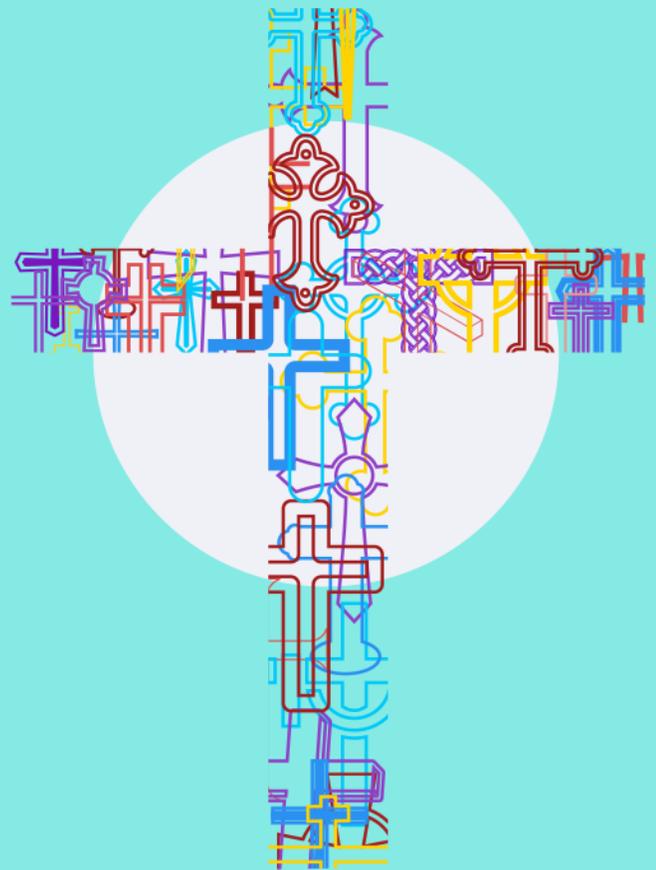
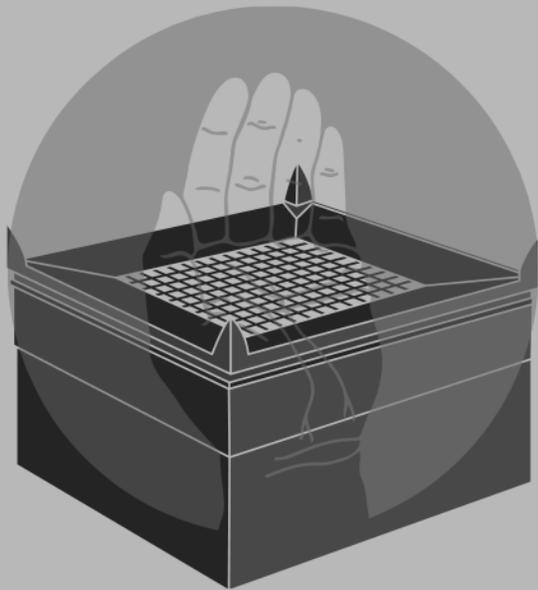


# OUT OF THE *SHADOWS*

## DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



*"When you are reading a book in a dark room, and come to a difficult part, you take it to a window to get more light. So take your Bibles to Christ." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne*

History has always been about Jesus. And yet, our history, the history of humanity, is a story about chasing shadows. As we move through life we endure experiences that cause us to press harder into what we think will make us feel better. Sometimes this results in strengthened faith, sometimes we jump feet-first into distractions, addictive actions, busyness, or hardened apathy. We begin to pursue what is at hand, helping ourselves believe age-old stories that take our hearts on temporary walks away from our failures, brokenness, and pain. But it is all just a shadow compared to Christ.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a community of new Jesus-followers in ancient Rome were experiencing the same sort of temptation. Following Jesus as the felt-absence of God became more and more pronounced was beginning to look less appealing than the Old Way of sacrificing animals, listening to the prophets taught, experiencing angelic activity, and hearing the High Priest announce, "You are forgiven." For them, it was beginning to look like an unfair trade; the tangible, physical, Old Testament was not even "Old", but contemporary, and being experienced daily by neighbors, family, and community leaders. The Jewish community could walk into the temple courtyards, they could see the blood on the altar, they could see the High Priest sweat as he tirelessly worked for the atonement of the people; but Christians were beginning to believe they had been cheated. They had heard the Good News about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but where was He as ridicule, exclusion, and suffering began to rise? *Are you ever at this same fork in the road - watching those who don't follow Christ engage in a life you wish you had, seemingly enjoying every moment of existence as you attempt to seek first the kingdom of God?*

Hebrews was the answer of God to the overwhelmed community then, and stands as a response to the distracted and apathetic church today. The author of Hebrews looks at all of the Old Covenant activity and announces, "It's all a shadow; it has always been about Jesus." This community needed to once again consider Jesus, and taste His supreme glory. And so do we.

More than any other New Testament writing, Hebrews takes the entire Bible - the Law, the prophets, the sacrificial system, the old manifestations of power, along with the attentive reader, to Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate word of God, the final High Priest, the eternal, permanent sacrifice of God, the effect of which is everlasting. With Jesus, who reigns right now over even the darkest times, we can repent and believe, enduring with patience, joy, and relentless hope as we watch - and participate in - His unshakeable kingdom advancing across the entire world.

Join us as we "pay much closer attention to what we have heard" about King Jesus, who is far better than anything else anyone could offer, and who brings His people out of the shadows.

In Christ,  
*The Pastors of Living Stones Church*

## BIBLE READING PLANS

*"In the Bible we discover a real and complex God. If you have a personal relationship with any real person, you will regularly be confused and infuriated by him or her. So, too, you will be regularly confounded by the God you meet in the Scriptures—as well as amazed and comforted."*

Timothy Keller, *Experiencing Intimacy and Awe with God*

Throughout 2020 we want to have our minds renewed, our hearts restored, and our eyes set upon the beautiful reality of Jesus and His advancing Kingdom, and there is no better way for us to open ourselves to this kind of life than by prayerfully engaging with God through the Bible. Below are links to some Bible reading plans that can help you regularly read Scripture.

**[bit.ly/LSmcheyne](https://bit.ly/LSmcheyne)** (link is case-sensitive)

Each day has two passages from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament, and one from either the Psalms or the Gospels.

**[bit.ly/LS1yearNT](https://bit.ly/LS1yearNT)** (link is case-sensitive)

This plan will lead you through the New Testament in one year. Each book includes videos specifically designed to enhance your understanding and engagement with God's Word.

**[bit.ly/LS1yearBible](https://bit.ly/LS1yearBible)** (link is case-sensitive)

This plan takes you on a journey through the entire Bible over the course of one year. Each book includes videos specifically designed to enhance your understanding and engagement with God's Word.

# HEBREWS INTERPRETATION HELP

Hebrews shows us how serious theology is sincerely practical. As the early church began facing suffering, and with it, the temptation to flee from Jesus, Hebrews was given as a direct and passionate exhortation, helping readers cling to Christ by showing who He is from a range of perspectives: for those wanting to know their sin is forgiven, Jesus is the perfect and permanent sacrifice; for those seeking protection and spiritual service, Jesus does both better than the angels; for those desiring to hear from God, Jesus is the best word God has ever given. The author goes back to numerous Old Testament names, events, and experiences as he contrasts the stunning reality of Jesus with the shadows that came before Him.

Because of this, we are providing Community Group leaders with some basic skills for handling both Hebrews and the Old Testament passages referenced within it.<sup>1</sup>

## THREE INTERPRETATION STEPS

### 1. Observe the Text

Ask:

- What are repeated words or ideas?
- Who is writing? Who is talking?
- Where is this passage taking place?
- Are there contrasts? Comparisons? Lists?
- What figures of speech are present?
- What verbs are used? Are the actions past, present, or future?
- Are there quotes from other parts of the Bible? Where are these quotes from?
- Are there words that indicate a mood, tone, or emotion?
- Are there any linking words such as “but”, “therefore”, “because”, etc.?
- What are the roles and actions of God in this passage?
- What are the roles and actions of people in this passage?

