

deSilva, Hebrews, Session 13, Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of deSilva, Hebrews, Session 13, The Sermon “to the Hebrews” and the Art of Preaching, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. deSilva's lecture analyzes the homiletical strategies employed by the author of the Book of Hebrews. **He identifies four key approaches:** focusing the audience on Jesus, skillfully framing the present moment using Scripture, holding the congregation accountable for their faith, and encouraging a passion for excellence rooted in God's purposes. **The lecture uses examples** from the Book of Hebrews to illustrate these techniques and proposes them as models for contemporary preachers. **Ultimately**, the goal is to equip preachers to inspire faithful Christian living by effectively communicating the core message of Hebrews.

2. 16-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva's, Hebrews, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → General Epistles → Hebrews).



deSilva_Hebrews_Session13_TheSermon

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. David A. deSilva's "Hebrews, Session 13":

Briefing Document: DeSilva on Homiletical Strategies in Hebrews

Subject: Analysis of preaching techniques and core message in the Book of Hebrews.

Source: Excerpts from "DeSilva_Hebrews_EN_Session13.pdf" by Dr. David A. deSilva

Date: October 26, 2023

Overview: This document analyzes Dr. deSilva's interpretation of the Book of Hebrews as a model of effective preaching. DeSilva focuses on both the *homiletical strategies* employed by the author of Hebrews and the *core message* that is perennially relevant. He argues that the author of Hebrews was a master preacher whose techniques can inform and improve our own preaching, while the message of Hebrews itself is crucial for nurturing faith.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Primacy of Jesus:

- **Central Focus:** The author of Hebrews consistently directs the audience's attention back to Jesus. This is not just a theological point, but a rhetorical strategy. DeSilva emphasizes, "The first thing he teaches us in the opening two chapters of his sermon is to always give them Jesus."
- **Overcoming Preoccupation:** The goal is to shift the audience's focus from their problems and anxieties to the significance of Jesus and his work. Rather than starting with the congregation's struggles, he starts with God's action through his son.
- **A Definitive Word:** The author of Hebrews emphasizes that God has spoken a definitive word through Jesus: "...God, the almighty ruler of the cosmos, has spoken a definitive word about deliverance through God's son..." This approach asserts the supreme importance of Christ.

1. Shaping the Moment with Scripture:

- **Strategic Use of Biblical Precedent:** The author of Hebrews uses the story of the wilderness generation from Numbers 14 and Psalm 95 as a "canvas" to reframe the congregation's current struggles.

- **Framing the Challenge:** Instead of focusing on external challenges, the preacher reframes the real threat as "that our hearts will become hardened to the voice of God calling us forward."
- **The Threshold Moment:** DeSilva notes that this biblical precedent presents the congregation as being at a critical threshold. The choice is stark: trust in God and move forward, or turn back to a lesser, familiar life. This is not just a historical analogy but a way of defining their current experience. "The mental frame of the threshold underscores the starkness of the choices."

1. **Holding the Congregation Accountable:**

- **High Expectations:** The preacher challenges the congregation to live up to their Christian calling and to demonstrate spiritual maturity. He isn't reticent to challenge the audience: "He lets them know quite boldly that he expects great things of them, born of spiritual maturity."
- **Costly Gratitude:** The preacher reminds the hearers of the costly grace they have received and calls them to a life of costly gratitude.
- **Active Participation:** He challenges the congregation to actively participate in the community, encouraging and supporting one another. He suggests, "...many more of them ought to have been actively engaged in Christian leadership within the congregation...".
- **Metamorphosis:** The preacher uses metaphors of growth and development to inspire ongoing progress towards Christlikeness. "Do we continue to urge our congregations on to maturity and discipleship, to be born along to perfection or to maturity as the preacher of Hebrews does?"

1. **The Importance of Meaty Theology:**

- **Deep Engagement:** The author of Hebrews doesn't shy away from difficult theological questions. He provides well-reasoned answers based on scripture and understanding of rituals. "This preacher doesn't just ask tough questions and then hem and haw around them."
- **Pastoral Responsibility:** DeSilva argues that preachers should be "the primary theologians, ethicists, and biblical interpreters in the Church."
- **Addressing Coherence:** The preacher must help the congregation integrate their faith with the realities of their lives in a "coherent, responsible, even profound way."

- **Foundation of Assurance:** Deep theological understanding is the foundation for a life of discipleship and mission.

1. **Releasing the Congregation's Passion for Excellence:**

- **Redirected Ambition:** The author of Hebrews understands that people have a passion for excellence but seeks to redirect that passion toward God and heavenly goals. The preacher invites his congregation to tune into the "Lifestyles of the Rich Toward God."
- **Godly Heroes:** The sermon uses the examples of heroes from faith to highlight the value of persevering and following God's vision rather than seeking worldly success. This is counter to modern values: "The crucified Savior, into whose likeness Christians should hope to grow, would never have been featured on that primetime show."
- **Life as a Contest and Training:** The preacher uses images like life being a contest and a training exercise to inspire the hearers to persevere and excel for God. "Life is a contest that offers eternal prizes for those who persevere to the end."
- **Excitement for Faith:** The preacher should strive to convey the excitement of the Christian life and whip up the congregation's ambitions.

