



How Do We Positively Provoke Others Without Offending Them?

Hebrews 10:24: (KJV) *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.*



We all know someone who has been in some kind of altercation that didn't end well. When we go back and look at the events, we always want to know who started it. What we are looking for is who initially provoked the other party to cause the chain of events that led to someone on some level being hurt. The point is, provoking one another is not usually looked at as a good thing, as we think of things like sibling rivalries or having someone "push your buttons." However, with an appropriate approach, provoking others can be a powerful tool, as it can stimulate them to positive action and conflict resolution. How do we do that? How do we provoke others towards everything

good and avoid provoking them towards anything bad?

Today we will journey through a specific process of communication used by the Apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews. We are not going to deeply study the book of Hebrews in this episode but will carefully follow the communication process used to *provoke unto love and to good works*.

Provoke: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3948 *paroxusmos*; from #3947 ("*paroxysm*"); incitement (to good), or dispute (in anger)

The King James Version translates this as: contention, provoke unto

This word is used twice in the New Testament, once in a positive sense and once in a negative sense:



Provoke me:

Hebrews 10:24: (KJV) *And let us consider one another to **provoke** <3948> (to press toward, to incite, to stimulate) unto love and to good works...*

Just *don't* provoke me:

Acts 15:39: (KJV) *And the **contention** <3948> was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.*

The contention between Paul and Barnabas was so strong that they parted ways after having traveled together for many miles and many years.

Provoke can be either positive or negative.

How do we positively provoke others without offending them? Let's examine the art of positive provocation through the actions of the Apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews, who we believe was the book's author.

The Hebrew Christians who lived at the time right after the gospel began were a unique group called from the nation of Israel. Centuries before, God had called Israel to be His chosen people. Israel had been kept separate from the heathen nations around them and lived for centuries under God's Law. This is what made them unique throughout history.



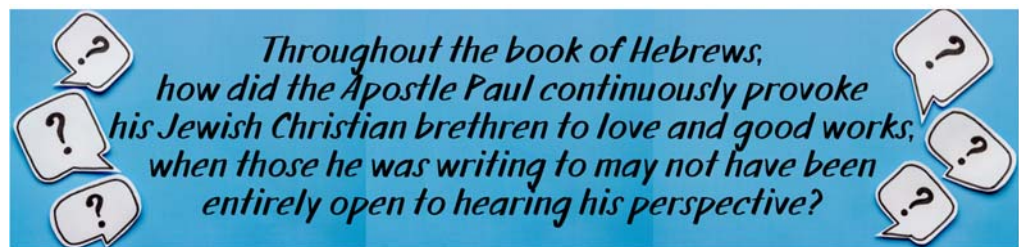
This made it challenging to convince them to give up that Law and follow Christ after generations and generations of following the Law. Many of the Hebrew Christians wanted to take the Law with them into their Christianity. Paul saw the need for them to put the Law aside, and because he was considered the “Apostle to the Gentiles” he knew his influence might not be readily accepted. They were very Jewish in their thinking, and he was the main apostle to those who had no background in Jewish Law and traditions whatsoever.



What was the solution? How did he communicate when he knew he would not be readily accepted? His solution was to write a detailed treatise to the Hebrew Christians, detailing God’s plan through Jesus and the role that the Law played in leading up to Christ.

We believe Paul wrote Hebrews to communicate with his Hebrew brothers and sisters, who were also Christians, to show them Christ in a fuller sense.

The primary question we are going to ask as we walk through our examination of the Apostle Paul’s methods in Hebrews is:



To answer this question, we will briefly touch on the first 10 chapters of the book of Hebrews to find the pattern of communication.



We recommend reading these chapters in their entirety. We are condensing the verses in order to see this overall communication lesson from the Apostle Paul.

How do we provoke without being provocative?



HUMILITY FIRST.

In this case, Paul did not use his name. Why?

The message was far more important than the messenger!

- With humility in place, we can positively provoke to love and good works.
- Without humility, we just provoke.

These brethren were misguided by previous traditions, and Paul was trying to show them the new and better way. He put himself aside so that the message could be clearly heard.

All of us have been in situations where we want to make our point - because we know the point is right - and they had better listen! We get stuck being negatively provocative in wanting others to understand our viewpoint.



Common basis of credibility: *Prophecy*

Paul immediately begins with the common ground of prophecy, introducing Jesus in the context of the Old Testament. This is brilliant!



OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES: *JESUS*

He quotes from Psalms 2:7-8, alludes to Proverbs 8:22-30, quotes from 2 Samuel 7:14, 1 Chronicles 22:10,28:6, Psalms 89:26-27 and Psalms 97:7 - all within the first six verses!

He is laying important groundwork by referring to scriptures the Jews knew well:

Hebrews 1:1-6: (NASB) ¹God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³And he is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When he had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they. ⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say, You are My son, today I have begotten you? And again, I will be a Father to him and he shall be a son to Me? ⁶And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, And let all the angels of God worship him.

