

➤ Read Hebrews 4:1–13.

1. What is the main theme of this week's passage?

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2. What comes to mind when you think of rest? (Jot down words or phrases, or draw a picture before continuing.)

3. Various kinds of rest are referred to in this section of Hebrews.

- a. **Israelites' Rest** in Hebrews 3:16–19; 4:2, 8

What kind of rest was being offered? (Deut. 12:8–10)

- b. **God's Rest** in Hebrews 4:4

Why did God rest? (Gen. 2:2)

- c. **Believer's Rest** in Hebrews 4:3, 9–10

What kind of rest is being offered now? (Matt. 11:28–30)

What kind of rest awaits us? (Rev. 14:13)

4. The writer voices the concern that some may fall short of entering the rest God offers.
 - a. How could someone fail to enter the rest? (vv. 2, 6; Heb. 3:18–19; for contrast see 1 Thes. 2:13)

 - b. How do we enter the rest God promised to believers? (v. 3a; Rom. 4:1–3; Acts 13:38–39)

Rest

God’s rest on the seventh day of creation was a rest, not of exhaustion, but marking that his work was complete (Gen. 2:2). And the rest that was promised through Joshua was rest from the Israelites’ enemies (Deut. 31:3–5). Both of these leave us longing for the rest that is available to us through the work of Christ, who “has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death [our enemy] and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:9–10, emphasis added).

5. The history of the Old Testament is filled with demonstrations of God’s desire to be in relationship with his people and provide for their every need, including rest. Nevertheless, how did God respond to the people’s willful rejection of him? (v. 3b; For the context of this verse look at Ps. 95:10–11 and Exod. 17:1–7. For the broader scope of the Israelites’ rebellion, see Deut. 1:26–36.)

➤ **Reread Hebrews 4:11–13.**

6. The final verses of this week’s passage seem to go in a totally different direction.
 - a. Why do you think the author is calling our attention to the power and usefulness of the word of God?

- b. How does the “alive and active” (v. 12) word of God protect us from missing out on the rest God has promised?

- c. Maybe you see the description of the word of God as intimidating, or perhaps you don’t take it seriously. The deep work of God’s word is intended to be beneficial and relevant to life. The passages below speak figuratively of God’s word. What do they convey about its benefits?

Ps. 119:11

Ps. 119:105

Mt. 4:4

Mt. 7:24–25

Mt. 13:23

- 7. The writer of Hebrews proclaims the good news that “the promise of entering [God’s] rest still stands” (v. 1) and warns us not to harden our hearts and fail to enter this rest.
 - a. In what ways are you feeling weary and in need of rest today? (For instance, are you stuck striving to measure up, to feel good about yourself, to save yourself, to seek to earn God’s favor, to fight your battles/enemies in your own strength, etc.? Or are you worrying about troubles you face or struggling with discontentment?)

- b. Now reread Jesus’ invitation to rest in Matthew 11:28–30 in your Bible and in the Message below:

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

- c. In prayer take your weariness and self-reliance to Jesus. Take God up on his promise today and enter his rest, allowing the word of God to lead your sometimes fickle heart back to the place of rest. Accept Jesus' invitation to "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Then you can say, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Hudson Taylor served as a missionary to China for 51 years and founded China Inland Mission. From the opening chapter of *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*:

"Above all, he put to the test the promises of God, and proved it possible to live a consistent spiritual life on the highest plane. He overcame difficulties such as few men have ever had to encounter....What was the secret, we may well ask, of such a life? Hudson Taylor had many secrets, for he was always going on with God, if they were but one—a simple, profound secret of drawing for every need, temporal or spiritual, upon 'the fathomless wealth of Christ.'"

"Bear not a single care thyself,
One is too much for thee;
The work is Mine, and Mine alone;
Thy work—to rest in Me."¹

¹ Howard Taylor, and Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 15–16.