### 2. Investigate the Original Audience & Interpret the Passage

As a family of churches, we are approaching Hebrews with the following assumptions:

#### ***What Hebrews Is***

The book of Hebrews is neither a book nor a letter but a sermon most likely preached and written before the destruction of the Jewish Temple (which happened in 70AD). The traditional title “To the Hebrews” reflects the early church’s belief that this sermon was given to Jewish Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from Matt Smethurst’s article, “How to Study Your Bible in 2020”, [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)

## ***Why Hebrews was Written***

This sermon was preached and written to the Jewish Christians in Italy with explicit evangelistic goals (the author wants to see more people trust Jesus, especially the Jewish people who had yet to see Jesus as the fulfillment of their history) and with the intention of helping new Christians stay committed to Jesus. Remember these reasons as we explore Hebrews throughout 2020.

## ***Who Wrote Hebrews***

Although we cannot determine with full confidence who preached/wrote this letter, we can eliminate some candidates like the Apostle Paul, who represents the most popular choice throughout church history. With a closer look at the grammar and use of the Greek language, we can see this person did not speak, write, argue theologically, or communicate like the Apostle Paul.

The author was probably well known to the community he is addressing, and he was probably a second-generation Christian. The use of the Greek language tells us that the preacher/author was well educated. Lastly, the preacher was an expert in the Old Testament; no other NT book sources the Old Testament like the book of Hebrews.

## ***What Hebrews is About***

Jesus is the supreme message of God and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types; Jesus takes the people of God out of the shadows of the Old Testament types, and fulfills the promises of God. We respond by seeing Jesus as more excellent than all the shadows that have come before, and as the central focus of our faith, leading to our endurance (the words “better,” “more,” and “greater” appear a combined 25 times in Hebrews).

## ***How Hebrews Applies to Us***

The historical, resurrected Jesus is significant, present, powerful, dynamic, and relevant to all of life, as opposed to modern ideas of Jesus, which present a small, nondescript, powerless, and static being.

Jesus is better than any spiritual experience, teacher, leader, political strategy, social movement, accomplishment, gift, adventure, or religious and philosophical activity. He is worth following, even at the cost of your acceptance, social inclusion, or life.

## **With this background information, you’re better prepare to ask:**

- Does the surrounding context clarify any confusing words or phrases?
- It’s best to examine the “nearest” context—other verses in the same chapter or other chapters in the same book—before consulting “farther” passages or outside resources.
- How would I paraphrase this passage in my own words?
- Why did the biblical author write this particular passage?
- Why did he feel it necessary to include?
- Is my interpretation consistent with what I noticed in the observation stage, or have I made leaps based on prior assumptions?
- Do other passages of Scripture fill out my interpretation?
- Let clearer Bible passages help you understand less clear Bible passages
- Where does this passage fall in redemptive history?
- How does it fit within the Bible’s story as a whole?

For more help with investigating the context and interpretation, you can access resources such as [this free course from The Gospel Coalition](#).

It's also helpful to remember what the Bible is: *the Bible is God's communication to human beings about Jesus Christ*. Therefore, here is a simple way to think about the big story of the Bible and how it relates to Jesus:<sup>2</sup>

**Old Testament** (Genesis - Malachi): **Anticipation**

**Gospels** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John): **Manifestation**

**Acts: Proclamation**

**Epistles** (Romans - Jude): **Explanation**

**Revelation: Consummation**

### 3. Application

Ask:

- What's something I learned about God?
- His character, His plan, His priorities, His promises, His desires, His ways?
- What's something I learned about myself? My neighbor? The world?
- What's the sinful condition on display in this passage?
- What aspect of human sin or brokenness is most evident?
- What aspect of God's grace is most evident?
- How does the gospel - the stunning news of what God accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to reconcile rebels to Himself - affect my understanding of this passage?
- How do I need to change my thinking or living based on what I've learned?
- How should I be praying in light of this passage?
- Is there an encouragement or promise here that I need to meditate on?
- What implications does this passage have for the way I engage my unbelieving friends?
- How does this passage apply to my brothers and sisters in Christ? How does it speak to our life together as a church?

