

Seminar

Identity, Fear and Faith



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Agenda

- Seminar: on How Hebrews counsels its fearful, doubting audience
- Groups – case study & questions

Introduction

Pay close attention to two matters:

- First, Point 1 on the audience's doubt leading to cognitive dissonance and how Hebrews engages their reality map.

***cognitive dissonance**: in the presence of unresolved doubts, we may enter into such a state of dissonance that we question the veracity of deeply held core beliefs - because of something in our experience that "feels" incongruent with, and more compelling to us, than our underlying core belief(s)

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Introduction

- Second, What Hebrews is DOING: how it retells its audience's story to instill hope and to reorientate them.
- My counselling experience in NYC with disillusioned individuals who had come to faith earlier in life

Point 1: How are they stuck?

Cognitive Dissonance

- Their **story** (see Heb. 2:1, 4; 10:32-35)
- About [Christ's heavenly priestly ministry]
"we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (5:11)

Point 1: How are they Stuck?

- **Doubt of Wonderment:** a healthy form of doubt since it drives us back to God and his Word and to arriving at an acceptance of the limits of our knowledge wrt difficult "why" questions
- **Doubt of Judgment:** marked by a suspicion that God is not reliable or that he is not good. In effect, it stands over and accuses God.

Paul Tripp, *Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense*, 95

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Point 1: How are they stuck?

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in reasoning about righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:12-14)

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Point 2: The Feedback Loop

Accompanying Sinful Fear, Doubt,
& Disillusionment

- How does the author appeal to their underlying "felt" need...?

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Point 2: The Feedback Loop

- (a) Engages their confusion & sense of danger (->fear) - [Heb. 2:1, 4, 5-15]
- (b) Addresses roots issues (emotional reaxn-> ruling expectations)
- Heb 3:7ff & Num. 14:2-4
- The mythic "beliefs" of wilderness generation (reality map)
- Heb. 4:1-2; 12:15

Point 3: The Call to Respond from a Faith-Filled Vision

- He grounds their hope by inviting them to view themselves and their story from the perspective of the larger story of promise
- Heb. 1:1-2; 6:11-15; 2:10-14; 6:19-20

Point 3: The Call to Respond from a Faith-Filled Vision

- What would a response of faith look like? Threefold call:
 - (A) Turning to their Heavenly Advocate (Heb. 2:17; Jn 1:11).
 - (B) Re-envisioning their Struggle through the Lens of Christ (Heb 12:1-2; 5:13-14)
 - (C.) Commit to Gathering Regularly for Corporate Worship and to Encourage & Exhort One Another

Conclusion

- **"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:12-13)**

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Conclusion

- Mythic functional beliefs drove the cognitive dissonance
- One's ability to take hold of hope is directly related to one's ability to "see" one's struggle through eyes of faith.
- Hebrews presents Christ as...

Questions for Case Study Discussion

- What are some of the contours of Claire's suffering?
- What emotions might clue you in to the landscape of her reality map? (functional view of God, self, situation, others)
- Evidence of doubts being brought to the Lord? Indications she may be going down the road of doubt of judgment?
- How might you approach a retelling of her story, with the hope of helping to reorientate some aspect of her view of God, herself, and what he might be "up to" in her situation?

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