

A Better Priest
Hebrews 2:10-3:1
Small Group Guide

Opening question:

- How would you define “empathy,” and what does it look like in action?

Optional Reading for Background: Today we’re starting a 4-week look at the book of Hebrews. We’re calling the series, “Better,” because the book sets out to show that Jesus is better and greater than all the other things that people have historically considered great. And one of the tremendous reasons that Jesus is better than all these other things is because he empathizes. Because he’s been where you are. Because he became a human.

Hebrews was probably written sometime just before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, in AD 70, to a group of Jewish Christians, most likely who lived in Rome. In addition, because it lacks some of the standard elements of a letter, some commentators think it’s better to look at it as a sermon.

1. How would you describe the difference between a written sermon and a letter?

Now that you have a grasp of the background, TAKE TURNS READING Hebrews 2:10-3:1.

2. From 2:17 (see below), what can you tell is the function of a priest?

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

- a. How might Jesus becoming “fully human in every way” help him be our “high priest?”
 - b. If this passage describes, in part, the doctrine of “incarnation,” what do you think this means? Feel free to Google “incarnate” or “incarnation.”
 - c. Why do you think the Church Fathers thought this doctrine was important? What difference does it make to us as Christians?
3. In 2:10 (see below), Pastor Josh says the Greek word “archegos” could mean either “pioneer” or “champion.”

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the *pioneer of their salvation* perfect through what he suffered.

- a. What do you think “pioneer” and “champion” mean in the context of this verse?
- b. Describe emotionally how it strikes you for Jesus to be your pioneer and champion in salvation through his suffering in our place.

4. Look at 2:14-15:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

- a. Remember back when you didn't know Christ and didn't have certainty of eternal life. Did you fear death? Do you still struggle with this fear? Describe.
- b. If Jesus has power over our greatest enemy (death), how might he help us with our other fears?
- c. How real is Jesus to you in your fears? Do you let him help?

5. Look at 2:18:

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The author later says this, in Hebrews 4:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- a. What does Jesus' great empathy with your weakness mean to you?
- b. What does it mean to you that Jesus was able to conquer sin? Does it provide hope? Discouragement? Something else? Describe.

6. Pastor Josh stated the following:

“In the Greek, the word that receives emphasis in v. 17 is the word *merciful*. By becoming human and suffering, Jesus became the perfect high priest for you because it enabled him to be a merciful high priest.... He is able to empathize, because he's been where you are; in fact, he's been worse off than you. There is a difference in the degree of empathy or compassion that you show someone when you have experienced what they are experiencing.”

- a. How does Josh's quote further help you understand why Jesus is a superior high priest? How does this make you feel?
- b. As we close, is there anything else other than Jesus that you think you might be using as a substitute “priest” to make you feel better about your sins and weaknesses? Do you go to Jesus or to something/someone else? Explain.

7. **Share and Pray:** Among our prayer requests, let's pray for each other that we will go to the superior high priest of Jesus to find accountability, mercy, and compassion for our sins instead of going to another relationship or vocational success or compulsive hobby, etc., to feel better.