

Hebrews: It's Not How You Start---It's How You Finish: A Study Guide to the Most Encouraging Book in the New Testament

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Hebrews is an inviting and accessible study guide that facilitates meaningful and satisfying exploration of the New Testament book.

Kathy Stewart's biblical study guide *Hebrews* makes difficult doctrine easy to understand and calls the epistle "the most encouraging book in the New Testament." Designed for Christian laity, it explores the notion that Jesus paved the way for people to approach God in confidence, without fear.

The guide traces the history and possible origin of the Epistle to the Hebrews and covers its topics in a buildup to a hope-filled climax which encourages readers toward intellectual and historical understanding and greater faith. In easy-to-understand language and with arguments that are bolstered by scriptures, it argues that the letter is systematic about establishing the supremacy and authority of Jesus using arguments that Jewish people at the time would have understood. The guide takes those arguments and explains them in a way that today's Christians can appreciate, too, making connections between the Hebrew Bible and New Testament writings that support the epistle writer's claims for Jesus's stature and worthiness before God.

The guide emphasizes the seriousness of the epistle's warnings to faithful people. It works to lead students to deeper understanding regarding how it's possible, even after accepting Jesus, to fall away from faith and be cast away from God. It is effective in exploring the context in which the letter was written, why its arguments were necessary, the dangers that those faithful to Jesus faced, and the consequences of falling away from faith.

The guide approaches the doctrinal difficulties of the letter in a conversational, inviting way that encourages and sets the stage for dedicated scriptural study. It supports its reference to Hebrews as "one of the hardest books in the Bible" by diving into topics that remain controversial, including the notion of lost salvation. Highlighting the letter's many exhortations, the book also demonstrates why Hebrews is one of the most encouraging books of the New Testament. Its lighthearted and humorous remarks make its study fun.

The text flows from one topic to the next, providing ample opportunities for comparing and contrasting Hebrew Bible and New Testament writings. It is easy on the eye—laid out in appropriate sections and with sufficient white space to enhance reading pleasure. Helpful worksheets and charts are included so that students can record their responses to questions asked in the text, or can create lists based on their research of relevant scriptures.

Thoughtful, pointed questions are designed to discourage skipping ahead in the study, as the material grows from anticipated responses. The only additional material required when using this guide is a personal Bible and perhaps a Bible commentary to supply greater insight, depth, and range. An outline of the Book of Hebrews makes locating specific topics a quick and easy task, and solid, respected references are provided for further study.

Hebrews is an inviting and accessible study guide that facilitates meaningful and satisfying exploration of, and support

for, Hebrews's message of hope.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May 23, 2019)

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