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from "Every Book of the Bible in One Word" by Garrett Kell.

# OUT OF THE SHADOWS: AN OUTLINE OF HEBREWS

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS III

### **4:14 - 6:20 Jesus is better than your High Priests**

- 4:14- 16 - Tested
- 5:1-6 - Appointed
- 5:7-10 - Suffered
- **Exhortation #3**
  - 5:11-14 - Dull vs. Mature
  - 6:1-9 - Apostasy
  - 6:9-20 - Assurance

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS PART IV

### **7:1 - 10:39 Jesus mediates a better way**

- 7:1-19 - The Good and Bad of our Past
- 7:20-28 - Jesus' Resume
- 8:1-13 - Better Covenant
- 9:1-14 - Better Worship
- 9:15-28 - Better Death
- 10:1-10 - Better Blood
- 10:11-18 - Better Forgiveness
- 10:19-25 - Better Living
- **Exhortation #4**
  - 10:26-39 - Better Reward

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS PART V

### **11:1 - 12:29 Jesus is a better reason**

- 11:1-3 - Faith that Saves
- 11:4-7 - Faith that Pleases God
- 11:8-16 - Faith in a Foreign Land
- 11:17-31 - Faith in the Desert
- 11:32-40 - Faith of the Great
- 11:40-12:2 - Endure as a Runner
- 12:3-11 - Endure as a Son
- 12:12-17 - Endure in Community
- **Exhortation #5**
  - 12:18-29 - Endure in Worship

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS PART VI

### **13:1-25 If Jesus is better...**

- 13:1-6 - Let Your Love Prove His Worth
- 13:7-16 - Join Him as an Outsider
- 13:17-25 - Embrace Humility

# OUT OF THE SHADOWS: COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER GUIDE

## WEEK 1

### HIGH PRIEST

#### HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

#### A NOTE TO LEADERS:

Some weeks in the Discipleship Guide for this series contain multiple Text and Application questions. Please do not feel pressured to rigidly follow this outline or answer every single question. Ask the Spirit to lead you as you lead your group, and be attentive to the needs of your Community Group.

*Here are 6 questions you can ask of any passage in Hebrews:*

- What is the context of the original audience?
- Why did it matter to the original audience?
- How can we relate to the original audience? How might the text matter to us?
- What is the text calling us to be, do, or know?
- What does this passage say about God?
- Where is the gospel, Jesus, or grace found in this text?

#### PASSAGE SUMMARY

In Heb. 4:11-13 we were shown how God's Word completely exposes us; from God nobody can hide. Knowing that this could provoke deep terror, the author now directs our attention to Jesus, our God-appointed great High Priest. Jesus is truly God and truly man, and because He has suffered temptation without ever giving in, He knows the full force of temptation and can empathically extend mercy and grace to His people. Jesus is, however, far greater than the Old Testament order of priests because His priesthood is eternal, and the sacrifice He has offered - Himself - is eternally sufficient atonement for all those who trust in Him. Christians can therefore hold fast to their "confession" - the good news about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and draw near to Jesus, even in the midst of suffering, temptation, or wavering faith.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

Take some time to discuss how Jesus being our great High Priest impacts and shapes our response to the injustice, chaos, and violence in America today. How can we represent God to the culture and how can we bring the culture to God and His Word?

#### TEXT

1. How do these verses describe Jesus? What is so significant about these descriptions?
2. Compare and contrast Jesus with the Old Testament priests. What is similar? What is different?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

3. What is the author's point in mentioning Jesus' temptations, suffering, and prayers? How can these truths be an encouragement for us?
4. What does it mean that Jesus was "made perfect"?
5. One of the core Christian doctrines is Sola Fide, or "faith alone", meaning that we become God's children forever by faith alone in Jesus alone, apart from any of our own goodness or righteous acts. Why, then, does the author say Jesus is the source of eternal salvation to "all who obey Him"?

## APPLICATION

1. This passage describes Jesus' ability to sympathize with His disciples. How can we, as a Community Group, practice this same kind of empathy with one another, especially when struggling with temptation?
2. Describe a time when you confidently drew near to the throne of grace. Why was this impactful for you, and how would you encourage someone else to do the same?
3. What would you say if you had to describe the beauty, significance, and reality of Jesus being a great High Priest for His people? How would you describe the concept of the priesthood to someone who is not familiar with this part of the Bible?
4. Take some time to meditate on 5:9-10. What is your emotional response to Jesus being the "source of eternal salvation" to His people?

## PRAYER

Take some significant time to actually draw near to the throne of grace and seek God's grace and mercy for powerful temptations, profound emotional turmoil, injustice, and violence present in our culture.

## WEEK 2

### DULL VS. MATURE

#### HEBREWS 5:11-14

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- What does this passage say about God?
- Where is the gospel, Jesus, or grace found in this text?

#### PASSAGE SUMMARY

This section is the author's pastoral exhortation to his readers. Just as the author was about to begin showing how Jesus and Melchizedek are related, he remembers the spiritual "dullness" of his audience. In terms of discipleship a person's maturity can often be seen in their ability and willingness to disciple others. Reaching your potential as a Christian depends upon your ability and willingness to grasp the basic truths of Christianity and then apply those truths to make good, righteous decisions. For those who aren't "grown up Christians", the charge here is to return to the "milk" of the very basics of theology since they need to be told what to do rather than knowing from God's Word what needs to be done. This is a call to grow up in Christ.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

John Calvin wrote the following about this week's passage:

*"...the Lord speaks to us so clearly and without any obscurity that his word is rightly called our light; but its brightness becomes dim through our darkness."*

In your own experience, what has made understanding and obeying God's Word personally difficult for you? On the flip side, what has been beautiful and joyful about maturing in your understanding and faith?

#### TEXT

1. How would you summarize these verses in your own words?
2. What words would you use to describe the tone of this passage? Why?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

3. Where else in Scripture is the metaphor of milk used? How would someone who can only currently “have milk” grow in their understanding and faith?
4. How can Christians train their “powers of discernment”?

### APPLICATION

1. Take some time to evaluate yourself: do you view yourself as someone who needs “milk” rather than “solid food”? Why or why not?
2. Why is it crucial for Christians to know how to distinguish between good and evil? What are the practical effects of not being able to do so?
3. What is one step you can take or one habit you can begin toward more mature understanding of Scripture? How will you allow yourself to be held accountable to do this?
4. How can knowing how to make good, righteous decisions make room for an opportunity to proclaim the gospel?

### PRAYER

Repent for any laziness or apathy you may have toward the Bible

Ask God to give you a true, profound love for Him and His Word, asking Him to open your eyes to see beautiful things in His Word

Ask God to give you opportunities to train your powers of discernment

## WEEK 3

### APOSTASY

#### HEBREWS 6:1-8

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- What does this passage say about God?
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#### PASSAGE SUMMARY

*"In building a house we must never leave the foundation; and yet to be always engaged in laying it would be ridiculous."* - John Calvin

Theologians have noted throughout history that the church is made up of two groups of people: those who are in Christ (Christians) and those who are not in Christ (unbelievers). Being a part of the church, even as an unbeliever, provides benefits as well as opportunities to see God powerfully working. Involvement in the church and external appearances of repentance, however, are not a guarantee that someone has genuine saving faith. In this passage the author warns the reader that those who fall away cannot be restored. This is a warning meant to provoke honest reflection, confession, and repentance in the life of genuine Christians and in the life of anyone who may believe that church attendance and witnessing God's work without repentance and faith are enough to be reconciled to God.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

How often do you take time to reflect on the state of your faith? Why should we regularly examine our own heart and soul before God?

#### TEXT

1. Describe the tone of this passage. What words help create this tone? Why is the author using this tone?
2. Verse 1 mentions "repentance and faith". Where else is this combination used in Scripture? What does this combination of words communicate?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

3. What does the author call “the elementary doctrine of Christ”? Why does he refer to these doctrines as “elementary” and “the foundation”?