The first six verses contain all of these Old Testament references which plainly and specifically point to Jesus. Paul lays calculated groundwork that will allow him to identify with his listeners, communicate with them and to provoke in a loving way those who do not see eye-to-eye with him, even though they are all Christians.

ANGELS: *JESUS*

Paul continues by prophetically comparing angels, who were the most powerful beings (other than God Himself) then known to the Jews, to Jesus, the only son of God.

He is finding common ground:

Hebrews 1:13-14: (NASB) ¹³But to which of the angels has He ever said, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET? (quoting from Psalms 110:1) ¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Paul points to the Old Testament to demonstrate the difference between the important role of Jesus compared to the angels.

Why was it important to use this approach? The Jews had a traditional viewpoint that the Law was the centerpiece of everything in their lives. It was so ingrained in them that it seemed impossible to change. As a prior Pharisee, Paul understood the depth, the meaning and the power of the Law. In this letter, he came up with a way to communicate - a way *to provoke unto love and to good works* without provoking to anger.

Giving up the Law was a real "hot button" for the Hebrew Christians, but Paul approaches it carefully, cautiously and in a very calculated way starting with the Old Testament scriptures that point to Jesus.



FIRMLY ESTABLISH A COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY.

In this case, the credibility came from indisputable authority of the Old Testament prophets and writings, and the power of God's angels.

- With a common basis of credibility, we can positively provoke to love and good works.
- Without a common basis of credibility, we just provoke.

Without a common basis of credibility, we just disagree over our viewpoints – if someone does not see it our way it causes an argument. The Apostle could have thought of this situation that way, but he did not. He established a common ground of credibility with patience so that he could guide them to a higher way of thinking in a spiritually-driven, mature fashion.

We can already see that there is an art to positive provoking. Let's now commit to take this art and make it a reality!

Having personal humility and a common base of credibility in place, what should we work on next?

Any time we are attempting to build a communication bridge with those we may have issues with, we need to be patient and careful. It is so easy to rush through this or that step and in so doing we put undue pressure on the process. This is where our normal attempts to provoke to love and good works when we have a disagreement break down because we put too much pressure on the process. Too much pressure can easily result in negative provocation, which is exactly the opposite of our objective! We are going to see how the Apostle Paul was able to completely avoid negative provocation by his approach.

Common basis of credibility: Eyewitnesses



Paul continues to build a picture of Jesus by adding another level of credibility with eyewitnesses.

He adds the testimony of Jewish Christians who saw, heard and followed Jesus in person:

Hebrews 2:3-4: (NASB) ³*How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the holy spirit...*

Those who were with Jesus were also given God's spirit, enabling them to perform miracles. These were undeniable facts of the power of God's spirit that first was in Jesus, then in his followers who were all of Jewish descent at that point in time. This was powerful evidence of the difference in Jesus versus the Law.



He builds on that evidence by comparing the angels' destiny with Jesus' destiny:

Hebrews 2:5: (NASB) *For He did not subject to angels the world to come...*

The Apostle specifically says *the world to come* will not be subjected to (ruled by) angels.

But about Jesus it was said:

Hebrews 2:8-9: (NASB) *⁸YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET (quoting from Psalm 8:6). For in subjecting all things to him, he left nothing that is not subject to him...⁹But we do see him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES: JESUS *All things...under his feet - this was a privilege given to Jesus.*

ANGELS: JESUS *So that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone - for every human being who ever lived. Paul gives the comparison that the angels are great, powerful and representatives of God Himself.*

Paul subtly builds his argument that Jesus is also a representative, but in a different, higher way.

He continues to build his credibility by reminding the Hebrews that Jesus was Jewish and came from the same lineage as they did.

Yet he had the responsibility to destroy evil, and became a high priest:

Hebrews 2:14, 17: (NASB) *¹⁴...since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.¹⁷he had to be made like his brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

To make propitiation for the sins of the people - Jesus had to be made like his brethren in all things, which made him a merciful and faithful high priest.

Jesus had his pre-human existence in heaven, but he was born here on earth, solely human. He was a human being.

He gave his life as a *propitiation* - a corresponding price - a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the people.

THE PRIESTHOOD: JESUS

Paul describes Jesus as *a merciful and faithful high priest*, which would have caught the ears of his listeners because of the importance of the priesthood under the Law.



BUILD ON THE COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY BY ADDING DETAILS THAT ENHANCE THE BASE WHILE EXPANDING THE DISCUSSION.



He does not abandon the base of credibility he already established. He does not say, "I'll pacify them with a few scriptures just to warm them up." He uses those scriptures as a base and then enhances the argument with further scriptural basis.

In this case, the eyewitness accounts of those who followed Jesus. They became carriers of the gospel through God's spirit and had miraculous powers.

All became subject to Jesus, by virtue of his ransom sacrifice.

Common basis of credibility: *Eyewitnesses* These eyewitnesses helped to put the argument clearly in place.