Key Quotes:

- "The first thing he teaches us in the opening two chapters of his sermon is to always give them Jesus."
- "The real threat is that our hearts will become hardened to the voice of God calling us forward."
- "The mental frame of the threshold underscores the starkness of the choices."
- "He lets them know quite boldly that he expects great things of them, born of spiritual maturity."
- "This preacher doesn't just ask tough questions and then hem and haw around them."
- "The crucified Savior, into whose likeness Christians should hope to grow, would never have been featured on that primetime show."
- "Life is a contest that offers eternal prizes for those who persevere to the end."

Implications:

- **For Preachers:** This analysis provides a model for preachers to craft effective sermons that center on Jesus, use Scripture strategically, challenge the congregation to grow, and inspire holy ambition.
- **For Congregations:** This analysis highlights the importance of maintaining a focus on Jesus, choosing to trust God in the face of adversity, and striving for spiritual growth and maturity.
- **For Understanding Hebrews:** DeSilva's perspective provides deeper insight into the rhetorical strategies and the core message of the Book of Hebrews.

Conclusion: Dr. deSilva argues that the author of Hebrews employed strategic rhetorical techniques to move his audience toward a deeper understanding of their faith. By focusing on Jesus, framing their current situation with Scripture, holding them accountable, engaging with theology, and releasing their passion for excellence, the preacher of Hebrews provides a powerful model for preaching that remains relevant today.

4. Hebrews Study Guide: 13, The Sermon “to the Hebrews” and the Art of Preaching

Hebrews Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to the author, what are the two main focuses when preaching through Hebrews?
2. What is the goal of all rhetoric, including sermon rhetoric?
3. Why does the author of Hebrews not start his sermon by addressing the congregation's problems?
4. What does the author emphasize about God in the opening verses of his sermon?
5. How does the author use the story of the wilderness generation in Hebrews?
6. What is the real threat to the congregation according to the author's interpretation of Psalm 95?
7. What are the two questions that the mental frame of a "threshold" forces the congregation to ask?
8. What does the author mean by holding the congregation accountable?
9. What does the author mean by the phrase, "make it meaty," in regards to sermon preparation?
10. How does the author encourage the congregation's passion for excellence?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two main focuses when preaching through Hebrews are the homiletical strategies modeled by the author, and the core message of Hebrews, which remains essential for nurturing a faithful response. The first focus is on learning from the preacher's example, and the second is on proclaiming the word of Hebrews.

2. The goal of all rhetoric is to move an audience from their current state to where the speaker wants them to be, whether that is a big shift or simply a confirmation of their current state. Rhetoric is always concerned with bridging the distance between the audience's current understanding and the speaker's desired end-point.
3. The author does not start by addressing the congregation's problems to immediately direct their attention to the greatness of God's intervention in Christ. The author wanted them to focus on the significant event of God speaking through his son rather than dwelling on their own struggles.
4. The author emphasizes that God has spoken through a son, who is far superior to the prophets and other servants of God. This son is God's partner in creation, the sustainer of the cosmic order, and the one who took on flesh to accomplish something essential for deliverance and salvation.
5. The author uses the story of the wilderness generation as an analogy for the current situation of the congregation. He draws parallels between their experiences to highlight the dangers of a hardened heart and the importance of trusting in God's promises, especially when faced with doubt and challenges.
6. The real threat to the congregation is not their external circumstances, but the danger of their hearts becoming hardened to God's voice. This hardening leads to distrust in God's promises, turning them away from their relationship with the living God, and toward worldly comforts.
7. The two questions the mental frame of a "threshold" forces the congregation to ask are: "What do you really stand for?" and "Are you for God and God's promises, or the comforts and security of the world?". This framing highlights the stark choices available and forces them to reflect on their allegiances.
8. Holding the congregation accountable means expecting spiritual maturity, challenging them to live up to their Christian instruction, and reminding them of their responsibility for the grace they have received. This includes living out their baptismal vows and actively participating in the congregation's growth.
9. By "make it meaty," the author means that sermons should delve into difficult theological questions with depth and rigor. This entails digging into scripture and traditions to address challenges facing the congregation, providing the assurance that their faith and hope is real.

10. The author encourages the congregation's passion for excellence by channeling it towards God and the goals of the Kingdom. He encourages them to focus on the approval of heaven rather than the models of the non-Christian society, using examples of faith from the Bible as well as those who pursued God, regardless of worldly status.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the author's use of rhetorical strategies in Hebrews, focusing on how he directs the audience's attention away from their immediate problems and towards a perspective rooted in faith. How do these strategies work to create a persuasive argument?
2. Compare and contrast the author's approach to preaching with what you consider effective preaching today. In what ways do they overlap, and where do they diverge? Use specific examples from the source text.
3. Discuss the role of scriptural interpretation in the sermon to the Hebrews. How does the author use past narratives to shape the congregation's understanding of their present situation, and why is this method effective?
4. Explore the concept of accountability as presented in Hebrews. How does the author challenge the congregation to grow in their faith and take greater responsibility for their discipleship? Why is this challenge essential for spiritual health?
5. How does the author of Hebrews create a sense of ambition and excellence in the lives of the believers and why is this an essential part of maintaining a consistent devotion to God?

