



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 7



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 7
FEBRUARY 27, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

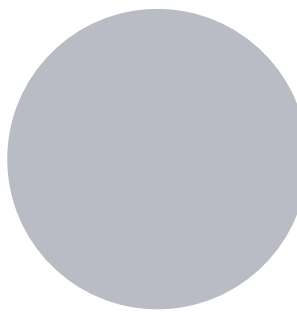
... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.




WEEK 7

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DAY 1

SPIRITUAL FATIGUE

First read Hebrews 4:1-2.

Our souls need rest. But in our fast-paced and physical world we rarely pause to consider our spiritual condition. Though our bodies sleep, our hearts stay awake with fear, worry, and shame. We are spiritually fatigued. The good news is amidst our soul's weariness, **"the promise of entering [God's] rest still stands"** (v.1a). And the writer of Hebrews invites us in (v.2b).

For Israel, spiritual fatigue is the result of being stranded, "stuck in the desert between the slavery of Egypt and the promise of Canaan" (*Guthrie*, 166). Their exhausted spirits convince them to lose faith in God's goodness and power. The desert exposes need. Instead of trusting God with uncertainty, they blame him. Our souls are prone to similar weariness and disorientation. Between this age and the one to come, we get tired. We grow weary of waiting on God's direction and provision.

Our souls need rest. Yet in our exhaustion we often do the opposite of what our souls need: we keep trying to make our own way. Rest is the invitation to trust. As Marva Dawn notes, rest is ceasing to be God in our own lives. That's why Jesus says, **"Come to me"** (Matthew 11:28). He doesn't say, come to my community ... or come on my vacation ... or come to my workshop (see *Guthrie*, 166). He says, come to *me*. Because that's the only remedy for a weary soul ... a loving Savior.

DAY 1 SPIRITUAL FATIGUE

1. Why is it 'good news' that we can rest in Christ?
2. What's making your soul tired right now?
3. How does Jesus bring peace, love, or freedom to your weary spirit?

Heavenly Father ...

You are worthy of my trust because in you I'm free of worry and shame, enveloped in your love. Help me to trust and enjoy your rest.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2 FINISHED WORK

First read Hebrews 4:3-5.

We usually think about rest as the reward for finished work. After all, rest is the opposite of work. *Right? But isn't something else always around the corner? Another project, assignment, presentation, or night shift?* That seems like a moving finish line. So, *how can we rest if work is never ending?*

Hebrews' author shifts our thinking. He tells us, **"we who have believed entered that rest"** (v.3). True rest comes through faith, not finished work. Well, at least not *our* finished work. Rest is a reward of what God has done.

In one sense, **"his works were finished from the foundation of the world"** (v.3). Creation is complete. In another sense, rest only became possible when Jesus said, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). Redemption is complete. Therefore rest is God's reward for God's finished work. Notice he calls it **"my"** rest and **"God rested on the seventh day"** (v.3,5). Rest belongs to God.

But here's the good news: in Christ we enjoy what only God deserves (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Trusting the Lord frees us from an unhealthy relationship with rest and work. We're freed from being defined by work, because we're defined by Christ (1 Peter 2:1-5). We're freed from financial anxiety, because Christ is our provider (Matthew 6:25-34). We're freed from securing our future through work, because we are hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3).

Rest is possible because God's work is complete. Paradoxically, because God's work is finished we can enjoy rest ... even though we might have more work left to do.

DAY 2 FINISHED WORK

1. What do you think it means that God is at rest?
2. How is your work (or lack thereof) causing you fear and weariness right now?
3. How does the gospel free you from these fears and weariness?

Heavenly Father ...

(Inhale.) Your work is done.

(Exhale.) Creation and redemption are complete.

(Inhale.) Settle my fears.

(Exhale.) Refresh my spirit.

(Inhale.) I'm satisfied in you.

(Exhale.)

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3 OBEDIENT JOY

First read Hebrews 4:6-7.

The writer is repeating himself a lot. Over and over again he's clear: Israel didn't listen to God's voice and so they didn't enter God's rest. They, ***“failed to enter because of disobedience”*** (v.6). In other words, disobedience never leads to rest.