When we have a disagreement with those who perhaps have some common ground with us, are we willing to be as patient as Paul? Are we willing to slowly build on that common ground? Or are we going to push the envelope and say, "You know what, you're wrong. Get over yourself."

The apostle took this incredibly patient approach. With the added details and expanded discussion, we can, like the Apostle Paul, *provoke to love and good works*. If we are impatient and want to get right to the point, we just provoke. And when everybody gets mad, nothing good comes from it. The apostle is teaching us a very specific lesson in how to communicate one with another, especially when we have a common basis but with differing opinions.

**Common basis of credibility: *Brethren in Christ*
and the Faithfulness of Jesus and Moses**



Paul continues by reinforcing his connection to the Hebrew Christians as his brothers in Christ, then parallels the faithfulness of Jesus and Moses:

Hebrews 3:1-2: (NASB) ¹Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession; ²He was faithful to Him who appointed him, as Moses also was in all his house.

Faithful...as Moses also was in all his house - Paul uses Moses' example to relate on a high level.

Two individuals in Jewish history are looked upon by the Jewish people with the greatest respect - Moses and Abraham. We will get to Abraham shortly. Moses was faithful. Paul is giving Moses the incredible respect he absolutely deserved.



With his foundation established, Paul begins to focus his argument by elevating Jesus over Moses.

He starts out by saying: Moses was faithful *in all of his house...* and you can just see the heads nodding...*Yes, he was. Yes, he was. He was our example. He was our lawgiver.*



Hebrews 3:3: (NASB) *For he (Jesus) has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.*

Now he is taking that honor given to Moses and saying,

That is wonderful, that is good, that is powerful...everybody is nodding... but let's look at Jesus because he *has more honor*, since he was the one who built the house than the one who is the house.

Of course, we know that Jesus had a pre-human existence, so Paul is putting him in his rightful place in relation to Moses. For some of the Jews listening, this might have been uncomfortable, but because Paul has built this basis of credibility, it can be hearable at this point.

Paul now labels his focus, comparing the house of servants and the house of sons:

Hebrews 3:5-6: (NASB) *⁵Now Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant... (the heads are nodding - Yes, he was. He was our example; he was our lawgiver) ⁶but Christ was faithful as a son over his house - whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence...firm until the end.*



We recommend reading these chapters in their entirety. We are condensing the verses in order to see this overall communication lesson from the Apostle Paul.

Moses was faithful in all of his house as a servant...Christ was faithful as a son over his house. Who has more honor, the son or the servant?



REINFORCE AND INTRODUCE.

REINFORCE YOUR BROTHERHOOD AND YOUR COMMON CREDIBILITY BASE, THEN INTRODUCE WITH CLARITY YOUR PERSPECTIVE TO OPEN OTHERS TO A PARADIGM SHIFT.

Reinforce your brotherhood to that high calling; reinforce that common credibility base.



JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD

Moses is a new addition to the credibility base. Jesus as the son of God is higher than Moses, the servant of God.

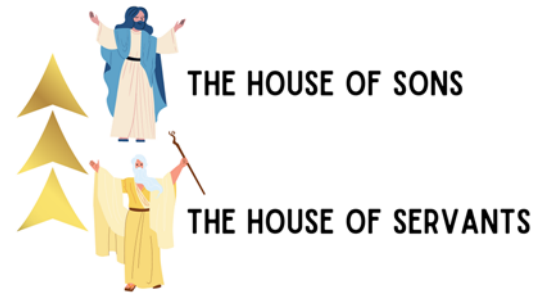
MOSES AS A SERVANT OF GOD

This will help them understand that they are called to something higher than Moses, although it is still subtle at this point in his teaching.

In this case, Paul teaches that all Hebrew Christians are brothers in Christ. Moses and Jesus were both faithful. However, Jesus (and his followers) were to be elevated by virtue of Jesus' sonship over Moses (and Israel) as servants.



Paul explains how there is a significant difference between the path of the servant and the path of the son. They could not argue because they were Hebrew Christians. They knew Jesus was crucified, and that he was the son of God.



Hebrews 3 helps us to see this.

Again, Paul uses that quiet, calm, humble building of his point.

- With this reinforcement and further understanding, we can provoke to love and good works.
- Without reinforcing and deeper understanding, we are just provoking.

*Common basis of credibility: **Learn from the mistakes of others***



Paul admonishes his audience to learn from the mistakes of others, based on the firmly established common base of credibility:

Hebrews 4:11: (NASB) *Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall through following the same example of disobedience.*

The Jewish people fell constantly, and the Apostle Paul reminded them of that. Paul next cites the Christian advantage – that Jesus our leader and high priest had experienced humanity and now *is passed through the heavens*.

Jesus understands us and walks us through our trials:

Hebrews 4:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast our confession.* ¹⁵*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

We can see how the apostle is building the argument of the high priest. He mentioned it and is now coming back to it. We will soon see how he expands even more.

