

Week Seven: Jesus Provides Rest, Part Two

Introduction

It is unbelief that causes our restlessness. The cure for unbelief is the Word of God.

Digging Deeper

Read Hebrews 4:11-13

Hebrews 4:11 begins with an oxymoron: “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest.” Strive to rest? Work hard to not work? Is that what the author means? Actually, yes. This verse is a reminder that it goes against human nature to rest in Christ’s finished work on the cross. Our natural, sinful instinct is to work for salvation. We must, therefore, stop ourselves on a daily basis from this tendency. We need to work hard - train ourselves - to rest and trust, to abide in Christ (John 15:5).

Hebrews 4:12-13 transitions to a reason why we must strive to enter this rest, this faith in Christ’s finished work. Why? Because God knows our hearts, our motives. We cannot hide from God or His Word. The illustration used is of a sword that pierces straight to the heart, exposing everything that is inside. This sounds like a painful process, and often discovering the truth of God’s Word is painful. We see who God is: His purity and holiness. And then we see who we are: sinful, unholy, undeserving, unclean. Isaiah 6 is a great example of this truth. Isaiah saw God exalted on His throne and in misery exclaimed, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips...”

But thankfully God does not leave us there - pierced, exposed, unclean, naked, poor. As with Isaiah, He cleanses us and gives us hope and a purpose. And rest. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Bible Study Questions

Read Hebrews 4:1-13

1. What was it that kept the Israelites from entering Canaan, God’s rest? What will keep us from God’s rest?

2. What Psalm is quoted in verse 3? When, in regards to Joshua, was that Psalm written and why does it matter? (hint: read 6-8)
3. In what ways was Joshua's rest incomplete?
4. What works do we cease from in v.10 (works as a basis for our own righteousness)?
5. Read verse 11 several times. We know that we enter God's rest by faith. Why then are we exhorted to strive to enter God's rest? Is it not that faith is not passive but active? We need to strive to rely on and cling to and depend on Jesus' work for us! The purpose is so that we will not fall by unbelief! Faith must be attended and strengthened.
6. Name the adjectives used to describe the word of God. How do these attributes apply to your life?

Group Application Questions

1. Do you show any symptoms of someone who is not resting in Christ each day (worry, anxiety, pride, fear, impatience, self-reliance)? Strive to enter His rest!
2. Do you try to hide your sins from others or God? You can't hide from God (Genesis 3, Psalm 139). Instead, confess your sins (1 John 1:9). Repent and obey in faith.

Prayer

Have someone read Colossians 1:15–23 and have a different person pray through these points:

1. Praise Jesus because of who he is and the power that he wields.
2. Thank Jesus for working his power in ways that you've seen in your life.
3. Praise Jesus for the reconciliation that he brings to us and to the world.
4. Ask for a heart that will see Jesus and understand who he is in his full glory.
5. Ask for the ability to live out his commands and live a holy life to honor him.

*Digging Deeper and Group Application Questions were adapted from Richland Hills Community Church, Kent Hughes' Hebrews Commentary (An Anchor for the Soul), and The NIV Application Commentary by George H. Guthrie.

