

Dear Group Leaders and Hosts,

Last Sunday I spoke to the children and congregation from Hebrews 2:1-4 on the idea of "drifting away." I introduced the idea to the children by speaking about boating on the Niagara River (I wore a life jacket as a visual aid :-). The Niagara River, of course, flows over Niagara Falls so boaters need to pay close attention lest they get into the "exclusionary zone" or danger zone above the falls. This area of the river has a large shoal which can easily damage the propeller leaving the boat drifting with the current to the brink of the falls!

In addition to the life jacket I also tied a rope from the communion table to my ankle because the Hebrews passage isn't about drifting on the Niagara River but rather about drifting away from Christ. So the rope was my second visual as a reminder not to drift away from Jesus. I then asked the children (and adults) what it looks like to drift away from Jesus and many good answers were given. We then turned our attention to communion as a reminder to stay close and connected to Jesus.

What I didn't emphasize was the warning of the passage. The Niagara Falls illustration carries a warning but I didn't put the emphasis there but instead on not drifting into danger. But the passage itself is a stern warning to pay careful attention, for if drifting from the law of Moses was punished, how much more if one drifts from Jesus!

"We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?"

The author then goes on to highlight that this message is certain because of its witnesses - Jesus, the apostles, and God himself via the Holy Spirit!

"This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

I mention the warning aspect of the passage because there are several warning passages in Hebrews and this is the first. This is not simply an academic exercise or a game in which it doesn't really matter in the end if you win or lose. To deny Jesus is to forfeit the benefits of his salvation - forgiveness, reconciliation, and life. Theologians debate eternal security and you can have your own idea on the matter but our author is clearly warning his readers of a real danger with precedents in Israel's history. How can we not take such warnings seriously and therefore consider our own paying attention versus drifting away.

Discussion Guide

Here are some questions to consider during the "engage" component of your group meeting.

1. What are some examples of Israel drifting away from the Law of Moses and being punished by God?
2. Why did God punish drifting away from the Law of Moses?
3. What are some examples of drifting away from Jesus in the New Testament?
4. Why does God punish drifting away from Jesus?
5. How do you pay careful attention to this great salvation? Not how **can** you or how **might** you but how **do** you? That is, what are your practices, activities, habits, etc. that keep you paying attention to Jesus?
6. Have you ever drifted away from Jesus? This is often referred to as "backsliding." Do you have a story to tell? Lessons to share?
7. Are you drifting now? How can your group help protect you from going over the Falls?

May the Lord be with you as you meet to encourage one another. In Hebrews 10:24, 25 we read:

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Blessings,
P Dan