

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Restate the Big Idea in your own words using synonyms for words such as devastations, tragedy, gracious, test, and temporal. What are examples of "temporal mercies"? What is the difference between a temporal mercy and eternal rest? What is a typical cultural response to devastation and difficulty?

2. The word "test" in the passage literally means to prove. Give some examples of individuals whom God tested from the Scriptures. Discuss how they were tested. How did they respond to the test? Discuss examples when God tested a group of people. What is the goal of God's testing? What are some ways we respond to testing?

3. The word "rest" literally means to stop or cease. It is used in the context of working or some type of activity. Read Genesis 2:1-3. Considering the meaning of rest, what does it mean that God rested? From Hebrews 3:17 & 18 how did God's people fail to rest? What does it look like for us to enter God's rest? (Hebrews 3:14)

"God is the One responsible for bringing tests and trials upon man. Such testing, however, is not without intent. It is to refine the character of man that he might walk more closely in God's ways."
- Marvin Wilson

When God rests, He delights in Himself and in His work (Gen. 1:31). If this is true, then those who enter God's rest will delight in God and His work. When the fullness of God's rest is finally applied to us, we will delight only in Him and in nothing else. We will also delight in the work He has done and nothing else."
- R.C. Sproul

4. In modern terms the phrase "harden your heart" means to turn a deaf ear or to deliberately ignore someone. Discuss a time when you were ignored. How does the message from Hebrews 3:7-19 inform or reform how we think about church?

Praise to Jesus - Praise the Lord for His refining work in your own life because it is evidence of an intense, purposeful and perfect love of our Father towards his children. Praise God for the rest that he offers in the person and work of Jesus Christ who offers the kind of rest that brings peace. Praise the Lord for our Church!

Repentance through Jesus- Consider how you have responded to devastations and difficulties. Repent of a short-sighted view of hard things. Confess and repent for having a victim mind-set in difficulty rather than having the perspective of one who is dearly loved by God, who will never leave you or forsake you, who is purposely inviting you to rest in Jesus. Confess and repent of a low view or cultural view of church rather than recognizing that it is the place where God speaks to his children.

Consecration for Jesus - Ask Jesus to consecrate your heart and mind to present and future hardships in light of his purifying work. Consecrate yourself to daily lean on God's grace in order to realize that as God's child you are never a victim but are sharing in Christ's suffering and his grace is sufficient for every trial. Consecrate your ears and your heart this coming Sunday to listen and receive God's love from the pulpit.

"A hardened heart is the opposite of a tender heart, one that is easily penetrated by the Word of God, is easily impressed by its teaching, is moved by God's love, and is touched and won over by God's great redemptive works."
- Richard Phillips

“Pastoral discipleship from the pulpit for you through the week.
Each of our pastors has designed content with you in mind.”

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

If you want to connect with our family ministries, contact Pastor Ken (kenc@fpcrome.org)

1. In Hebrews 3:7 we read, “as the Holy Spirit says” and then we read a quote from Psalm 95. Make sure to point this out to your children that even though Psalm 95 was written by a human, ultimately that human author was inspired by God the Holy Spirit.

- a. Ask your children what difference it makes that we believe that the Bible is inspired by God, and it is His Word.
- b. Take time to tell your children about the difference the Bible has made and does make in your life.
- c. Also point out to your children that this passage talks about when we hear God’s voice. Talk with your children about how we primarily hear God’s voice by reading the Bible.

2. In our passage, we read a warning against the “the deceitfulness of sin”.

- a. Ask your children if they know what “deceitfulness” means and have them give an example of deceitfulness.
- b. Then ask your children how sin can be deceitful.
- c. Talk about how sin lies about the consequences of sin and lies about the happiness that comes from sin.
- d. This provides another opportunity to talk with your children about the importance of regularly reading the Bible in order to know the Truth.

3. The author of Hebrews in verses 12-13 commands us to “Take care” and to “exhort one another”. This tells us to be on guard and to strongly encourage one another to be on the watch for sin.