Jesus says he was tempted in all points just like us because he was a man, but he was without sin. Therefore, because of his example, we can approach the throne of grace boldly. The Jewish Law did not have the ability to give the people such access. They had to continually fulfill the rituals of the Law in order to continue their access to God.



LEARN FROM YOUR COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY HOW TO FIRMLY ADOPT YOUR NEWLY CLARIFIED PERSPECTIVE.

In other words, your newly clarified perspective is belief in Jesus. He is your high priest, and through him you can approach God. This is a powerfully different approach!



In this case, the Old Testament account of Israel showed the Hebrew Christians *what not to do*, and Jesus showed them *what to do* in following him as sons.

- With credibility-based lessons, we can provoke to love and good works.
- Without credibility-based lessons, we are just provoking.

The apostle is teaching us to patiently identify with those we love but disagree with. This is the way to provoke credible discussion.

Having a clearly-defined common base of thought and action is such a strong foundation. Building on it takes time and patience!

How does Paul now positively provoke his Hebrew Christian brothers and sisters to move decisively beyond the Law and firmly towards Christ?

The task the apostle is working on is huge and it is risky. Helping anyone walk away from what they have generationally believed in towards something new and different can easily backfire. Paul, having been a Pharisee, was aware of the depth of this challenge. He knew what it felt like to have such vital faith in the Law and its rituals, sacrifices and so forth. He knew from years of personal experience. What did he do here? He patiently, wisely and scripturally met that challenge head-on. It was clear where he was going and why.

In the first four chapters, Paul had just provoked the Hebrew Christians to grow beyond their previous thinking. He is now saying they must grow a little further.

Common basis of credibility: Grow into mature Christians



Paul now takes a breath and reestablishes their common base of credibility. He understands the power of reminding both parties what they agree upon. It is a strong perspective.

Hebrews 5:1,4: (NASB) ¹*For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; ⁴And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.*

The high priests were not self-chosen. It was not voluntary; they were appointed by God on behalf of men to care for things pertaining to God. *No one, Paul says, takes this honor to himself but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.* Paul directs them to the first high priest, Aaron, to establish credibility. He is always adding to the base of credibility.

Paul has verified that God chose the original priesthood and will now re-establish Jesus in his central role - with a twist:

Hebrews 5:8-10: (NASB) ⁸*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered. ⁹And having been made perfect, he became to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation, ¹⁰being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.*



THE PRIESTHOOD: JESUS

Paul instructs them that Jesus, like Aaron, was designated by God as a high priest. But Jesus is according to the order of Melchizedek, not part of the Aaronic priesthood under the Law.

For more on Melchizedek, please see [BONUS MATERIAL](#).

In the next verse, Paul more strongly admonishes the Hebrew Christians to grow up.

He is blunt - he has been giving them base upon base of Old Testament credibility, showing them Jesus every step of the way:

Hebrews 5:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹Concerning him (Melchizedek) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

This would not have been easy to hear. You have come to need milk and not solid food...you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you...you have become dull of hearing. These are hard words. They would not be able to understand the reference to Melchizedek, as they still had a lot to learn - it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

He is getting firmer here but is staying calm and building credibility as the words get stronger.



HAVING PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED A PARADIGM SHIFT, REESTABLISH YOUR COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY AND FIRMLY PROVOKE TOWARD GROWTH.

In other words, "I have told you; you need to see the Law and the priesthood differently. I am giving you a different priesthood now to look at because this is bigger than you know. Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek and yet he is a high priest, different/higher than the order of the Aaronic priesthood."

In this case, Paul resets the Old Testament as a model through which Jesus was established as the obvious centerpiece of God's plan. He urgently points towards their need to grow into mature Christians based on this truth.

Paul has put the Melchizedek priesthood into the mix and is saying this is a truth they need to see clearly and grow into. He has built this pattern, this base, this credibility so that when it comes time, he says, "You see how important it is? Do you see how you need to change? Do you see how there is a need for growth?"

- With this reestablished credibility and firm direction, we can provoke to love and good works.
- Without reestablished credibility, firm direction will just provoke.



If Paul had just said, "Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek; the old priesthood is nonsense," there would have been a reaction, and rightfully so. He allowed their belief to have a place and took that belief and showed them how to grow it into something bigger and better and more important to their Christian lives.

*Common basis of credibility: **Growth in Christ,**
stepping forward in spirituality*



Paul strongly admonishes growth in Christ, stepping forward in spirituality:

Hebrews 6:1: (NASB) *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.*

He is telling them that they have the basis, *the elementary teaching*. However, they cannot stop with the basics; they need to *press on to maturity*. They should not lay *again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God*. They understood repentance; they understood Jesus and his ransom. Now they needed to grow through the application of that knowledge.

Again, he is pressing these Hebrew Christians toward being more mature and not measure their value to God through the Law. Paul shows them step-by-step that NO, that is NOT where their value lies - it is through Jesus. Every step Paul takes in the discussion always comes back to Jesus.

