



October 18 — Encourage One Another

Weekly Reading: Titus 3; Philemon; Hebrews 1–3

Life Group Passage: Hebrews 3:7–14

Main Point

We guard against hardened hearts by listening to God today, holding firmly to Christ, and encouraging one another to persevere.

Key Verse

“But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.”

Hebrews 3:13

Life Group — The Flow

- 15 minutes — Conversation and relationship-building
- 5 minutes — Looking Back
- 5 minutes — Introduction, Background, and Christ Connection
- 30 minutes — Study and Apply
- 5–7 minutes — Application Exercise
- 10 minutes — Pray Through the Passage and Prayer Requests
- 5 minutes — Conclusion

If Time Is Limited...

Focus on:

- Main Point and Key Verse
- Background and Christ Connection
- Read Hebrews 3:7–11
- Passage 1 questions 1 and 3
- Read Hebrews 3:12–14
- Passage 2 questions 1 and 4
- Application Exercise
- Pray Through the Passage

- Final Takeaway

Looking Back — 5 Minutes

Last week we saw that God-breathed Scripture teaches, corrects, trains, and equips us. Hebrews now presses us to respond to God's voice today—and to help one another keep responding.

Discuss one or more:

- How did you use Read • Receive • Respond this week?
- Did Scripture correct or train you in a way you did not expect?
- What good work did God's Word help prepare you to do?

Transition to Introduction

“God's Word speaks, but Hebrews reminds us that hearing truth is not the same as responding to it. Hearts can slowly become less responsive unless we pay attention.”

Introduction — 5 Minutes

Ask

What warning sign do people commonly ignore until the problem becomes serious?

Examples could include dashboard lights, health symptoms, smoke detectors, weather alerts, financial notices, or relationship tension.

Follow-Up

Why do repeated warnings sometimes become easier to tune out rather than easier to obey?

Say

Warning signs are meant to move us to action. Their value disappears when we learn to see or hear them without responding.

Hebrews uses Israel's wilderness history as a warning to Christians. God had spoken, provided, and proved faithful, yet the people repeatedly hardened their hearts. The writer tells the church not only to watch their own hearts but to encourage one another every day so that sin's deception does not quietly harden anyone.

Transition to Background

“The warning reaches back to a familiar Old Testament failure and applies it directly to believers who were under pressure to turn away from Christ.”

Background

Hebrews was written to Christians facing pressure, weariness, and the temptation to retreat from their confession of Jesus. The letter repeatedly shows that Christ is better: greater than angels, greater than Moses, and the final revelation of God.

In Hebrews 3, the writer compares Jesus with Moses and then quotes Psalm 95, which reflects on Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness. The generation rescued from Egypt saw extraordinary acts of God but repeatedly tested Him and refused to trust His word.

The point is not simply that ancient Israel behaved badly. Scripture says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” The past becomes a present warning.

Hebrews takes perseverance seriously. Its warnings are not designed to make tender believers live in constant panic. They are among the means God uses to call His people to faith, expose false confidence, and keep the church actively encouraging one another toward Christ.

Transition to Christ Connection

“The call not to harden our hearts is ultimately a call to keep trusting the living God who has spoken finally and fully in His Son.”

Christ Connection

Earlier in Hebrews, Jesus is presented as God’s final Word and as the faithful Son over God’s house. Our perseverance is not faith in faith itself; it is continuing confidence in Christ.

Jesus remained faithful where Israel failed. He obeyed the Father completely, endured temptation without sin, and went to the cross to rescue a rebellious people. Through His resurrection, He gives new life and brings believers into God’s household.

Because Christ is sufficient, turning away from Him is never progress toward something better. The church therefore encourages one another not by saying, “Try harder to keep yourself saved,” but by continually pointing one another back to the trustworthy Son.

God often uses Christian community as a means of perseverance. We cannot believe for someone else, but we can speak truth, notice drift, pray, remind, warn gently, and help one another keep looking to Jesus.

Transition to Study and Apply

“The warning begins with one urgent word: Today.”

Study and Apply — 30 Minutes

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says and how we can apply it in our lives this week.