Glossary

- **Homiletics:** The art and practice of preaching or sermon delivery.
- **Rhetoric:** The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques.
- **Exposition:** A comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory.
- **Scriptural Precedent:** A previous example or occurrence in scripture that is used as a point of reference or basis for comparison.
- **Spiritual Sclerosis:** A figurative term describing a hardening of the heart or spirit, often associated with a lack of faith, trust, or sensitivity to spiritual matters.
- **Threshold:** A figurative term used to describe a point of transition, often involving a significant choice or change.
- **Discipleship:** The process of learning and following the teachings of a religious leader or tradition.
- **Grace:** In a religious context, the free and unmerited favor of God.
- **Theological Question:** A question or inquiry that involves religious or spiritual doctrine and matters of faith.
- **Prosperity Gospel:** A theological belief that associates faith with material wealth and success.
- **Lifestyles of the Rich Toward God:** A concept that emphasizes spiritual riches and a life lived in accordance with God's will over material wealth or worldly success.

5. FAQs on DeSilva, Hebrews, Session 13, The Sermon “to the Hebrews” and the Art of Preaching, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Preaching and the Message of Hebrews

- **What is the primary goal of preaching, according to the author of Hebrews?** The author of Hebrews demonstrates that the primary goal of preaching is to move the audience from their current state to a place where the speaker believes they should be, rooted in scripture and faith. This might involve redirecting their focus from worldly concerns to the person and work of Jesus Christ, confirming their current commitment, or calling them to a deeper level of discipleship. The "how" of achieving this is central to effective preaching.
- **Why does the author of Hebrews start his sermon by focusing on Jesus rather than addressing the immediate problems of the congregation?** Instead of starting with the congregation's struggles or rebuking their shortcomings, the author begins by highlighting the greatness of Jesus Christ. This strategy emphasizes that the most significant recent event is God's revelation through His Son. By directing the audience's attention to Christ's divine nature, role in creation, and redemptive work, the preacher seeks to provide a powerful alternative perspective, transforming how they view their situation and giving them the strength to persevere.
- **How does the preacher use the story of the wilderness generation to address the congregation's situation?** The preacher uses the story of the wilderness generation from the Old Testament (Numbers 14, Psalm 95) as an analogy for the congregation's struggles. He frames their present challenges as standing at a threshold, much like the Israelites on the verge of entering the Promised Land. By comparing their situation, he highlights the real danger, which is not external hardship but a hardening of hearts and a turning away from God's promises, just like the wilderness generation. This re-frames the problem from one of circumstantial difficulty to one of spiritual choice.

- **What does the preacher mean by the "mental frame of the threshold," and why is it important?** The "mental frame of the threshold" is a way of visualizing the congregation's situation, emphasizing the starkness of their choices. The preacher frames their current situation not as a starting point but as a point of decision, akin to standing on the edge of the Promised Land. It forces the audience to consider whether they will choose the path of faith and God's promises, even in the face of difficulty, or turn back to their old ways. This frame underscores that perseverance is the most logical and sensible choice after all they have invested.
- **How does the author of Hebrews hold his congregation accountable and why is this crucial?** The author holds his congregation accountable by expecting great things from them, born of their spiritual maturity. He challenges them to live up to their Christian instruction and the vows they have taken, particularly regarding Christian leadership and mutual encouragement. This accountability is important because it ensures that the congregation does not remain complacent but actively participates in their faith journey, moving towards Christlikeness and helping others along the way.
- **What does the author of Hebrews mean by "Make it meaty"?** "Make it meaty" means that preachers should not shy away from addressing difficult theological questions. Rather, they should invest the time and energy necessary to study the sacred texts and rituals, wrestling with tough concepts in order to provide a solid foundation for faith and discipleship. The author believes preachers are the primary theologians, ethicists, and biblical interpreters within the church and should take this role seriously. This ensures that the congregation understands their faith on a deeper level.
- **How does the author of Hebrews release the congregation's passion for excellence, and why is this important?** The author of Hebrews taps into the congregation's desire for excellence, but directs this passion towards a God-centered perspective. He presents examples of faithful individuals throughout history, and of Christ himself, who sought honor not through worldly achievements but through following God's will. This redirecting of ambition enables people to seek success in discipleship, service, and faithfulness, not in material wealth or worldly acclaim.

- **What specific images does the author use to reframe the challenges of the Christian life?** The author uses several images to reframe the challenges of the Christian life. He likens life to a great contest, where believers are called to compete and win, with eternal prizes awaiting those who persevere. He also uses the metaphor of a formative training experience, where God shapes character and cultivates virtues. He presents it as an exciting path filled with challenges, like being in a climactic game before a cheering crowd, and frames life as a journey towards lasting fame and success with God. These images help to emphasize that difficulties are opportunities for growth, perseverance, and ultimately, victory.