

Hebrews *Moving Forwards*

3. Meat and Milk *Hebrews 5.11-6.2*

Aim of the study: To think about how Christians can stall in their growth and how God enables us to move on.

To start with:

What's your favourite meal when you were young and what is your favourite meal now? (If people's tastes have changed you might like to think about why that is!)

Studying the text:

The writer to the Hebrews has some pastoral concerns that have been implied up to this point and in this passage are made clear. To set the scene, take a piece of paper and getting different cell members to read the following verses, write down the exhortation (instruction) and the reason given if there is one:

- Hebrews 2.1
- Hebrews 3.1
- Hebrews 3.8
- Hebrews 3.12
- Hebrews 4.1
- Hebrews 4.11
- Hebrew 4.14

Example:

| Verse | Exhortation | Reason |
|----------|--|---|
| Heb 2.1 | Pay more careful attention to what we have heard | So that we do not drift away |
| Heb 3.1 | Consider Jesus | |
| Heb 3.8 | Don't harden your hearts | |
| Heb 3.12 | Take care | That none of you have an evil heart of unbelief |
| Heb 4.1 | Be careful | That none of you be found to have fallen short of it |
| Heb 4.11 | Make every effort to enter that rest | So that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience |
| Heb 4.14 | Let us hold fast to our confession | |

- Given these instructions what issues do you think the Hebrews might have been facing? (What might you have found if you'd visited their church?)

Read Hebrews 5.11-6.2.

Melchizedek. In the Jewish world priesthood ran in families. Melchizedek (whose name means 'King of Righteousness') appears and disappears suddenly in a Genesis story in which Abraham honours him with a gift (Genesis 14.17-24). In Jewish tradition (Psalm 110.4) Melchizedek is therefore a priest who is also a righteous king whose descendants are characterised by holding an eternal priesthood.

The writer wants to communicate that the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus is 'after the order of Melchizedek' but he thinks that the people are unable to benefit from the 'solid food' of deep Christian teaching. They hear the teaching and think 'Can't be bothered with that!' It's not that they have a low IQ but they have become 'slow', 'dull of heart' (5.11) or 'lazy' and so they are stalling in their discipleship and Christian growth.



2. 'Dullness of heart; hearing without faith or hearing which produces no fruit - is much more dangerous than open rebellion and wilful sin'. How far do you agree with this statement?
3. From the passage what are the consequences for the individuals, those around them and the whole church of this immaturity?
4. How do you think Christians today become 'dull of heart'? Why might we be tempted to settle for less than maturity?
5. What methods has God provided to enable those who've stalled to become mature? Think about:
 - a. What food do they need?

(NB. They do need the milk of Hebrews 6.1-2 and not yet meat. It's not about laying the foundation again but to stand on the basic truths of the gospel and practice how to grow with them.)
 - b. What training do they need to give themselves to?

Reflect and pray

- Take some time to think about whether you have 'stalled' or 'settled' for immaturity in some area of your life. What do you need to do to start 'growing up' in that area?
- If you are hungry for 'solid food' consider what it looks like for you to pursue this. What do you actually need to do? Also think about who and how you might teach others the things of faith.
- After some time you might like to encourage people to share and pray together in 2's/3's.