

Vertical and Horizontal

We will be looking at Hebrews 10:19-25 for the next 4 weeks. Using different translations of the same passage will help us get a better understanding of what we are learning. We can also choose the way we read these verses. This study can take the form of a led meditation. You might want to have some instrumental music playing quietly in the background, or silence if that helps you focus.

Praying the Bible.

This works best with a paper bible (I know you have one somewhere). The version does not matter, in fact if you are doing this in a group then having various translations can be helpful. If you are doing this alone then read out loud, the Bible was meant to be read to an audience, so hear the words. Start with a short prayer, asking God to speak to you in this reading.

Read Hebrews 10:19–22 slowly. A word at a time. Hear each word in your head as if someone is reading it to you. Take your time, you might get the best results if you come last.

1. Is there a word or phrase that stands out to you?
2. Why is that?
3. Ask as simple prayer question, “Lord, what does this mean?”
4. Allow time for God to speak, listen for an answer before you move on.

I’m using the NIV and the word “brothers” stand out to me. It jars with the more inclusive language we use today. So let it go or add “sisters” or any other appropriate word. Don’t let that cause you to miss what comes next. This is about drawing nearer to God.

When you have finished you may want to share what stood out for you and perhaps what answers came to mind.

It can help to write down your thoughts, for the next time you look at this passage a different part may catch your attention.

In deeper

These are some ideas that may further help you if you find this style of reading the God’s word difficult.

- It is an amazing privilege to draw near to God, to come into his presence. It was only ever a possibility for a very few people in the history of Israel, but for you there is an open invitation.
- This is not just a new fangled idea, or a different religious practice, this is “a new and living way”. New we understand, but what does “a living way” mean?
- A high priest meant something to the Hebrew people, but what does that mean to you?
- “Assurance of faith” sounds like a big thing. What might it mean?
- We are in the second week in Lent and we are looking towards Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus we have been cleansed of a guilty conscience.

As God said to Jeremiah and is repeated in Hebrews 10:17, “I will remember no more.” God does not forget. He chooses not to remember. It is an active and living, conscious decision of God so that you do not have to be enslaved by guilt.

When someone chooses to follow Jesus it opens up a relationship with God, a vertical relationship. Jesus taught us that the vertical relationship we have with God is so close we can call him “Father”.

When someone chooses to follow Jesus they “**know**” that they have been forgiven. You remember that? That is how it feels to have that relationship with Jesus, and it is really important but it is not enough on its own.

When someone chooses to follow Jesus it has an effect on those around them. This is horizontal faith. The life changing effect of faith, and that can be seen in many different ways. The writer to the Hebrews includes in the same sentence as being cleansed of a guilty conscience, being washed with pure water. It is difficult to see that this is anything else other than baptism. In Peter’s first sermon baptism is the outward physical demonstration of trust in Jesus (Acts 2:38). Horizontal faith.

So what is it you need to do to draw near to God?