Series: Reframing Our Ritual, Part 2  
Study as an act of faith  
Scriptures: Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Community is shaped by the conversation we hold among ourselves. This discussion guide is simply a tool to help you host a meaningful conversation around the themes that have emerged from our teaching this week. Be creative in your listening, observing, asking :)  

Summary: Today, we are talking about the ritual of study. For the writer of Hebrews to stop growing is to stop following in the way of Jesus. Bobbi encouraged us to reflect on what prevents our growth and how we put limits on ourselves. We looked at what maturity looks like in the life of faith and how study can be a ritual to keep ourselves open and growing.

Check-in: “One interesting study from 2018 is from Nicholas Hobson at the University of Toronto who, with coauthors, says rituals help to regulate emotions by blocking anxiety and buffering against negativity, work and performance by honing attention and boosting confidence, and connection to others by coordinating cohesiveness and promoting trust.”  
What rituals, one or two, do you particularly miss this season? And what are you replacing them with?

Moving past ABCs  
Take a look at Hebrews 5:11-14. What stands out to you right away about the word choice, metaphors, attitude? What point is the author making about growth?  
The author uses the Greek word nothros for “you no longer try” to describe lifelessness in a human being or an animal.  
Reflect on your experiences a bit. What makes you go lifeless? When or why do you tend to stop learning, growing and changing? What do you think makes a person want the past instead of the future?  
How do you tend to limit yourself? And when you think of that, what has made you grow and learn most, in life, at work, in your faith journey?

Too far gone?  
What is the writer’s take on maturity here?  
How does this thought resonate with you today: “Maturity is not about being a perfect Christian. In the philosophical schools of the time, students mature through categories. Pythagoras had “the learners” and then “the mature.” Philo had “those just beginning,” then “those making progress,”
and finally "those beginning to reach maturity." Maturity is progress.
The church’s rituals are here to help you grow, not limit you.
Basics are great, but you get to move past them.*

What rituals have you found helpful in your own progress?

What are some of the lessons you’d like to take away from this pandemic?
How did you grow during this season?

Is there an area of life that you’ve been pushed to be more creative? Or maybe you’d like to be?

**Blessed to grow**
Hebrews 6:7-8.
What stands out to you in the organic metaphor that the writer is using in vv. 7-8?

Bobbi made a point that those are metaphors of empowerment. We control bounty, and even if we walk away, we can always return to God and be met with compassion.

Is there a metaphor, a person, a book, or an idea that encourages you to grow? What about it empowers and inspires you?

**Study as faith in action**
Hebrews 6:9-12

The author uses the word diligence in Greek that also translates as "pursuit, exertion, study."

Name one or two things in your life that require diligence.
What forms does diligence take for you in making sense of your life and faith?

Which step in Bobbi’s guide to Study as a Ritual particularly appeals to you?

"**Five things you can do to grow faith as an integrated part of your life.**"

1) **Choose a community that represents your beliefs.**
No one’s got time for sexism, racism, guilt-based preaching. What we need is friendship, a place of trust with our differences, always underscored by love.

2) **Assemble a chorus of voices.**
When it comes to ideas, find your people. Read, listen to podcasts, ask for booklists. Do your homework. Stay open.

3) **Send away what no longer serves you.**
It’s ok to let go of things you used to believe in. Theology evolves. It always has. It always will. Do not feel bad as you change your mind about God.

4) **Set down ideas that shimmer.**
In the contemplative practice of lectio divina, you are invited to open your heart to scripture, and a word or image will stand out to you or, as some spiritual directors say, shimmer. When you hear an idea about God that you love, take note. Write it down. Follow it deeper.

5) **Let awe be your guide, not certainty.**

**Prayer**
Loving God,
It’s so amazing that we can never exhaust you.
Your love is boundless.
Your creativity is endless.
Your ways of meeting us are new every morning.
Jesus, will you expand our imagination in matters of faith.
Expand grace, expand patience, expand joy, expand hope, expand our understanding of the scriptures, expand our play with the sacraments.
Spirit of the living God, present with us now,
Enter the places of stagnation,
of spiritual ideas that make us weary,
of pain from our past,
and heal us of all that harms us.
Amen.