 3 --- Jude 1 - 2 Peter 1-3
Week 52, Day 4 --- 1 John 1-5
Week 52, Day 5 --- 2 John 1 - 3 John 1
Week 52, Day 6 --- Revelation 1-5
Week 52, Day 7 --- Revelation 6-11

Week 52, Day 1 --- Hebrews 11-13

Hebrews 11 is one of the most famous chapters in the whole Bible. It is called the faith chapter. In it you will find a review of the great stories of faith from the Old Testament. It also contains the following verse that I consider to be one of the most important in the entire Bible.

° 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.

Most people who claim to be Christians live by one of two motives: pleasing God or trusting God. How would you answer this question? Is it better to please God or to trust God? This may seem like a trick question, but it isn't. If my motivation and desire is to please God then I will focus on what I am doing. My tendency will be to focus on my works and the result will be pride. It is unlikely that I will actually develop the character that God desires and I probably won't please Him no matter how hard I try.

On the other hand if my motivation and desire is to trust God then my tendency will be to focus on what God is doing. Who is God? Where is He leading? What can I learn from Him? As I grow in trust for God and learn to walk following Him. Notice that the verse says I need to believe two things. First I must genuinely believe that God exists. Every move I make should be based on the reality that there is a God who created me and everything around me. Second I must genuinely believe that God is good. Not only is God good, but God desires to share His goodness with me. With these two beliefs I can follow God with confidence.

What is the connection between this understanding and the chapter on discipline that follows?

Week 52, Day 2 --- 2 Timothy 1-4

This is Paul's final letter that we have kept for us in the New Testament. It is an intensely personal letter. Paul knows that his time on earth is coming to an end and he is passing on his ministry to Timothy. It seems clear from Acts that Paul could have avoided prison by not going to Jerusalem. However, he probably wouldn't have gotten to Rome any other way. Some believers felt that Paul had made the wrong choice. As he reaches the end Paul is feeling very alone and he wants to see both Timothy and Mark one last time.

I love books and one of the special notes in this letter is Paul's request for his scrolls. They probably would have been portions of the Old Testament. They also would have been incredibly valuable.

What does Paul encourage Timothy not to do? What does Paul encourage Timothy to do?

Week 52, Day 3 --- Jude 1 - 2 Peter 1-3

These two short letters have similar themes. The church has survived a period of persecution from the outside and is now threatened by forces inside. The church grew rapidly during periods of persecution. Any rapidly growing movement attracts men and women with gifts of leadership who hope to develop a following for their own benefit. In this case these false teachers were preaching a message that told people that they could be saved and continue to do all the evil they had done before. This message was a lie and still is a lie.

Think about it. The greatest promise of the New Testament is the presence of the Holy Spirit, God Himself, in us. If the Holy Spirit is in us guiding and encouraging us, then are we going to become more like God or more like Satan? 2 Peter 1:5 and 6 tells us what we should expect.

Week 52, Day 4 --- 1 John 1-5

I encourage you to read through this book several times. It really cannot be understood in small chunks. It is not written like an American book with a beginning, middle, and end. Instead, it flows back and forth. I think the message of the book is a very simple one. If I am in Christ I will be becoming more like Jesus every day. If I am in Christ I am alive. If I am in Christ I will love as Jesus loved.

Week 52, Day 5 --- 2 John 1 - 3 John 1

These two letters are written to specific people toward the end of John's life. They are indicators of what had begun to happen in the church. In 2 John the issue is an idea that was beginning to creep into the church. The idea was called Gnosticism. In Gnosticism spirit and matter were totally separate with spirit being good and matter being evil. The first implication was that Jesus body was evil and that God's Spirit entered it just briefly before His death on the cross. The practical implication of this was that as long as the spirit of a person was connected with God it did not matter what the body did. People who believed this attempted to lead the church into sexual immorality. This teaching needed to be stopped and John writes to warn the church. Unfortunately, the teaching did not end and forms of this teaching still exist today.

In 3 John the issue is a person. It would seem from what John writes that this person believes that the church belongs to them and not to Jesus. This has created division in the church. Unfortunately, divisions of all sorts that began before John died have continued to this day. This is totally contrary to Jesus' prayer in John 17 and has seriously reduced the spread of the gospel.

What would you have done if you were the church leader who had received one of these letters?

Week 52, Day 6 --- Revelation 1-5

Late in the Apostle John's life he was exiled to the island of Patmos. It is amazing that he was not killed. As far as we know he was the only one of the apostles who was not killed and who died of natural causes. He was an old man and the only apostle remaining alive. His letter is the last one written that is included in the Bible. It can be confusing because John addresses two things in the book. He writes to encourage the church in the persecutions it is currently enduring. He also writes to describe the future hope that we have in heaven. These messages are interwoven in the book. Even more confusing is the fact that he writes in a language that is much like code. The style is very much like the style of Daniel and Ezekiel in the Old Testament. It is the language of images and symbols. John is painting fantastic pictures for our imagination with his words.

This letter was written during a time when the church was dealing with great persecution. The emperor was probably Domitian and he was an evil man. He demanded that his subjects worship him as a god. For example, we take the expression "Jesus is Lord" very lightly. Domitian demanded that his subjects say, "Domitian is Lord" and for Christians to refuse to say that and instead to say "Jesus is Lord" was sufficient to demand the death penalty.

Also woven through Revelation are a number of songs. Revelation is the hymnbook of the early church. The ultimate focus of the book is on Jesus and believers are encouraged to worship Him with song. At the end of chapter 1 there is a wonderful description of Jesus. How does this description compare with the image of Jesus you have from the gospels?

The letters in chapters 2 and 3 are real letters to real churches in real cities. They are also letters of warning to churches today. When you think about the church which of these letters best fits the picture of today's church that exists in your mind? I hope you are encouraged as you read through this book. There are difficult times ahead, but God wins the ultimate victory and He has prepared a special place for us to go to and be with Him.

Week 52, Day 7 --- Revelation 6-11

I saw a video on YouTube yesterday that was amazing. A choir had gone to a food court in a mall and joined in eating with all the customers at the mall. All of a sudden music comes over the PA and the choir begins to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. The song builds and builds until the last phrase is repeated over and over – and He shall reign forever and ever. There are two main themes through this long middle section of Revelation. The first and primary one is that Jesus will reign forever. He desires everyone to be a part of His eternal kingdom, but many refuse. God's kindness, patience, and grace have not brought people to repentance. Now we see God's wrath and still people will not repent. This is the second theme. God will separate His children from the children of the devil. Only those who are wearing white robes will be allowed into God's presence.

Week 53, Day 1 --- Revelation 12-18

These chapters are filled with fantastic images and creatures. Bible students have debated their meaning since the early days after this letter was written. It is easy to get distracted and miss the main point of what John writes. The church was being persecuted and the source of the persecution was Rome. The Roman Empire was very powerful and many believers died at the hands of Rome. Imagine that you are a believer living in a Roman city. What message do you hear in these chapters? What is Jesus warning you about? What is Jesus calling you to do? What will last forever? What will be destroyed?

Week 53, Day 2 --- Revelation 19-22

I don't know if you've ever seen The Lord of the Rings. In each of the 3 movies that tell this story there is a great battle. The plot builds until the battle comes and then the battle itself is much of the movie. We expect the same thing in Revelation, but the battle never happens or at least it is over so quickly that there is no drama associated with it. Jesus has won the victory and there is no great struggle. When Jesus enters the battle it is done.

This is the important thing for you to remember. Jesus is coming again and when He comes He will take everyone cleansed with His blood to be with Him forever. I'm looking forward to that day and I hope you are too.