Passage 1 — Hebrews 3:7–11

Hear His Voice Today

Read the Passage – Have a volunteer read Hebrews 3:7–11.

A Rest for the People of God

[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.’” (ESV)

Commentary

Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, summarize the key insights rather than reading everything word-for-word.

Verse 7 introduces the quotation with “as the Holy Spirit says.” The writer treats Psalm 95 not merely as something God said in the past but as the Spirit speaking to God’s people in the present.

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” A hard heart is not merely an emotional feeling. It is a settled resistance to trusting and obeying what God has said.

Verses 8–9 recall Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness. The people had seen God’s works, yet testing and complaining became a pattern. Exposure to God’s activity did not automatically produce trust.

Verse 10 says the generation continually went astray in their hearts and did not know God’s ways. Their outward rebellion grew from inward distrust.

Verse 11 recalls God’s judgment: “They will not enter my rest.” The warning is serious because unbelief is serious. God’s promises are generous, but they are not invitations to treat Him casually.

The repeated word “today” teaches urgency. One of sin’s favorite lies is that obedience can always be postponed. Hebrews says the appropriate time to respond to God’s voice is now.

Guide Discussion

You do not need to cover every question. Use those that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What repeated actions or attitudes in Israel’s story reveal a hardening heart?
2. **Discuss.** Why can seeing God work in the past still fail to produce present trust and obedience?
3. **Deeper Dive.** What is the danger of repeatedly postponing a response we already know God is calling us to make?
4. **Reflective — Index Card.** Is there any area where “later” has become your regular response to something God has made clear?

Teaching Insight

Say

“A hardened heart is rarely formed in one dramatic moment. It often develops through repeated small refusals to trust and obey. Hebrews responds with urgency: listen to God today.”

Transition to Passage 2

“The writer now moves from Israel’s history to the responsibility of the church: watch yourselves, and do not leave one another unattended.”

Passage 2 — Hebrews 3:12–14

Watch Out and Encourage

Read the Passage – Have a volunteer read Hebrews 3:12–14.

[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. (ESV)

Commentary

Verse 12 says, “Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.” The warning is addressed to the community, and each person is called to examine the direction of the heart.

Sin is not neutral. Persistent unbelief moves away from the living God. The writer does not want professing Christians to assume that past association with the church makes present drift harmless.

Verse 13 gives a communal response: “encourage each other daily.” Encouragement here is stronger than saying something nice. It includes coming alongside another person with truth, appeal, comfort, and warning as needed.

The reason is “sin’s deception.” Sin rarely introduces itself by honestly announcing where it intends to lead. It minimizes consequences, exaggerates benefits, and persuades us that our exception is reasonable. Other believers can often see what we have become skilled at explaining away.

Verse 14 says we have become participants in Christ “if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.” Perseverance does not earn a share in Christ; it demonstrates the reality of genuine participation in Him.

The passage therefore holds personal responsibility and communal care together. Each person must respond to Christ, but Christians are commanded to help one another persevere.

Consider This — The Carbon Monoxide Detector

Carbon monoxide is dangerous partly because people cannot see or smell it. A detector does not create the danger; it reveals a danger that may otherwise go unnoticed.

A wise person does not become angry with the alarm for interrupting a quiet evening. The warning is an act of protection because something deceptive is present.

Biblical encouragement sometimes comforts us and sometimes sounds an alarm; both can be acts of grace when they help us keep trusting Christ.

Guide Discussion

1. **Good for Students.** According to verses 12–14, what responsibilities do believers have toward themselves and toward one another?
2. **Discuss.** What is the difference between biblical encouragement and simply being positive or agreeable?
3. **Deeper Dive.** Why is sin's deception easier to resist in honest Christian community than in isolation?
4. **Reflective — Index Card.** Who has permission to lovingly tell you when they see spiritual drift—and who might need that kind of faithful encouragement from you?

Teaching Insight

Say

“Christian community is not a substitute for personal faith, but it is one of God’s gifts for perseverance. We need people who will remind us of truth before sin’s explanations harden into settled patterns.”

Transition to Application Exercise

“Hebrews gives us three movements we can practice: hear God, guard against deception, and encourage someone else.”

