



INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 4:1-13

We begin this week's study with help understanding what it means to really rest in God.

"Suppose you were digging a hole, and I offered to give you a rest. How would I do it? While you continued shoveling, I could call down a suggestion to you, such as, 'Try tossing the dirt over your left shoulder instead of your right.' I could sing a song about digging, or discuss all the latest philosophical thinking that might relate to it.

Would any of those give you rest? No, it would more likely give you a heart attack!

Yet those approaches are very much like what today's Christianity tries to do to bring rest to struggling believers, all in vain.

How could I truly give you rest if you were in that hole digging? Obviously, there is only one way: you must get out and let me get in. You must drop the spade and let me pick it up. You must quit and let me take over. You must vacate that hole in the ground so that I can occupy it.

That is the way the Lord Jesus wants to give you and me rest...He is saying to us, 'Get out, and let Me get in. Vacate, and let me occupy. Drop the spade and let me dig!'"

"What happens next? As you vacate, incredibly enough the Lord does occupy. He surprises you beyond your wildest dreams. You discover at last that God is big enough for the job. Your heart is filled with joy, and this experience of His adequacy undergirds your faith for the next situation that arises when you recognize your need for Him, your need for His rest and for relief from your own ineffective self-effort."¹

As we talk about the Sabbath rest that is available to God's people this week, we're learning that God wants to relieve the burdens of our everyday lives by having Christ work in us and through us. It's the only way to truly take a rest!

Watch It  Bible Principles

Watch Bible Principles #7; Heb. 4:1-13 www.villagebible.church/bibleprinciples

¹ W. Ian Thomas, *The Indwelling Life of Christ* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), 95-97.

Open it

1. What's your favorite vacation destination and why?

Read it

Hebrews 3:16-4:1-13

God delivered ancient Israel from slavery in Egypt and promised to give them a new land. As Israel waited in the desert for God to take them to that land, many disbelieved and disobeyed God. Because of this, those people never got to see the land. They died in the desert wilderness. Our passage for this week opens right after the author of Hebrews has reminded his audience of this history.

Explore it

2. What does the author say about people who hear the good news but don't do anything with it?
3. What is the warning from Psalm 95 that the author of Hebrews quotes in verse 7?
4. How focused should we be on entering God's rest (verse 11)?
5. What does the author say about God's word?

Apply it

Hebrews 4:1-13 is “a call for readers to do several things: first, examine themselves to see if they are genuine followers of the Messiah Jesus; second, put forth the effort to experience divine rest (God’s peace, joy, power, fruitfulness, contentment) now; and third, lay hold of heaven’s grace, which will enable them to persevere.”²

6. We are called to examine ourselves. Briefly write down what the gospel is. How does this help you know that you are truly a follower of Jesus?

7. Every Christian is offered the opportunity to experience divine rest. Describe in your own words what it means to truly rest in God.

8. In what ways are you not experiencing God’s rest in your life right now (His peace, joy, power, fruitfulness, or contentment)?

² Michael Rydelnik and Michael G. Vanlaningham, eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1928.

9. By “lay hold of heaven’s grace” we mean placing your hope in your heavenly future. The rest that God offers is not just for our time on this earth, but it’s for eternity in heaven. How does the promise of heaven help you to deal with the challenges in life?

Read Psalm 95. The author has been leaning on this Psalm since Hebrews 3:7. The Psalm condemns Israel’s wilderness generation for not trusting God’s promises, but the author of Hebrews uses it “to reiterate a great theme of this passage: those who *believe* enter God’s rest. In fact, the end of verse 3 affirms the availability of that rest to all generations – even the wilderness generation – since God’s rest started at the foundation of the world.”³

10. The author repeats “They shall not enter my rest” in verses 3 and 5. Why do you think the author repeats this statement from Psalm 95?

Reading about the mistakes of the wilderness generation is designed to get us to act differently. We should learn from their refusal to trust God. Sometimes reading about other people’s mistakes can make us feel superior to them.

11. Write about the difficulty of learning from other people’s mistakes without feeling superior to those people.

³ R. Albert Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, Christ-centered exposition (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Reference ; B & H Publishing Group, 2017), 57.

Read Hebrews 4:9-10. The Sabbath rest that the author is describing here is not the idea of avoiding work for one day per week. He's talking about resting from living your life in your own power, strength, and wisdom.

12. In what ways have you seen that “the Lord is big enough for the job of running your life when you trust Him by faith?”⁴

13. Verse 11 calls us to “strive to enter that rest.” What are some practical ways you can strive to enter God's rest each day?

Read Hebrews 4:12-13. The author of Hebrews describes God's Word as “living and active.” There is power in God's Word. It's not just words on a page or literature designed for our instruction. “The Bible is unique among all the world's books because its words are charged with the life and power of God...Interestingly the word ‘living’ is applied by the same author [of Hebrews] to God Himself (3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22). The living God sends His Word forth with His life. And because the Word is living it is also active.”⁵

14. What is your reaction to the way Scripture is described in this passage? How does it make you want to respond?

⁴ Thomas, *The Indwelling Life of Christ*, 98.

⁵ Robert L. Saucy, *Scripture: Its Authority, Power, and Relevance*, Swindoll Leadership Library (Nashville, TN: Word Pub, 2001), 3–4.

15. Respond to someone who says, “I don’t need theology or the Bible; I just need Jesus”? How could you use this passage to support your argument?⁶

16. Some churches focus less on preaching in their services because they feel people would rather spend time singing. How does this passage support the idea that preaching deeply from God’s Word is important in every church service?

In order for us to take advantage of the rest that comes from spending time in God’s Word, we have to be intentional about it. There are many things that can take up slots on our busy calendars and it’s easy for Bible study to get crowded out. “If you are out of the habit of engaging the Bible meaningfully, you might begin by setting aside 45 minutes or an hour a day to do basic study and memorization. Treat that time as nonnegotiable and choose a time during which you are least likely to be interrupted. Work at consistency rather than great value. For example, you might start by memorizing one verse per week. Also, such a commitment to Bible study and memorization is bolstered if you have a friend that will encourage you and with whom you can share insights from your study. Such interaction with scripture is costly, but you can be assured that the investment of consistently opening your life to God’s Word will pay great dividends.”⁷

17. If you are out of the habit of spending time in the Bible every day, what is one specific way you can begin forming a new daily Bible reading habit? Is there a family member or friend who can help to encourage you in this?

⁶ Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, 62.

⁷ George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 172.

This study was compiled and questions were written by Pastor Cisco Cotto—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup