

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: What Believers Should Desire, Hebrews 6:1-3 and recap of 5:11

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INTRODUCTION: In Hebrews 5, I talked about the immature believers who were slow to learn and therefore couldn't really move on to the deeper teachings of the Christian life. Chapter 6 picks up where Chapter 5 ends.

There are three points to my message today.

1. Believers should desire to grow.
2. Believers should desire to know.
3. Believers should desire to show.

First, BELIEVERS SHOULD DESIRE TO GROW.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 6:1-3 ¹*Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,* ²*instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.* ³*And God permitting, we will do so.*

EXPLANATION: In Hebrews 6:1-3, The Greek word for *elementary* here is *arche* (ar-khay'), which means "beginning" or "first." Now this sheds light on the rest of the chapter, because the first teachings of Christ are really in the Old Testament. We see Christ-like characters in the Old Testament, who foreshadow Christ, and we see rituals in the Old Testament which foreshadow the work of Christ.

It's obvious Jews were the intended audience, so let's look at each of these elementary or first doctrines of Christ...and how they relate to the Old and New Testaments.

Let's assume the intended audience was both Jews, who knew about Jesus but did not believe in him and Jews who believed in Jesus.

The first doctrines:

1. Repentance from acts which lead to death.
 - a. Non-believing Jews would say following the Law saved them. The burden of the Law foreshadowed the burden of the cross.
 - b. Believing Jews learned the Law was fulfilled in Christ and works could not save them.

2. The next elementary doctrine was belief in God.
 - a. Non-believing Jews would have said they believe in God but not Christ.
 - b. Believing Jews were challenged to go deeper.

3. The next elementary doctrine regarded water. Your English Bible may say "cleansing rites" or "baptism".
 - a. Non-believing Jews' houses had a basin of water for ceremonial cleansings.
 - b. Believing Jews were told to do away with these ceremonial cleansings. Now, believers were baptized.

4. The next basic teaching was the laying on of hands.
 - a. Non-believing Jews remembered the animal sacrifices where they laid their hands on an animal as a symbolic transfer of sin. This was a foreshadowing of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus.
 - b. Jewish Christians now laid hands on people who were being prayed for.

5. The next basic teaching was the resurrection of the dead.
 - a. The non-believing Jews knew that coming back from the dead was possible because of several occurrences in the Old Testament, but they were unclear as to how it happened. They probably did not know these resurrections foreshadowed the resurrection of Christ.
 - b. Now the Christian Jews knew Jesus was the reason for the hope of the resurrection of the dead.

6. The next basic doctrine was eternal judgment.

- a. The non-believing Jews believed eternal judgment was based on disobedience to the Law.
- b. The believing Jews knew the basic doctrine was the saved would be spared eternal judgment, and the lost would not be spared

Now, you may say, all of these are good doctrines, but what's the big deal? Hebrews told the believers these were foundational doctrines, and it was time to move on.

Not only should believers desire to GROW—

Second, BELIEVERS SHOULD DESIRE TO KNOW.

SCRIPTURE: Look back in Chapter 5, Verse 11: ¹¹ *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.*

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a boy, I had a Sunday School teacher who taught the same things over and over. The topic in the lesson book did not matter... He always circled back around to the same things. When he started his repetition, I always nudged my girlfriend, and my brother would cut his eyes toward me.

APPLICATION: I'll be the first to say if you teach regularly, it is not easy coming up with new material, but in this case, the teacher was caught in what I call a *dogma loop*. He wasn't growing as a believer.

ILLUSTRATION: I know a young man who took mandolin lessons for several years. He became quite a master of the instrument at a young age. One day, his instructor told him, "There is no need for me to be your teacher anymore, because I've taught you everything I know about the mandolin."

At first, I thought he was a great teacher who was honest enough to admit a student reached his own skill level. Then I thought... *What a shame the mandolin teacher is no longer a learner.*

The ultimate failure of the teacher was he didn't teach the boy how to teach himself or how to teach others, and eventually the boy quit playing altogether.

APPLICATION: Great teachers are still learners. It is the same in the Christian life. If you are teacher, you'd better be learning from others. The teacher is always in the middle.

I am baffled by the number of immature Christians who do absolutely nothing to improve their Bible knowledge. Perhaps there was a day when a person had an excuse due to lack of resources. I am not sure if that day ever existed, though, because for hundreds of years copies of the Bible have been plentiful. Even if a person only had a Bible, that would be enough of a resource for one to grow in the faith.

But, today, think about the resources. They are everywhere. In fact, every day I go through the mail which comes to me as a pastor and in a week's time, I'll throw away at least 20 advertisements for Bible resources.

We have the Bible and Bible teaching on CD, DVD, radio, and TV. We have books and devotional booklets galore. We have Christian bookstores. We have classes in our church. We offer several services per week. Yet, we still have Christians whose knowledge of the Christian faith is no more than the basics.

So, really, we face the same challenge as the people in Hebrews.

Believers should desire to grow, to know, and—

Third, BELIEVERS SHOULD DESIRE TO SHOW.

Now, let's go back to Chapter 5 to see where this teaching was originally going. It appears to me that Chapter 5 sets a goal for all Christians to be teachers in some way. Believers should be ready to *show* others what they've learned.

If you are a Christian and you have not taught anything to anyone about the Christian faith, my question is why not? Before I came to Tusculum Hills, several of my friends in ministry referred to this church as “the sleeping giant.” What they meant was there is incredible potential here.

APPLICATION: So, here's my challenge to you which I believe is the challenge in Chapter 5 and the early part of Verse 6. Make plans to teach. Learn something

and teach it. If you've never done it, start. You don't have to be a professional lecturer. Just be yourself. Meet someone for coffee to read a chapter of the Bible, talk about it, and have prayer.

For others, how about working toward the classroom? To some of our current teachers now— years ago, would you have ever believed you would be a teacher in a church?

This Wednesday night, Terry Taylor will bring the Bible study while I am away for military duty. I want every ministerial staff member to be a teacher and fill the pulpit. Terry probably doesn't want all staff to sing. But, the principle is here...I want a staff that is willing and capable of teaching.

Along with teachers who teach, we need a membership who is willing and capable of teaching. Not all are great teachers, but all should be willing to teach. I've never been in a church which had enough teachers.

CONCLUSION: What is the purpose of growing, knowing, showing? The purpose is for the continuation and growth of the Church. It doesn't happen by itself:

- God accomplishes His Will through His people.
- People accomplish the Will of God because of their knowledge of Christian teaching.
- New people learn about Christian teaching because others study and teach them.

This brings us to decision time. Do you have a direction from this message? If not, you've missed it completely, so let me say it again: Grow up and prepare to teach. Prepare to pass on the faith to others. Don't just sit there and expect others to do it.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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