- a. Ask your children how we can encourage each other this week to know the truth about sin.
- b. Also point out to your children that our battle against sin is not something we are to do alone, but we are to do it with other Christians like our family and our church friends.
- c. Also talk with your children about the importance of reminding each other of the greatness of Jesus Christ and His victory on our behalf. This is how we help each other to keep walking with the Lord.

Big Idea

Today’s devastations and difficulties are not ultimately a tragedy but a gracious test of the Father by which the Spirit ensures that our hearts are not rooted in temporal mercies but the eternal rest of the Son.

Outline

1. God’s Test

2. God’s Rest

3. God’s Voice

“Let the church daily lean on God’s grace in order to realize that His children are never victims of their circumstances. You can’t imagine a more victimized person than Jesus. Yet when he died, he didn’t say, “I am finished” but “It is finished.” He did not play the victim...he emerged the victor. Forget your self-pity. True, your supervisor may be trying to push you out of your job. Your marriage may be a fiery trial. You might be living below the poverty level. But victory is yours in Christ. His grace is sufficient. Know this truth and it will set you free. This day, Jesus, I can feel sorry for myself or victorious in you. Show me how to choose the latter.”

– Joni Erickson Tada

“God’s word is living and active...at no point does Scripture become outdated and irrelevant...God spoke to His people in the desert; David composed Psalm 95, through which God addressed the Israelites; the author of Hebrews quotes a number of verses from that Psalm and says the Holy Spirit speaks to those reading his epistle. God’s word still speaks to us today.”

– Simon Kistemaker

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 95

Matthew 11:28-30

Romans 8:31-39

"GOSPEL TESTING"

Hebrews 3:7-19

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, **8** do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, **9** where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. **10** Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' **11** As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" **12** Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **14** For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. **15** As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." **16** For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? **17** And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? **18** And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? **19** So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Historical Context

This passage is rooted in the story of God's people in the OT. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. They began to cry out to God, and he heard them. And despite mighty miracles by God through Moses, Pharaoh refused to let God's people go. So finally, God rescued his people in dramatic fashion through the parting of the Red Sea.

Yet soon after their deliverance, the people began to grumble and complain. They began to get fearful. It was as if they had not seen enough to fully trust in the LORD. What did God do? According to verse 8 there was a season of testing. The testing took place for 40 years in the wilderness. The original destination was the promised land in Canaan but God decided they needed a detour and so he tested them in the wilderness.

The word "test" that is used in the passage (in referring to that event) literally means "to prove". Throughout the Scriptures God tests people. The first time is in Gen 22 with Abraham. God also tested king Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32. According to Hebrews 3:7-19 God tested not only individuals but also his people.

4. This passage also introduces the concept of the rest of God. We will read more about it in Hebrews 4. The author uses the example of the Israelites journey to the Promised Land from Egypt. For them, they thought of entering the Promised Land as entering God's rest.

- a. The author points out that the Israelites didn't respond with faith and trust in God. Instead, they hardened their hearts and did not trust God. Therefore, they did not enter God's rest.
- b. For us, we are invited into God's rest through faith in Jesus Christ. Talk with your children about what it means to trust in God.

FOR STUDENTS

If you want to connect with our student ministries, contact Pastor Jimmy (jimmyl@fpcrome.org)

1. The Holy Spirit is talked about for the first time in the book in 3:7. What is the Holy Spirit's function here?
2. Read Psalm 95, which is a reflection upon Exodus 32. What connections do you find with both Psalm 95 and our passage in Hebrews?
3. According to verse 13 how long are we to "exhort one another"? What are we to "exhort one another" in, and why?
4. What/Who have we come to share in according to verse 14?
5. "Our confidence" is mentioned in 3:6. Why is it mentioned again here in 3:14?

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Hebrews: How Jesus Speaks into Everything by John D. Barry.*

Scriptures for further study:

2 Chronicles 32

Genesis 22

, 1 Peter 4:12-13

Psalm 95

2 Corinthians 13:5-7

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

If you want to know more about Jesus and Christianity, contact Pastor Jonathan (jonathans@fpcrome.org)

1. In the opening verse of this passage (verse 7), the writer of Hebrews begins with the statement, "as the Holy Spirit says...", and then proceeds to quote from Psalm 95 in the Old Testament. What is the author implying here about the Scriptures? What does this say about the inspiration and the authority of the Scriptures? What do you believe about the Bible?