This is tragically ironic. Usually our primary motivation for disobedience is joy and peace—we want rest. We desire pleasure and happiness and freedom but don't think righteousness can give us what we seek.

That's why sin is the fruit of distrust. When we sin we're not trusting that God is about our good. We're convinced happiness is something we have to get for ourselves. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, aware of this tension, was emphatic that, “They alone are truly happy who are seeking to be righteous” (*Spiritual Depression*). Disobedience never leads to joy. Obedience always does.

Hebrews teaches us that obedience is not simply compliance with God's voice. It's also the enjoyment of God's rest. I think that's why the writer keeps repeating himself. This is a counterintuitive doctrine. *Isn't it?* Life with Christ is filled with paradoxes. Rest comes through Christ's work. Joy comes through Christ's righteousness. Life comes through Christ's death. Joy comes through obedience.

DAY 3 OBEDIENT JOY

1. What does this lesson tell us about God's nature and character?
2. What does it teach us about ourselves?
3. How does the gospel lead us to rest?

Heavenly Father ...

I'm often confused. I think, like Israel, I know what's best and how things work. Grant me the humility to know I don't know. Grant me the courage to trust that you're trustworthy. Grant me the rest that only comes through you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4

TRUE AND BETTER

First read Hebrews 4:8.

Not everyone enters the land God promises. Including Moses. As we learned in the previous passage, many **“failed to enter because of disobedience”** (v.6). But Joshua does enter God's rest. Repeatedly God told Israel's new leader, **“Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them”** (Joshua 1:6). Joshua does enter God's rest and he brings others with him.

However, the preacher intimates that the rest Joshua gives is not ultimate. Otherwise, **“God would not have spoken of another day later on”** (v.8b). Another day holds a true and better rest for God's people because another day promises a true and better Joshua.

The Promised Land and Joshua are signposts. That is, they point us to something greater. Author David Paul Tripp explains, “all of creation was designed to be one big sign that points you to the One of ultimate glory who alone has the power to give you life and to satisfy your heart” (*New Morning Mercies*, 24).

This includes leaders.

This includes rest.

The challenge is not to settle; not to settle for lesser glories and wait for the true and the better. The Promised Land points us to greater rest because Joshua points us to a greater Savior.

DAY 4

TRUE AND BETTER

1. Why is the rest of Christ true and better than the rest of Joshua and the Promised Land?
2. Why is it hard for you to wait for the true and better?
3. How does Jesus help us in our waiting?

Heavenly Father ...

Waiting is hard. But waiting on you is always good. Because you are what I truly need. You are better than every other pleasure, joy, and love. Help me to rest as I wait on you in all things.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5 SABBATH REST

First read Hebrews 4:9-10.

We were not made to always work. This has never been more of a challenge. The technological age presents us with the opportunity and expectation of bringing our work with us wherever we go. This complexity only intensified through the global pandemic in which a number of workers moved their work into their kitchens and living rooms. We are always working, it seems, whether we like it or not. Even when we don't open emails, we think about our aspirations for work and the pressure we feel to secure future, identity, and joy for ourselves.

Ceaseless work believes a lie. It believes we have to take care of ourselves. Against the grain of this destructive deception, the Scriptures present to us a God who rests ... a God who invites us to rest like him (v.10b). *Why?* Because, as theologian Marva Dawn observes, "A great benefit of Sabbath keeping is that we learn to let God take care of us—not by becoming passive and lazy, but in the freedom of giving up our feeble attempts to be God in our own lives" (*Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, 4). We enter rest when we let God be God.

Sabbath is not a rule. It's an invitation. It's a healing posture which shapes us in the image of our Creator. You see, when we stop working in a world that never stops, we learn to see the world beyond this one. It's a world where our futures are secure, our identities are whole, and our joy is everlasting. By grace, **"there remains a Sabbath rest"** for you and me (v.9a). We can stop. We can let God take care of us (1 Peter 5:7).


DAY 5 SABBATH REST

1. Do you think God takes good care of you? How do you know?
2. What fears show up when you stop or simply think about stopping your work?
3. How has Jesus taken care of your future, identity, and joy through his death and resurrection?

Heavenly Father ...

(In stillness and silence, let your soul rest in Christ. Let God bring to mind all the ways he cares for you.)

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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