*(Note for leaders: some commentators believe that these doctrines represent some confusion in this church - these believers are stuck somewhere between a Jewish understanding of these “basics” and a Christian understanding of them, and the author is exhorting them to move toward maturity in their Christian understanding of all of these doctrines)*

4. What beautiful promises and rewards are on the line for those to whom the author is writing? Where in the Bible do we see descriptions of God’s promises to His people?

5. According to this passage, can a genuine Christian lose their salvation? Why or why not? What other sections of Hebrews and the Bible bring clarity to this doctrine?

*(Note for leaders: Though Living Stones Churches believe in the doctrine of the Perseverance or Preservation of the Saints [see below], we encourage genuine, passionate, and loving discussion about the warning in this passage, and therefore discourage Community Groups from taking this warning as anything other than real and true; we believe that God uses warnings such as this to provoke true repentance in the life of the Christian, and therefore warnings such as this are the means or way that God preserves His people’s faith)*

LS Stance on Assurance of Salvation:

*We believe that because salvation is secured and granted by an unchanging and all powerful God and because salvation is not based on the will of humankind, that salvation cannot be lost or removed from us. Since no condition in humans determines whether or not they are chosen, but it is by the work of Jesus and by the grace of God that we are saved, then no work of humans can cause them to be unsaved.*

## APPLICATION

1. If you are a Christian, when in your life have you felt afraid of losing your salvation? How does the Bible instruct us to respond to this kind of fear?

2. What does it look like for us as a Community Group to truly invest in one another’s path toward maturity in Christ? What are some areas of immaturity in our group? What are some areas of maturity?

3. How would you use this passage to summarize the gospel to someone who does not trust in Jesus?

4. What makes Christian salvation secure? How can we have assurance that God will not ultimately reject all those who are truly His people? How can we use these truths to comfort, exhort, and encourage one another?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## PRAYER

Consider praying the following:

Thank God for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

Ask God to search your heart for anything that does not please Him, and to lead you on the path of righteousness

Pray for anyone you know who may be in danger of turning away from Jesus, asking the Spirit to do whatever is necessary to bring them back to repentance and faith

## WEEK 4

### ASSURANCE

#### HEBREWS 6:9-20

#### A NOTE TO LEADERS:

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- What is the text calling us to be, do, or know?
- What does this passage say about God?
- Where is the gospel, Jesus, or grace found in this text?

#### PASSAGE SUMMARY

After giving a stark warning in 6:1-8 the author pastorally encourages this struggling church by reminding them that the true evidence of genuine faith - love for God and others that is expressed in righteous works - is present among them, and that the promises of God are sure, certain, and irrevocable. As he ends his encouragement he again introduces the reality of the High Priesthood of Jesus.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

This week's text is about genuine faith and the certain promises of God. Take turns reading Ephesians 1:11-14 out loud and then open the group with a prayer of thanksgiving.

#### TEXT

1. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? What is the significance of this repetition?
2. How would you summarize the author's argument in verses 13-20?
3. When we are doubting the goodness of God, His promises, or our own faith, what does this passage tell us is the certain ground of our salvation?
4. In this passage, what is the relationship between God's promises and the "work of love" that the readers have shown? Why is it important to know how our works and God's promises are related?

#### APPLICATION

1. If someone looked at your life and what you spend your time, money, and energy doing, would they see evidence of your "works of love"? Why or why not? If they would not see evidence, how does the Bible instruct you to respond?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

2. How often do we celebrate and how often should we celebrate the fact that we have a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul in Jesus?
3. How do you feel about the reality that God cannot lie and that He works to make His promises all the more certain and sure for our benefit?
4. Where in your life are you lacking enthusiasm for Jesus and His mission? How is this impacting the unbelievers in your life and what is one practical change you can make this week?

## PRAYER

Consider praying the following:

Spend time thanking God for the gospel

Pray for those who do not yet believe the gospel

Repent for the ways you have allowed yourself to be sluggish in your life