2. This passage issues a strong warning that we are not to be like the Israelites, who, in their sin, rebellion, and hardness of heart, perished in the desert. Jesus also warns us that not believing in him results in perishing (John 3:16). Take these warnings seriously! God warns us because he loves us and desires for us to have true life instead.

3. Three times the author uses the word "today." This is meant to convey the sense of urgency we should have in turning from sin and turning toward God instead. Now is always the right time to make that decision!

4. Sin can easily deceive us and make our hearts progressively hardened. What prescription for this does the author offer to us in verse 13? As a new believer, are you connected to the church and to people who will encourage you in your faith and help you hold firm till the end (verse 14)?

5. The Israelites did not enter the land of Caanan and experience the rest that God had promised. But if you and I believe in Jesus Christ, we will receive all the blessings of "resting" in him. We no longer need to labor to achieve our righteousness; instead, we can have full rest in knowing that in Christ we are made righteous, and we can have confidence that one day we will enter our eternal home and promised land. Would you like to experience these blessings?

Like Christina. But even more so...we need something to fix our gaze upon...we need a home to pull us forward...and according to Hebrews, that is Jesus Christ...like the home on the hill in the painting, Jesus is the pinnacle of God's plan of redemption...so considering this painting and background, here these words afresh from Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1-2:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

And so, church, let's begin this journey in Hebrews together...which is not disconnected from our humanity and our struggles...for we to live in Christina's world...a world of suffering, pain, and hardship...but we are in a relationship with the savior, Jesus, who has overcome the world...and because of His supremacy, calls us to fix our eyes on Him in order that we might persevere in faith. -Tremper Longman, EBC, 23-25

About the artwork

Andrew Wyeth is perhaps the most famous American artist of the 20th century. He, along with John Singer Sargent, are the only two American artists invited into the Academy of Fine Art in Paris, France. President Kennedy awarded Wyeth the presidential medal of freedom, the only visual artist to receive such an award. He was also awarded presidential medals from George H Bush and George W Bush.

His art is connected to his humanity. He was a man that experienced loss and grief in this broken and fallen world and often expressed his pain in visual form through art.

His most famous work, and the one that best expresses his struggle with pain and grief, is a painting called Christina's World (1948). Christina is a friend of Wyeth and had a disease that left her unable to walk. Instead of choosing a wheelchair, she preferred to crawl using her arms. The painting is a picture of her struggle...but it is also a picture of her hope...in the painting her hands are gripped to the ground portraying her daily suffering, yet her body is leaning towards the farmhouse, which was her home. Life was a struggle, but her gaze and hope were on her home, which kept her moving forward and not giving up.

The book of Hebrews has a very similar theme...the writer expresses the hope and gaze of home in the person and work of Jesus Christ...the struggle to give up or turn back was very real for the audience...most scholars believe the original audience was Jewish Christians who were facing persecution...it would have been a struggle for them to keep moving forward in the profession of Jesus Christ because with that profession came pain and hardship.

ADDITIONAL NOTES



What is Pulpit Driven Discipleship?

Discipleship from the pulpit to communities therein pressed into the head, heart and hands of image bearers of God every day.

Pulpit Driven Discipleship is the name of a process of discipleship. Discipleship begins on Sunday with the sermon faithfully preached by our pastors then the message of sermon is digested and pressed into the heart throughout the week through prayer reflection and discussion in the home or in smaller discussion groups. It is in this context that life transformation and growth occur.

The pastoral leadership team and the Adult Discipleship Ministry Team are excited to walk together through the Book of Hebrews. Please prayerfully consider incorporating PDD as your primary means of discipleship. We believe that PDD is appropriate for individuals, couples, families, and groups of all kinds. This great resource can be found in the bulletin on Sunday, and will be available on-line and via email each week.

Director of Adult Discipleship Rob Davis welcomes discussion, questions, and comments of all kinds. Rob Davis 706-252-5216, RobD@fpcrome.org

PULPIT DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP



Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World, 1948 ;

Perseverance by Promise ***A Study of the Sermon to the Hebrews***

March 6, 2022