

Feb 1, 2026 Leader's Guide

Hebrews 4:11-5:10 "The Rest you've been running from"

Read Hebrews 4:11-13

1. What is the role of the word of God in the follower of Jesus? Can you give some practical examples of how this works itself out in your own life?

To expose us. Expose who we truly are, our thoughts and core motivations. So that we would be naked and laid bare before the one to whom we must give an account.

The second part of the question is meant to draw everyone into the heart implications of the passage. Bringing to the surface how the text convicts us, reveals in Jesus the true humanity that we were created for, the impact of sin on our lives and families.

If you share a personal example it will help others in their openness to share.

Read Genesis 1:26-27; 2:25-3:7

2. In Genesis it tells us that the first human creatures were naked and not ashamed. Why was that?

They stood in the presence of God's love, goodness and glory and knew to the core of their being that they were loved, known, and delighted in. As a result they were at ease with themselves to the very core of their being.

3. When they turned from God they realized they were naked and felt shame. Why was that?

They had stepped away from God's love deciding instead to rule in his place, to decide for themselves what was right and wrong. As a result they felt dis ease with themselves to the core of their being.

4. In response to their nakedness they sewed together fig leaves to cover the shame. What are some of the fig leaves we use to cover the shame, the dis ease with ourselves to the core of our being?

Here is an unedited portion of the sermon where Tim reflects on our fig leaves that might help you guide the discussion. You could spend a lot of time here, but try to move people to reflect on their own fig leaves rather than diagnosing others...

What do you turn to to tell yourself your ok - acceptable - to cover over any sense of shame - in adequacy - dis ease - well - for some of us its our accomplishments - or the accomplishments of our kids - our titles - the letters after our name - our net worth - the size of our paycheck - what we give away - the magnitude of our following on social media - the number on the scale

in the morning - the way people often presume we are 10 years younger than we actually are - or we've become adept at projecting a false self - a self we believe others will accept - what are your fig leaves? what do you turn to to tell yourself your ok - to cover over any sense of shame - dis ease?

Then there are those moments in life that confirm our deepest fears - you're not ok - you're not acceptable - perhaps a job loss - a betrayal - a rejection - a broken relationship - an opportunity that passes us by - or simply feeling stuck in a place we don't want to be - what do we do with it? - when the other fig leaves have proved inadequate.

At times we will lay the blame at the feet of another - this only happened because of my upbringing - what they did - what they said - who they are - this says nothing about who I am - this has everything to do with who they are - their wrong becomes our fig leaf

I've seen this often enough in the aftermath of a broken relationships - with few exceptions - both parties - albeit to varying degrees have contributed to it - the healthiest response would be to acknowledge your own part to play - address it and move on with life - but no - what often happens is that we cover over our wrong with their wrong - we craft a narrative where we're the hero - they're the villain - we try and get the narrative out there - rallying our friends to "on side" - we cement the narrative by recalling their wrongs over and over again - what are we doing - we are trying to cover over our wrong with their wrong - it is an inadequate fig leaf for all it serves is to cement our anger - bitterness and unforgiveness - tying our emotional life up with them - we may rarely if ever see them again - but they consistently invade our thoughts - steal our joy - our rest - our contentment.

For others of us - our fig leaves are all about escape - numbing ourselves to the shame - the dis ease - reach for the bottle - pop open the pills - binge watch the latest show - keep busy - active - always have something on - something to listen to - to drown out the swirl of unwelcome thoughts.

And then there is the cultural fig leaf - oh this sense of guilt - of dis ease - shame - is only the result of religious - societal - cultural - familial expectations - if we just rid ourselves of those - allow everyone to define what is right for them - we can be rid of such unwanted feelings - have we?

You see the problem with fig leaves is they dry out - break down - blow away - must be constantly reapplied - they will never ever cover over the shame - never ever deal with the nakedness - and if we are honest with ourselves - our lack of rest - our over work - over thinking - over worrying - is due to the fact that we are constantly adjusting - reapplying - acquiring for ourselves fig leaves

Read Hebrews 5:1-4

5. What were the qualifications for a high priest? In what ways were they to deal with the barrier of sin that had come between God and humanity?

Appointed by God to represent humanity before God

To offer gifts and sacrifices for sin

Can deal gently with sinners because he too is a sinner

Read Hebrew 4:14-16; 5:5-10

6. How does Jesus meet these qualifications? In what ways is he superior?

Appointed by God but not only as a priest, but a son, a king.

Not temporary but forever

He doesn't just cleanse the temple so that the glory of God might reside there, he has passed through the heavens so can usher us into the very presence of God.

He has suffered everything we have suffered so he can sympathize with us – suffer with us.

Intercedes for us

7. Jesus has fully entered into our human suffering and so can sympathize, meaning suffer with us. How does this help you navigate the exposure brought about by the word of God?

The hope here would be to tie up some parts of the conversation from the beginning. When our sin is exposed by the word of God how does it help to know that Jesus has faced this thing as well? That he won't just meet you with gentleness and forbearance as would a human priest, but with the deepest and truest of sympathy.

8. The preacher to the Hebrews in light of who Jesus is wants us to respond to the exposure of the word by coming with confidence before the throne of grace. Why? How might we do this practically?

For there we will receive mercy – "not be treated as our sins deserve" – and help in our time of need.

The word of God exposes our wounds that Jesus would heal them.

The word of God exposes our sin that Jesus would forgive us

The word of God exposes our enslavement to idols that Jesus would free us.

The word of God exposes what brings us down to death that Jesus would give us life.

Spend the bulk of our time working out how we bring these things to Jesus. Often we try and sort them out ourselves. No – come to Jesus – in prayer – in confession – in heartfelt cry for his help and deliverance.