

Hebrews 4:1-13

Week Six

Study written by Holli Worthington



Day 1



Heavenly Father, please make your word active in my life. Align my thoughts and desires with your ways and help me to know you better through your word today.

- ✓ Read through the passage in each translation.
- ✓ Underline or write in the margin, themes that you see.
- ✓ Write a question you have about the passage.
- ✓ In the space below, write out a verse from our passage that stands out to you, that you can meditate on throughout the week.

Day 2- Hebrews 4:1-3

Chapter 4 is a continuation of the exhortation in chapter 3 that says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts,” from Psalm 95.

1. What promise still stands according to verse 1?

Critical Connection: In chapter 3 we learned that the Israelites, who were led out of slavery by Moses, were not able to enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief. It was the land of victory, of abundance, and of security. The Promised Land represented God’s rest. God’s true rest is the promise of eternal salvation and abundant life. We enter this rest through faith in Jesus

2. Over and over again the Bible tells us to not be afraid, but here in verse 1 we are told to be afraid! What is it we are to fear?

For Discussion: How can we ensure that a good fear that helps keep us persevering does not evolve into bad fear that doesn't trust God?



“...lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.” is an athletic metaphor that pictures an endurance race. One of the recurring themes of Hebrews is that genuine faith shows itself in perseverance to the end. And in some ways that is a team effort. We are all running this race together and it is our responsibility to help our brothers and sisters reach the finish line.

- ❖ Have you ever had anyone come alongside you when your faith has been failing? How did they encourage you?

- ❖ Endeavor to keep an eye out for stragglers in the race who might be in danger of quitting – people who haven't been to church in a while, people who aren't connected to a small group, people who used to be in your group in the past or people going through a time of trial. How can you encourage that person this week?

- 3. Remember in chapter 3, the author has been using the Israelite's unbelief in the wilderness as a warning and example. What veiled caution is given to the readers in verse 2a?

- 4. Even though the Israelites heard the good news, why did it not benefit them according to verse 2? (Check out the footnote in your Bible for v.2)

-What principle can we learn from this?

5. What is necessary in order to enter God's rest according to verse 3?

Digging Deeper: Read the following passages and underneath each verse, describe what kind of faith or belief it teaches. What kind of belief is necessary to enter God's rest?

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.²² On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.'²³ But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'"(NLT)

Luke 8:13 "Some people are like seeds on rocky soil. They welcome the word with joy whenever they hear it, but they don't develop any roots. They believe for a while, but when their faith is tested, they abandon it."(NOG)

John 3:36 "And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."(NLT)

John 2:23-25 "²³ While Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people believed in him because they saw the miracles that he performed. ²⁴ Jesus, however, was wary of these believers. He understood people ²⁵ and didn't need anyone to tell him about human nature. He knew what people were really like."(GW)

Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. (NLT) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (ESV)

Ephesians 2:8-9 “⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

James 2:14,17 & 19 “What good is it, my brothers if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?...So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.”

Picture and Ponder: “Belief, the mental acceptance of a fact as true, will simply not bring rest to any soul. Acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world will not give us rest. Trust in him is what gives rest to our souls.”¹

Day 3- Hebrews 4:3-7

6. According to verse 3c, how long has God’s work (his rest) been available?

7. How is rest depicted in verse 4?

Critical Connection: Read the following verses and answer the question:

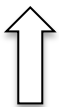
-The quote in Hebrews 4:4 is from Genesis 2:2. How does the creation account show that God's work was a completed work, there was nothing to be added to what he had done?

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day is a refrain written after each day of creation in Genesis 1. The account of the seventh day begins in Genesis 2:

Genesis 2:1-3 "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation."

Picture and Ponder: "When we say that God rested, we do not mean that he went on vacation or removed his care from our world. The picture is rather that after having made and ordered and subdued the creation according to his desired plan, his control was so absolute, his sovereignty so unquestioned, that God enthroned himself without effective opposition. His reign is one of rest that is, of absolute supremacy and unassailable sovereignty – so much so that he exerts all his rule from the position of rest."²

8. In light of God's rest from creating on the seventh day, what is the significance of the fact God is talking about entering "*my* rest"?



God you are so generous and gracious! You always offer me what you yourself have *your* joy, *your* strength, *your* peace and *your* rest. Thank you Father.

Scholar's Note: "The repetition of Psalm 95:11 in verse 5 emphasizes the urgency of entering God's rest. When a biblical author repeatedly returns to the same issue, it is most likely because the hard-heartedness of sin-prone people requires the repetition."³

9. For those who have yet to enter God's rest, how is the urgency communicated in verse 7?

Scholar's Note: "'Today' is the time when the promise that all believers will enter God's rest is still open and available."