He adds a sober reminder of what can happen should one turn away from the truth of the gospel. This is an important, serious point:

Hebrews 6:4,6: (NASB) *For in the case of those who have once been enlightened...and have been made partakers of the holy spirit, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the son of God and put him to open shame.*

Paul is talking about the incredible importance of what God's spirit does for us and how it works in our lives. He warns us with the sober realization that if we were to abandon it after it has been given to us and it has been a part of our lives - after we have become part of that "new creation" of 2 Corinthians 5:17 - life would be over. It is impossible to be renewed if one walks away from the sacrifice of Jesus.



Identifying what unforgivable sins are and their consequences

Jesus' sacrifice was given to all men once for all time. Now is our "*once*." We must understand how deeply serious true Christianity is. We have to admire the Apostle Paul for having the strength to be able to convey this message.



In the midst of showing them the importance of Jesus, he reminds them they are already Christians and have this great power and great privilege within themselves. It is important they hold onto it.

Paul encourages the Hebrew Christians in light of this serious warning:

Hebrews 6:9-10: (NASB) *⁹But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. ¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*

He is talking to them about their past and the Christian things they have already done. *Beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you* - in other words, "I am telling you this because you need to know it, but I am not looking at you in this way. I know your works. I know you as Christians and that you love God through Christ." He is building them up in a very powerful way.

Paul goes back to their common base of credibility in the oath and word of God Himself:

Hebrews 6:18: (NASB) *So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.*

UP TO THIS POINT, PAUL HAS SHOWN THEM THE BASICS:

- *the Law • angels • prophets • Old Testament scriptures*
- *Moses • the Aaronic priesthood and Melchizedek priesthood*

But there are only *two unchangeable things*:

1. the word of God, and
2. the promise, or oath, of God.

These can never be argued with. God put this in place, so we should not be looking at it any other way.

We who have taken refuge...are strongly encouraged to take hold of the hope set before us.



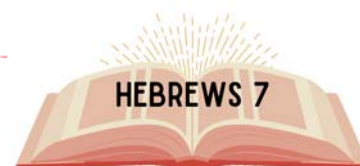
WITH A CLEARLY PRESENTED PICTURE, FOCUS ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF NEEDED GROWTH, WHILE DEEPLY ENCOURAGING THE BROTHERHOOD BASED ON THEIR OWN TRACK RECORD AND YOUR COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY.

In this case, Paul pulls no punches as to the conditions of the narrow way. He shows confidence in the Hebrew Christians' ability to rely on God's grace and to overcome.

- With common credibility and a focus on moving forward, we can provoke to love and good works.
- Without common credibility, a focus on moving forward will just provoke.



*Common basis of credibility: **The priesthoods** - reframe them in the context of the future*



Paul AGAIN reestablishes their common base of credibility and shows how change must of necessity come:

Hebrews 7:1-2: (NASB) *¹For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ²to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils...*

Abraham, the father of faith, paid Melchizedek tithes. This is how important Melchizedek was.

The next verse in Hebrews alludes to Psalms 110:4 which talks about the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Psalms 110:4: (NASB) *The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, you (referring to Jesus) are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Paul reveals what that meant:

Hebrews 7:11: (NASB) *Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood...what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek...and not...the order of Aaron?*

In other words, the Aaronic (or Levitical) priesthood that was part of the Law could not get the job done for eternity; it was a temporary fix. The Melchizedek priesthood is eternal. Psalms 110:4 pointed to Jesus as a *priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*.

Again we see Paul sending his audience back to the Old Testament to see what was most important - Jesus.

Paul places Jesus firmly in the center of God's plan, this time by virtue of his everlasting priesthood:

Hebrews 7:24-25, 27: (NASB) *²⁴But Jesus, on the other hand, because he continues forever, holds his priesthood permanently. ²⁵Therefore he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them...²⁷who does not need daily...to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this he did once for all...*

Jesus did not need to follow through on what the offerings of the priesthood were previously because he was perfect, and his offering took care of the sins of all the people. The priesthood had to take care of their own sins as well as the sins of the people with their offerings repeated each year.

Jesus' offering was able *to save forever*; his offering was permanent.

All of Paul's common base of credibility arguments point to Jesus.



HAVING POINTED TO DEEP ISSUES OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH, AGAIN REESTABLISH YOUR COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY AND FRAME IT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FUTURE.

In this case, Paul reconnects the Hebrew Christians with the Old Testament priesthoods and reintroduces Jesus as the fulfillment of these, now and forever.

Paul adds a new detail by pointing to both Old Testament priesthoods, plural. He introduces Jesus as the fulfillment of BOTH of these, as he is a priest now and forever.

Paul is creating an indisputable argument when we see the power of Jesus' life. He is doing it patiently and using what the Jews understood to show what they know has a meaning far beyond what they think.

