

## Hebrews 4:1-13 – Leader's Guide

### A Better Rest for the Weary

1. Is there someone in your life around whom you can completely rest? Who is it, and why do you feel able to rest in their presence?

*This is more of an icebreaker to get your group thinking about the necessary conditions for being at rest in someone's presence. Some conditions may include: a history with the person, total acceptance, love, the ability to be silent together, mutual affection, etc...*

2. While the biblical idea of rest includes "ceasing" from work, it also has positive connotations of finding a resting place in God and being made secure in his presence. How does the news that God made us to find a resting place in His presence land with you? Are there any times in your life where you've experienced God as your resting place? What was that like?

*For some this may be a new thought, for others, it may be a source of comfort to know that this is God's purpose for their life. This question is intended to connect rest to being in God's presence through Jesus.*

3. There is weariness brought on by life in general, and then there's the cost specific to being a follower of Jesus. What are some of the costs you experience for following Jesus in modern day Toronto?

*The first recipients of the letter to the Hebrews were experiencing a cost for worshipping Jesus as Lord within the Roman Empire. They were socially marginalized and were not included in Roman protections offered to Judaism and its adherents. Thus, they came under persecution from both sides. Judaism was leery of their belief that Jesus is God's Messiah and Romans were suspicious because they did not participate in Roman religion and Imperial cult. Help your group think through some of the spiritual/cultural pressures that can wear disciples of Jesus down in modern life.*

### Read Hebrews 4:1-3 and Numbers 13:25:-14:4

4. What does the preacher show about the relationship between the Gospel message and faith? Why is faith so crucial to entering God's rest? How does the preacher use the wilderness generation to encourage and exhort the letter's hearers?

*Help your group understand that there is one word in the NT that is translated "faith" or "believe" in English translations: the Greek noun pistis or verb pisteuo. It's helpful to know that "to believe" and "to have faith" are not two different things, but the same idea. NT scholars often*

*highlight that pistis is not an abstract idea but a virtue that is confirmed in concrete acts of faithfulness.*

*Help them wrestle with some of the different catalysts at work in the wilderness generation that contributed to unbelief (a lack of trust/faithlessness).*

### **Read Hebrews 4:6-11**

5. The preacher to the Hebrews connects faith to hearing God's voice with a soft heart.
  - a. Have you ever thought about faith in that way?
  - b. Are there practices or postures you find help you keep an open and soft heart to God's voice?
  - c. What is the relationship between grace, faith, and "making every effort" in the life of discipleship? How do they fit together?

*Pastorally, some people struggle with the question of hearing God's voice. Some may come from church backgrounds where overly spiritualized language about hearing from God caused pain or confusion. Others may come from backgrounds that implicitly or explicitly seemed to deny that God still speaks today. Bear this in mind and try to help your group understand that God does still speak today, primarily through Holy Scripture as the Holy Spirit illumines our hearts/minds and reveals Jesus therein. Most traditions also affirm that God speaks through others, through creation, through tradition, through our faculty of reason, and by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, and by the Holy Spirit working through spiritual gifts within the communion of saints. Scripture serves as a guide and guardian to all these other means.*

*Re: grace, faith, and making every effort. Emphasize that our effort in the Christian life is a response to grace and the active outworking of faith. Our effort/works don't free us from slavery or earn us God's favour, only Jesus Christ does that. Dallas Willard helpfully observes that, "Grace is opposed to earning, not effort." This may be a helpful insight to share and discuss as a group.*

6. "Once you've lived in Egypt, it's hard to get Egypt out of your system." In the Exodus story, God seeks to form his people such that they live more into the freedom he's given them. Are there ways you are sometimes tempted to "go back to Egypt" or when you see "residues" of a slavery mindset still clinging to you, even though you are no longer under the yoke of slavery?

*This question is aimed at honest discussion around struggles we continue to have in the Christian life. It's important to normalize how in the life of discipleship to Jesus, as we walk in the wilderness, we continue to wrestle with sin, or false views of self or God, even though we've been redeemed by Christ and he is at work by his Spirit to sanctify us. The responses to this question might be fodder for prayer as a group. Encourage your group to come to Jesus, lay down those burdens, and take his yoke on in a fresh way.*

**Read Matthew 11:25-30**

7. How does taking Jesus' yoke and learning from him form us as people who rest in God?  
In an age where people are on edge because of anxiety, fear, and anger, how might people living into the rest of Jesus have an impact on those around them?

*This question seeks to consider the influence for good that people who abide in God's rest can have on those around them. Get your group thinking about mission, service, and ways of living into the Kingdom of God that embody and share good news with the world.*