Day 4- Hebrews 4:8-11

10. How do we know that the Promised Land that Joshua led the people to was not the ultimate rest offered by God according to verse 8?
11. The Promised Land was not the ultimate rest. Verse 9 tells us the superior rest is God's rest, found only in Jesus. How is God's rest explained in verse 10?

Critical Connections: Read the following verses and answer the question:

-In The Ten Commandments God commanded his people to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. It was a day set aside for God when no one was to work. How is Jesus himself the true Sabbath? What works does he give rest from?

Romans 3:28 "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

*Colossians 2:16-17 ¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality."
(NLT)*

12. What *seems* to be contradictory in verse 11 (ESV) to resting from works in verse 10?

13. The Israelites in the wilderness did not make every effort to enter the Promised Land. They saw God's works and they heard his voice, but they did not trust and obey him and so hardened their hearts. For us to strive to enter God's rest is to do the opposite of them. How must we relate to God's works and his voice as revealed in his word so that we don't die in the wilderness?



If you have given up trying to be your own savior and trusted Jesus to pay the penalty for your sin and impute his perfect righteousness to you, then, praise God you have entered into his rest. Yet while we are here on earth we don't experience the complete fullness of his rest – that will come when we finally reach heaven. Now we are in the wilderness of this earthly life being tested in our faith and learning to trust God – much like the original readers of Hebrews. Here on earth we live with the tension of striving to enter God's rest.

- ❖ How do you work at resting in God?

- ❖ As a believer who has entered into God's rest, what resources do you have to help you through the trials and testing of this earthly wilderness?

- ❖ What ways do we experience God's rest here on earth?

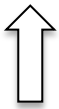
- ❖ How does trusting and obeying God bring rest?

- ❖ If you haven't rested from all your own efforts to earn God's favor, if you are not relying on Jesus' perfect righteousness, if you haven't trusted him as your own Savior, you can do that right now just by asking him. *Romans 10:9-10 says, "because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is*

Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

Day 5- Hebrews 4:12-13

Scholar’s Note: The word *For*, in 4:12 indicates that what is said next is the reason or summary of all that has just been said in the previous verses. The author of Hebrews has been using Psalm 95, which was written one thousand years earlier than he is writing, to exhort his readers. He is telling them, “those words spoken by David are not just old news, irrelevant spiritual musings. They are the very Word of God, living and active even today, and in them your own destiny is bound up through either belief or unbelief. That is the point being summed up by the opening words from Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active.*”¹⁴



Thank you Lord that your word is just as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago! Your word never returns void, it always accomplishes your purposes. Help my heart to be soft to what you have to say to me.

14. What significance is there in the fact that God’s word is *living and active*?

Digging Deeper: Read the following verse and answer the question:

-What do these verses tell us about the Bible and why it is living and active?

2 Timothy 3:16a "All Scripture is breathed out by God..."

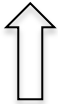
Isaiah 55:11 "...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I went it."

Picture and Ponder: “Let the man who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture.”⁵¹

Scholar's Note: "Piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow is a figurative way of saying God's word can "reach the innermost recesses of our being."⁶

15. Being that God's word is so sharp that it can pierce to the innermost recesses of your being, how should that affect how you approach Bible reading? What are some things you should watch out for in your heart?

16. God's word infiltrates so deeply into our being that it exposes our thoughts and motives. How is this uncomfortable and reassuring at the same time?



Father as I read and study your word help me to be willing and eager to have your word pierce my heart and expose my true thoughts and motives.

17. What does verse 13 teach us about God?

-How does this impact your prayer life?

-How does Jesus give us comfort in light of this exposure?

One Thing: Look back over this week's study. Pick one thing that God was stirring in your heart, convicting you about, or something new that you learned and write it here.

How will knowing this impact the way you think and act?

¹ Hughes, R. Kent. Hebrews (Vol. 1): An Anchor for the Soul: 001 (Preaching the Word) (Kindle

² Richard D. Phillips. Hebrews (Reformed Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 1530-1531). Kindle Edition.

³ Mohler, R. Albert. Exalting Jesus in Hebrews (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 57). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Richard D. Phillips. Hebrews (Reformed Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 1731-1733). Kindle Edition.

⁵ Martin Luther, What Luther Says, comp. Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 61. as quoted in Richard D. Phillips. Hebrews (Reformed Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 8335-8336). Kindle Edition. Richard D. Phillips. Hebrews (Reformed Expository Commentary) (Kindle Location 1748). Kindle Edition.

⁶ Expositor's Commentary Copyright © 1998-2018 Olive Tree Bible Software

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