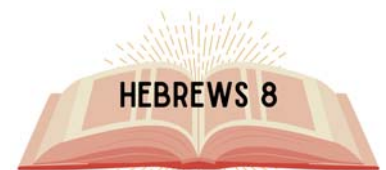
- With common credibility and a focus on deep and needed change, we can provoke to love and good works.
- Without common credibility, focusing on deep and needed change will just provoke.

A basis of common credibility cannot be understated! If we only remember one thing from Paul's approach, this would be it.

Paul has been building the argument for Jesus with steady momentum. What is the conclusion he is driving towards?

Paul has gone through comparisons of the Old Testament that point to Jesus in many ways. Each time, he has become more and more firm. We can see that firmness growing as he goes on. He will continue this pattern and then conclude with the most important things: mutual Christian love and faithfulness to our calling.

Common basis of credibility: The Old Covenant will be replaced by the New Covenant with Jesus as its mediator



Paul is blunt - the Old is out, New is in and the New is built around Jesus, not around the Law:

Hebrews 8:5-6: (NASB) ⁵(The high priests) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things... ⁶But now he (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

The Law Covenant they knew so well was only a copy and shadow of heavenly things. Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant. This was a point they could not argue, as the Law was not able to bring them to perfection and they all knew it.

Hebrews 8:13: (NASB) When he said, A new covenant, he has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.



Paul's argument gets deeper, as all the things he told them about the Law Covenant shows it is obsolete. Why? Because that which is new is here to replace it.



BASED ON YOUR COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY, RESTATE THE HIGHER SPIRITUAL TRUTHS WITH EVEN GREATER CONVICTION.

In this case, Paul clearly states that the Old Covenant and the old priesthood will undoubtedly end, being replaced with Jesus as the clear mediator of the New Covenant.

The Law Covenant served a tremendous purpose but has now become obsolete. Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant. It is new; it is different.

Paul is speaking to Hebrew Christians who want to take the Law with them, but are now faced with the fact that the Law is obsolete. Paul has shown them this through all these chapters and all this reasoning with a common base of credibility. Without common credibility, our strong convictions just make people walk away.

- With a common base of credibility, strong conviction for change can provoke to love and good works.
- Without common credibility, our strong convictions will just provoke.

*Common basis of credibility: **The Tabernacle,**
a moveable tent where God communed
with the Israelites in the wilderness.*



Unlocking the secrets and symbols God gave to ancient Israel



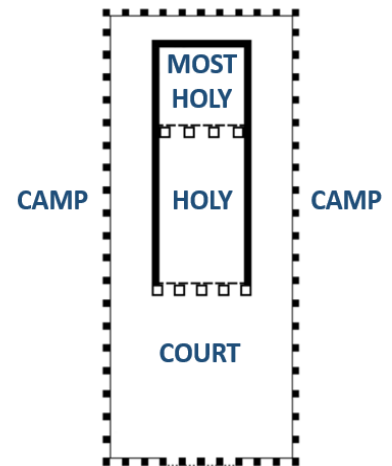
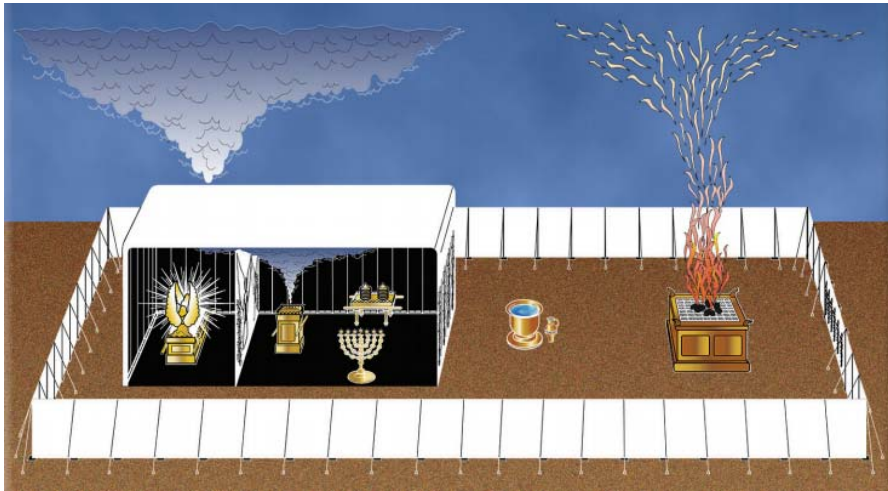
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WHAT WAS THE JEWISH TABERNACLE?
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Paul reviews the Tabernacle to set up his next point of strong conviction:

Hebrews 9:6-7: (NASB) *“...the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*

Paul just said the Law is obsolete, but now he brings up the Tabernacle! This was another sacred and significant part of their faith having to do with the sacredness of approaching God.

The Tabernacle was a portable temple that was part of the Law given to Moses. The description and details are found primarily in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.



The high priest would enter into the room called the “Most Holy” only once a year. He had to have blood with him to cover him and the people from their sins.

Paul is highlighting their most sacred and important rituals that connected them with God.

