


### ➤ Read Hebrews 5:11–6:12.

### ➤ Reread Hebrews 5:11–14.

1. The “this,” about which the author of Hebrews has “much to say” (5:11), is teaching about Jesus, the “high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (5:10). He began to teach on this subject in 4:14–5:10, and he will return to it at the beginning of chapter 7. But first he has another warning to issue. For what does he reprimand his readers in 5:11?
2. In the next verses our author uses figurative language of milk and solid food to explain a related problem he sees in his readers.
  - a. What does “milk” represent? (5:12)
  - b. How does he describe people who need milk? (5:12–13)
  - c. In contrast, what do you think “solid food” represents? (Consider 5:13b, as well as the kind of teaching the author has given up to this point.)
  - d. How does he describe people who can handle solid food? (5:14; \* 1:9a)
  - e. Which group are the original readers of Hebrews in, and which group *should* they be in? (5:12)
3. What do you think the danger is in “no longer try[ing] to understand” (5:11), but continuing to live on milk? (You may wish to review your answers to “b” and “d” above.)

### *The Word of Righteousness (5:13 ESV)*

The phrase “not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness” (NIV) or “unskilled in the word of righteousness” (ESV) is a tricky one to interpret. Some commentators believe that this “righteousness” refers to the righteousness of Christ given to believers—that is, his perfect record that is ours by faith (Rom. 3:21–22). Other see “righteousness” here as having to do with “the right conduct God expects believers to follow,”<sup>1</sup> an idea that is then continued in 5:14, where mature believers are described as “trained... to distinguish good from evil.”

## 7 Reread Hebrews 6:1-12.

4. In light of his readers' situation, what does the author exhort them to do? (6:1)

5. What does the writer consider foundational for believers?

"foundation of \_\_\_\_\_, and  
of \_\_\_\_\_, instruction  
about \_\_\_\_\_,  
the \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_."

—Hebrews 6:1-2

### *Cleansing Rites and the Laying On of Hands*

"Cleansing rites" (6:2) may include teaching about Jewish washing rituals and/or the baptism that converts to Judaism underwent and/or Christian baptism.

"The laying on of hands" (6:2) was associated with a number of things at different times: "ordaining or commissioning... healing the sick... bestowal of blessing,"<sup>2</sup> and "the gift of the Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

6. From your own understanding or from the verses below, explain how "repentance...and faith" (6:1) are the foundation for a Christian's life.

Repentance: Mk. 1:15; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 7:9-10

Faith: Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:15-16

### *Verses 4-6 of Chapter 6*


Verses 4-6 of chapter 6 are exceptionally difficult verses. They most likely describe people who "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."<sup>4</sup> When such people fall away, they demonstrate that "they are not true Christians because they have not made a true, saving response to the gospel, resulting in genuine faith, love, and perseverance."<sup>5</sup> "Those who deny Christ in this way are really taking their stand among those who crucified Jesus."<sup>6</sup> Then, "since repentance is an act involving the self-humbling of the sinner before a holy God, it is evident why a man with a contemptuous attitude towards Christ has no possibility of repentance. The hardening process provides an impenetrable casing which removes all sensitivity to the pleadings of the Spirit."<sup>7</sup> In contrast, "those who are genuinely Christ's do not fall away into apostasy [rejection of their faith]"<sup>8</sup>; they persevere.

7. Verses 7–8 give a picture that illustrates the point the writer has just made in verses 4–6. Fill in the chart below to investigate this illustration.

	Who does this represent?	What is their fate?
“Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop” (6:7)		
“Land that produces thorns and thistles” (6:8)		

8. In 6:9 the writer reassures his readers, “We are convinced of better things in your case.”
- In this verse the writer addresses his readers as “dear friends” (NIV) or “beloved” (ESV). Why do you think he chooses this moment for such tenderness?
  - What reasons does the writer give for his confidence? (6:10)
  - What do the qualities he mentions say about their faith? (Jn. 15:4; Jas. 2:14–18; 1 Jn. 4:19–21)
9. This passage closes with a number of exhortations.
- What are the readers *not* to do? (6:12)
  - What are they *to* do? (6:11, 12b)

10. These exhortations are not just for those who read this letter 2000 years ago.

Reread the exhortations in 6:11–12, and hear the words speaking to you. (You may also wish to review the following verses that urge us to persevere and instruct us on how to do so: Heb. 2:1; 3:1, 6, 12–15; 4:1–2, 11, 14–16;  Heb. 12:1–3.)

What does heeding these exhortations look like for you, practically?

11. Commentator Walter Henrichsen writes, “How then do I, as a believer, find assurance? By trusting in the objective truth of God’s promises rather than relying on the subjective feelings that come from my own experiences.”<sup>9</sup>

As you persevere in the life of faith, carry with you these promises of God:

**Jn. 6:37, 39–40:**

“All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

**Jn. 10:27–29:**

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

**Phil. 1:4–6:**


“In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

**Phil. 2:12–13:**

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

**1 Thess. 5:23–24:**

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”

\* For further study

<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol.12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, ed., *NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 1901n6:1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, 53.

<sup>4</sup> N. T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 60.

<sup>5</sup> Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2369, n6:4–8.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 148.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1977), 221.

<sup>9</sup> Walter A. Henrichsen, *After the Sacrifice: A Practical Study of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 78.