Application Exercise — 5–7 Minutes

Hear • Guard • Encourage

Supplies: Index cards and pens

Use these prompts privately first. If the final step involves another person, plan a gentle and appropriate action rather than a dramatic confrontation.

1. Hear

What truth from God do you need to respond to today rather than later?

2. Guard

What explanation or excuse makes disobedience sound reasonable in that area? What truth exposes the deception?

3. Encourage

Who can you strengthen this week with a reminder, prayer, check-in, or honest word centered on Christ?

Say

“The goal is not to become suspicious of everyone’s spiritual life. It is to become the kind of community where no one has to drift unnoticed.”

Transition to Pray Through the Passage

“The passage warns us about turning from the living God, so let’s pray to the living God for responsive hearts and faithful community.”

Pray Through the Passage — 10 Minutes

Led by the Prayer Champion

Read each verse and prayer prompt aloud. Allow a few moments between prompts for personal reflection and prayer.

If time is limited, use one or two prompts rather than all four. The goal is meaningful prayer through the passage, not completing every prompt.

Prompt 1 — Adoration (Who God Is)

God is living and speaks truth to His people.

Hebrews 3:12 — “Turns away from the living God.”

Praise God because He is living, present, and worthy of continued trust.

Prompt 2 — Confession (Where We Need Him)

Sin deceives and hardens.

Hebrews 3:13 — “So that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.”

Confess where you have believed an excuse that made disobedience seem smaller or safer than it is.

Prompt 3 — Gratitude (What He Has Done)

Believers share in Christ.

Hebrews 3:14 — “For we have become participants in Christ.”

Thank God that salvation brings you into real participation with Christ rather than leaving you to sustain yourself alone.

Prompt 4 — Response / Obedience (How We Will Obey)

Encourage one another today.

Hebrews 3:13 — “Encourage each other daily, while it is still called today.”

Ask God to show you how to strengthen one person with truth, grace, and timely encouragement this week.

Prayer Requests, Praises, and Follow-Up

- Ask the group for updates from the previous week’s prayer requests and celebrate answered prayers.

- Invite members to share honestly at whatever level they are comfortable so the group can support one another through prayer and practical care.
- Pray for perseverance, responsive hearts, and relationships in which believers can give and receive honest encouragement without shame or harshness.
- Record requests and praises, share them with the group during the week, and follow up at the next gathering.

Transition to Conclusion

“Hebrews does not allow us to treat perseverance as a private project. We listen today, we watch our hearts, and we help one another keep holding to Christ.”

Conclusion — 5 Minutes

Final Takeaway

Sin deceives and hearts can harden, but God speaks today. Faithful believers respond to His voice and become instruments of grace by encouraging one another to keep holding firmly to Christ.

This Week's Challenge

Respond — *What Will I Do?*

Use Hear • Guard • Encourage before the week ends.

- Act on the truth you identified instead of postponing it.
- Name the deceptive excuse when it appears.
- Send the text, make the call, pray with the person, or have the gentle conversation you identified.

Reflect — *What Is God Showing Me?*

Consider:

- Where have I become spiritually numb to a repeated warning?
- What excuses does sin most effectively use with me?
- Do people experience my “encouragement” as grace-filled truth or vague positivity?
- Who helps me persevere, and am I making use of that gift?

Review — *How Will I Keep God's Word Before Me?*

Review Hebrews 3:13 throughout the week:

“But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.”

When you are tempted to postpone obedience, let the word “today” remind you that a responsive heart answers God while His voice is being heard.

Read — *How Will I Prepare for Next Week?*

Continue with the church’s Year of Prayer New Testament Reading Plan.

Next Week’s Reading: Hebrews 4–8

As you read, notice how Jesus is presented as our great High Priest and how God’s promise gives believers confidence, maturity, and hope.

Closing Prayer

“Living God, thank You for speaking and for giving us Your Son. Keep our hearts soft and responsive to Your voice. Expose the lies that make sin look harmless, and forgive us for postponing obedience. Give us brothers and sisters who will encourage us faithfully, and make us courageous and gentle enough to do the same for others. Help us hold firmly to Christ until the end. Amen.”