

Study Guide

# Session 5: Jesus’s Work

## SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

### Main Idea

Instead of trusting in our own effort, we should trust and rely on the completed work of Jesus.

### Head Change

To know that Jesus fully and eternally atoned for our sins.

### Heart Change

To feel secure in our relationship with God.

### Life Change

To serve God because he loves us.

## OPEN

### What comes to mind when you think of work?

We all think of work a little differently, but we all are tempted to think of work as a source of value. We can believe that our work defines our value and even happiness. As a result, Christians can often have a performance-based mentality in our relationship with God, thinking that God values us based on how “good” we are.

But, if you are a Christian, your value is not tied to your work. In fact, you don’t want it to be! When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave, he accomplished what we never could, finished the work we have all failed, and now offers us new life. In this session, Pastor Derwin Gray will teach us how to accept that work and how we should live in light of it.

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**DISCUSS**

In our careers, effort often translates to reward. Overtime gives us extra pay. High performance earns promotions. We can easily apply our performance-based mindset to our relationship with God. For example, we might think that being a “good Christian” will earn us earthly blessings or answered prayers. On the other hand, we may feel like spiritual underperformers, too sinful or unworthy of God’s love. **What grade do you think do you’d get on your spiritual performance report card?**

**What sorts of rewards do you think you have earned from your good behavior?**

**What do you think it will take for God to be happy with you?**

Relying on our own work to prove ourselves to God is a broken way to view our relationship with God. Instead of trusting in Jesus, we think as if we are under the Old Testament Law, needing to make sacrifices and offerings to please God. We don’t make animal sacrifices like they did back then, but many of us still feel the need to pay for our own sins. **What do you think about yourself after you sin?**

**In what ways do you feel like you need to make up for what you have done?**

The Law was good but could not save anyone. It was given to God’s people so that they could see their sinfulness, recognize their need for forgiveness, and point to the hope of a savior. In other words, the Law was a road sign leading us to Jesus, who came to pay for our sins, offer us lasting forgiveness, and reconcile us to God.

Read Hebrews 8:6–13.

**Note:** To take a deeper look at the purpose of the Law, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

**According to this passage, in what ways is the new covenant different than the Law?**

Through Jesus, God offers us a new and better way to live. We do not have to pay for our sins because Jesus is

Horizontal lines for writing.

our perfect and eternal sacrifice. Read Hebrews 9:11–15, 24–28.

**What did the blood of bulls and goats offer in the Old Testament (v. 13)? What does the blood of Christ do for us (v. 14)?**

**What has Jesus’s sacrifice removed from us (v. 26)? What will Jesus bring to us when he returns (v. 28)?**

**Note:** If you would like to learn more about Jesus’s priestly office and Melchizedek, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

Verse 14 tells us that the work of Jesus should move us away from fixating on dead works to a lifestyle of worship. Instead of focusing on what you have to do for God, you can focus on loving and being with God. Imagine that you work at a job where you are constantly in fear of being fired. **What happens to your attitude and workday if you are afraid of losing your job?**

**How does that insecurity affect the way you treat people?**

Now compare that bad job experience to a weekend vacation with someone you love. **How do you behave differently around someone you love as compared to an angry boss?**

God is not calling us to an insecure job; he calls us to a secure relationship with him. **What would it look like to trust in the completed work of Jesus, despite what our shame and anxiety tell us?**

Legalism is a spiritual lie that tells us Jesus’s work was not enough for us. It implants fear in us that God is really unhappy with our performance and that we must work to earn God’s approval. But Derwin reminded us of the truth: “The way God feels about Jesus is the way God feels about you.” **What would change if you believed that God loves you the way he loves Jesus?**

God does not call you to serve him to earn his favor, or even to work off old sins. He wants you to walk in the new life he has already given to you. **What would it look like for you to live in the security of your relationship with God instead of the insecurity of your own efforts?**

Horizontal lines for writing answers to the questions.



**GO DEEPER**

This section has two potential functions:

- 1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.
- 2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Hebrews.

**1. Hebrews Reading Plan: Week 5**

Hebrews is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's word. This plan keeps pace with Derwin's teaching, so some weeks will have more reading than others. Feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to you and your group.

- Week 1: Hebrews 1:1–3
- Week 2: Hebrews 1:4–3:19
- Week 3: Hebrews 4
- Week 4: Hebrews 5–6
- Week 5: Hebrews 7–9
- Week 6: Hebrews 10
- Week 7: Hebrews 11–12
- Week 8: Hebrews 13

This reading guide will walk you through Hebrews 7–9, three chapters that help us understand the depth of what Jesus accomplished for us and how his priestly ministry changes the way we live, worship, and hope.

- Day 1: The Nature of Jesus's Priesthood (Hebrews 7:1–10)
- Day 2: A Priest Forever (Hebrews 7:11–28)
- Day 3: Priest of a Better Covenant (Hebrews 8:1–13)
- Day 4: The Earthly Sanctuary (Hebrews 9:1–10)
- Day 5: The Heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrews 9:11–28)

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Today, Christians are no longer under the Law, or the old covenant God made with his people (Galatians 3:23–29; Romans 6:12–14). But that does not mean the Law is bad or that it is irrelevant. The Law was and is good, but it leads us to something greater.

**What do you think of when you think of the Law? What questions do you have?**

God first gave Moses the Law after leading the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. It revealed God’s good character (Lev. 19:2; 20:7–8), set Israel apart from other nations (Ex. 19:4–6), and gave the Israelites civil, ceremonial, and moral laws for everyday life. But the purpose of the Law was not merely to change the behavior of the Israelites.

Read Deuteronomy 5:28–33.

The Law was not a cold, detached set of rules. God saw his people living in sin apart from him and hoped to change both their actions and their affections. **In verse 29, what is God’s purpose for giving his people the Law?**

**What is the intended result of following the Law in verses 32–33?**

God did not give the Law as a distant taskmaster, but as a loving father. It was a gift of love meant to turn people’s hearts toward God, to give them a standard for right living and right worship, and to bless God’s people. **In what ways does the purpose of the Law differ from the way you think about spiritual rules?**

Even when the Israelites sinned, God did not reject them. Instead, he made a way for them to be forgiven through animal sacrifices (Lev. 1–7). But his desire was always for his people to turn to him. Read Psalm 51, a psalm David wrote after a grievous sin. **How would you describe David’s heart toward God?**

**What is more important than sacrifices to God (vv. 6, 10, 12, 15–17)?**

The Law is good (Romans 10:4), but it can only point out our sin and inspire us to turn to God for salvation. Its rituals cannot save us—only God can in his mercy. The Law was meant to highlight our need for a God-sent savior. Read Galatians 3:19–29.

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In this passage, the Law is personified as a guardian or a tutor. **In what ways do guardians and tutors help children as they grow? How might the Law do the same for us?**

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The Law is a beneficial teacher, pointing out our sin and showing us our need for God’s mercy. It was a step in the story of redemption, reconciling us to our creator. Even now, God wants you to turn to him in worship and obey him so that you might be blessed. In Jesus, we can fulfill his hope in Deuteronomy 5:29. **What could you do to love God and obey his commandments today?**

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**3. Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1–10)**

Hebrews talks a lot about a priest named Melchizedek. But who is this obscure priest? Read Genesis 14:17–20.

**What do we learn about Melchizedek in this passage? What questions do you have about him?**

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After his encounter with Abram, Melchizedek doesn’t show up as a character in the narrative again. But he is mentioned in Psalm 110, a poetic prophecy of the Messiah and the Old Testament chapter quoted most often in the New Testament. Read Psalm 110.

**In what ways is the person in this psalm, the Messiah, described as a king? A priest?**

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**What is Melchizedek’s importance in this psalm?**

This psalm describes the Messiah seated at God’s right hand as a conquering king and a priest like Melchizedek. So, Melchizedek is not merely an obscure character, but the model for the Messiah’s ministry as a priest and king. But, still, we don’t know much about him or why he is important—that’s where the book of Hebrews comes in. Read Hebrews 7:1–10.

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**In verse 3, what is unique about Melchizedek and his priesthood?**

From the time of Moses and the Exodus, the Levites (a tribe of Israel) were the priests for God’s people. They performed sacrifices and made offerings on behalf of Israel. **What makes Melchizedek a greater priest than the Levites?**

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Melchizedek’s priesthood was established by God, not the Levitical line. Since Jesus wasn’t a Levite (he was from the tribe of Judah), the original readers of Hebrews might have been confused about why the author called Jesus a priest. The author of Hebrews uses Melchizedek to show that God can—and did—establish priesthood outside of the Levitical line. The author wants his audience to better understand Jesus’s role as their High Priest. Read Hebrews 7:11–28.

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Look at verses 13–16. **By what power is Jesus made a priest?**

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When Jesus came, he brought us a new covenant, one established by God. Because he is like Melchizedek—who became a priest by God’s hand and power, not by being a Levite—he can serve us better than any Levitical priest ever could. Reread verses 23–28. **What makes Jesus a better priest who can truly meet our needs?**

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So, who is Melchizedek? Because he and Jesus are similar, some people see him as a *Christophany*, or an appearance of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, in the Old Testament. Others say he was a Canaanite priest God established to affirm God’s covenant with Abraham and to ultimately point us to the Messiah, Jesus.

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Regardless of his true identity, Melchizedek helps us understand Christ’s priestly authority. Because Jesus is in the order of Melchizedek—our High Priest, established by God—we live under a greater covenant than the Law and can trust that Jesus is the exact sort of priest we need, eternal and able to make us perfect.

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**After studying Melchizedek and the priesthood, what renewed hope have you found in Jesus?**

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**4. The Shadow of Things to Come (Hebrews 9)**

The Law showed us our sin and need for a savior, but it is not the only aspect of Old Testament worship to point toward Jesus. Even the place where God’s people worshipped was made to reveal heaven. Read Hebrews 9:1–10, 21–23. As you read, imagine walking past the various elements of worship (the curtains, the ark, etc.).

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**Who could approach God’s presence in the holiest place in the temple?**

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Once a year, the high priest would enter the temple to sprinkle blood on the ark of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins. But his work, which was repeated year after year, was only a sketch and shadow of what Jesus, our High Priest, did on the cross. Read Hebrews 9:11–14, 24–26.

**In what ways did the earthly high priest’s actions foreshadow Jesus’s work in heaven?**

**What makes Jesus’s work greater than the priests of the Old Testament?**

We don’t have experiences in the tabernacle or the temple of Jerusalem like the readers of Hebrews did, but we do receive the same benefits of Jesus’s work as they do. He fulfilled and completed the work of the priesthood so that we could be fully cleansed of our sin and freely worship God. But we may still be tempted to prove ourselves to God through rituals, which Hebrews 9:14 calls “dead works.” **In what ways have you lived in dead works, trying to prove yourself to God?**

**What does it look like for you to worship God beyond ritual practices?**

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