He highlights these sacred things, then gives the fulfillment of how the Tabernacle was all about Jesus:

Hebrews 9:12: (NASB) *And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, he (Jesus) entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

The message is powerful: Jesus fulfilled the Tabernacle! He fulfilled what the angels were doing and what the prophets talked about. He fulfilled what Moses said, what Abraham said, the promises, both priesthoods, all of it. Jesus is the fulfillment of it all - eternal redemption through his blood.

Paul now will drive this point home as he shows how the Old Testament sacrifices pictured Jesus:

Hebrews 9:24-26: (NASB) *²⁴For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us...²⁶but now once at the consummation of the ages he has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Jesus did not go into *a holy place made with hands*; he went to heaven! It is the final step. This shows the power of what the Law was there to do - to bring us to Christ. He is showing the Hebrew Christians how magnificent is the role Jesus plays. How does he show them? Quietly, methodically, by showing them things they can all agree on and that they all understand, building the reasoning.



HAVING AGAIN RESTATED THE HIGHER SPIRITUAL TRUTHS WITH GREAT CONVICTION, EXPLAIN IT BASED UPON THE COMMON BASE OF CREDIBILITY.

In this case, Paul reviews the Tabernacle arrangement and powerfully explains its spiritual fulfillment in Jesus.

- With a common base of credibility, powerful teaching can provoke to love and good works.
- Without common credibility, our powerful teaching will just provoke.

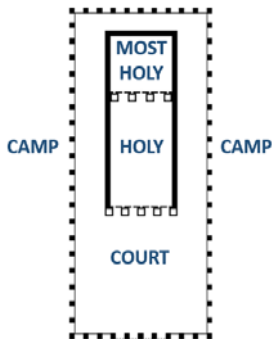
Common basis of credibility: The core issue of love



Paul lays out the shortfall of the Law contrasted with the value of Jesus' sacrifice:

Hebrews 10:1,4-6: (NASB) ¹For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come... can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Therefore, when he comes into the world, he says, SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED (Psalm 40:6), but a body you have prepared for me; ⁶In whole burnt offerings...for sin you have taken no pleasure.

The blood of bulls and goats was a temporary measure, but it could never take away sins like Jesus. Paul continues to explain that because of the true cleansing power of Jesus' sacrifice, his followers are now priests in the "Holy" of the Tabernacle. His listeners would understand its sacredness.



As priests, we must positively provoke one another:

Hebrews 10:19-21,24-25: (NASB) ¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²⁴...let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Encouraging one another - why? We serve in this holy place, with Jesus near us. We are priests together under Jesus, meaning we are doing the exact same work and cannot be separated. Therefore, let us encourage one another. Paul has this powerful, unifying message to conclude bringing them to Christ.

Paul again recalls the Hebrew Christians' VERY strong and severely tested previous faithfulness. This is a beautiful way to end this portion of Paul's teaching. So far, he has reviewed their common base of credibility using their own beliefs.

Now he talks about them and their personal example of faithfulness:

Hebrews 10:32-36: (NASB) ³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. ³⁵Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.



He talks about their history, their history as Christians, their history of being willing to endure great conflict and suffering, of having sympathy with those who were taken prisoner, of accepting joyfully the seizure of their property, knowing they had an everlasting home in heaven. He says, "Do not throw away your confidence. You have such great works in Christ, such great sacrifices. Remember, Jesus is the center. Do not go back, go forward!"

He has shown them how to take their faith to a higher level, and he is motivated by his love for them.



HAVING EXPLAINED THE HIGHER SPIRITUAL TRUTHS BASED ON **COMPREHENSIVE, COMMON CREDIBILITY, FOCUS ON THE CORE ISSUE IN LOVE, RESTATING THE VALUE OF THOSE WITH WHOM YOU ARE DISCUSSING.**

In this case, Paul is clear: only Jesus takes away sin and lifts us higher! Let's unify and encourage one another! You, the Hebrew Christians, are now in the Holy as priests and are certainly worthy brethren.

- With a base of common credibility, changing other's perspectives can provoke to love and good works.
- Without common credibility, changing other's perspectives is just an act of provoking.

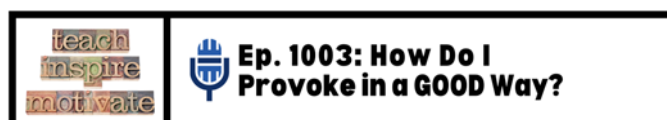
Paul has shown the Hebrew Christians what they had always believed was incredibly valuable, was true and served an incredible purpose. However, it was temporary because every single belief led to Jesus, the permanent fix. Do not take that which has already done its work into the work to be done now - the work of Christ. Stay focused and be faithful to Jesus and let the Law teach you how to do that.

*So, how do we positively provoke others without offending them?
For Jonathan, Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on May 8, 2023
Ep. 1280: Is God an Angry God?



Learning the what, who, why and how of positive provoking

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Bonus Material and Study Questions

Who Was Melchizedek?

Melchizedek is mentioned in only three books of the Bible; Genesis, Psalms and Hebrews. The only historical account of Melchizedek is found in Genesis 14:9-20 where Abram (later known as Abraham), rescued the inhabitants of Sodom, including his nephew Lot, who were taken captive by the king of Elam. Upon his return, Abram is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem) and *priest of the Most High God*. Melchizedek welcomed the returning army with a refreshment of bread and wine. Abram in turn, reciprocated by giving Melchizedek one-tenth of all the spoils of victory (Also see Hebrews 7:1-10).

Melchizedek is not so much a name as it is a title or designation of honor. It is a position or office that has to be filled by a worthy candidate. The term is a transliteration of two Hebrew words, *melek* and *tesedeq*. The Hebrew *melek* means "king" and *tsedeq* means "righteousness." Therefore, the term "melchizedek" literally means "king of righteousness."

He was also known as *priest of God Most High* - at a time prior to the Levitical priesthood, which would be established by God many years future during the time of Moses, with Aaron, Moses' brother, appointed as the first High Priest. The Aaronic priesthood was based in the Law Covenant, which was in operation until the coming of Messiah (Jesus). This covenant was enacted in order to prepare the Jewish nation for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). However, the Aaronic priesthood could never permanently rid the nation of sin. *It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins* (Hebrews 10:4) A greater priesthood as pictured by Melchizedek would be needed.

Melchizedek is one of the most enigmatic people of the Bible, not only because of his distinctive position as king and high priest, but also because of other profound statements about him, such as:

He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God he continues a priest forever (Hebrews 7:3).

We understand *without father or mother or genealogy* means that Melchizedek did not inherit his priesthood from his parents and that he had no children. No record was made as to when his priesthood began, nor was there any provision made for a successor. *Has neither beginning of days nor end of life* we understand to mean this priesthood had no beginning and no ending.

In Psalms 110:4, David says prophetically, *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*.

Who is the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek? We believe he is Jesus (the Messiah) as Head of the completed heavenly Body of Christ, composed of his faithful followers.

Because Melchizedek was without beginning or end of years with respect to his office, he typified not only Christ, but also the work that The Christ (Head and Body) will do during the future Messianic kingdom on earth to restore fallen man back to his original condition of perfection prior to Adam's fall. *But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them* (Hebrews 7:24-25).

What was the purpose for which God used Melchizedek and what can we learn from him? God used Melchizedek who was both a priest and king as a type of Christ and his triumphant Church who will act as priests and kings in the future Messianic kingdom on earth. Because of God's sworn oath (Psalms 110:4) Jesus has become a guarantee of a better covenant for the world of mankind (Hebrews 7:15-28).

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1279: How Do We Positively Provoke Others Without Offending Them?

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1279-provoke/>

1. What was the “hot button” issue the Apostle Paul needed to talk about to the Jewish Christians? Why did Paul think they would not listen to him? How did he decide to approach this problem? What essential characteristic is needed to “provoke to love and good works”?
2. How did Paul use *prophecy* to first establish the common basis of credibility? All the Old Testament prophecies quoted were about whom? Why was it important to use this approach? Where did the common credibility come from in this case? (See Hebrews 1:1-6, 13-14 and assorted Old Testament scriptures quoted in Hebrews 1:1-6)
3. Who were the *eyewitnesses* Paul used to build another level of credibility? What did Jesus’ followers have that the Law could not give? How is Jesus a higher representative of God than were the angels? Explain Jesus’ responsibilities. In this case, the eyewitnesses were given what task? (See Hebrews 2:5, 8-9, 14, 17)
4. How did Paul use the concept of *brethren in Christ* to reinforce his connection? In what way did he compare Moses and Jesus? Why was it important to use Moses here? Explain the “house of servants” versus the “house of sons.” What house would the Hebrews be a part of? What house would the Hebrew *Christians* be a part of? Why is that significant? (See Hebrews 3:1-6)
5. Paul admonishes his audience to *learn from the mistakes of others*; which others? What is the Christian advantage over the Jew? Why is the concept of Jesus being our high priest so important? What great privilege is given to the Christian that the Law could never give to the Jew? (See Hebrews 4:11-16)
6. What is the role of a high priest? How is Jesus’ priesthood different from the original Levitical priesthood? How does Paul describe their lack of *growth into mature Christians*? What does Paul do with their beliefs that helps them grow into more mature Christians? How does Paul encourage them to *move forward in spirituality*? How had they always measured their value to God? Where was their true value? What is the danger he warns about? (See Hebrews 5:1-12, 6:1-10, 18)
7. In what way does Paul reframe the priesthoods? How is the Melchizedek priesthood superior? Which does Jesus fulfill? Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant – how is it better than the Old? How did Jesus fulfill the Tabernacle? What would remembering their personal examples of faithfulness do for them? (See Hebrews 7:1-2, 11, 24-27, 8:5-6, 13, 9:12, 24-26, 10:32-36)
8. How do we show love for each other? What personal application can we take from this lesson?