

Small Group Sermon Response

Title: "Watch Out!"

Text: Hebrews 3:7-19

Date: Sunday, May 5, 2024

Preacher: Pastor Caleb Widmer

Last Week's Sermon Summary:

Last week's sermon, "Our Confidence and Hope," focused on Hebrews 3:1-6, where Pastor Caleb Widmer explored the theme of holding fast to our faith in Jesus as our Apostle and High Priest. The sermon emphasized Jesus' faithfulness and superiority over Moses, urging believers to remain steadfast in their confidence and hope in Him.

Introduction:

In this week's sermon, "Watch Out!" Pastor Caleb Widmer continues with Hebrews 3:7-19, using Psalm 95 and the story of Israel's wilderness wanderings to emphasize the importance of faithfulness and perseverance. He challenges believers to examine their own hearts and encourage one another daily to prevent falling into unbelief like the Israelites.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Israel's Example:** How does the author of Hebrews use the story of Israel's wilderness wanderings to warn the church against unbelief? (**Hebrews 3:7-11, Psalm 95:7-11**)
2. **The Call to Watch Out:** What does the author mean by "Watch out" in verse 12? How can we examine our own hearts to avoid unbelief?
3. **Encouraging One Another:** Why is encouraging one another daily so crucial, according to **Hebrews 3:13**? How can this strengthen our faith and prevent unbelief?
4. **Persevering in Faith:** What does it mean to "hold our original confidence firm to the end" (**Hebrews 3:14**)? How does this relate to real faith and perseverance?

Application Questions:

1. **Self-Examination:** What practical steps can you take to examine your own heart (not those of others) regularly to avoid unbelief and maintain faithfulness?
2. **Daily Encouragement:** How can you be more intentional in encouraging others daily in your small group or church community?
3. **Holding Fast:** Reflecting on Hebrews 3:14, what challenges are you facing that require you to hold fast to your faith in Jesus? How can you remain steadfast?
4. **Trusting God's Presence:** How does Israel's story in Exodus 17:7 ("Is the Lord among us or not?") challenge you to trust God's presence and guidance in your own life?

Additional Biblical References:

- **Exodus 17:7:** The Israelites tested God at Massah and Meribah, doubting His presence and provision.
- **Numbers 14:26-30:** The consequences of Israel's unbelief, resulting in an entire generation not entering the Promised Land.
- **Proverbs 4:23:** "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."
- **Jeremiah 17:9:** "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"
- **Psalms 95:7-11:** A call to worship and a warning not to harden our hearts like the Israelites.

Insights from Authors:

- **William L. Lane:** "The fundamental failure of the desert generation was their refusal to believe that God was actually present among them, directing them through his word."
- **C.S. Lewis:** "Every Christian would agree that a man's spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God."

Closing Thought:

The message of Hebrews 3:7-19 is a strong call to "watch out" for our hearts and "encourage one another daily." By examining our hearts and supporting one another, we can hold fast to our confidence and hope in Christ, avoiding the unbelief that led to Israel's downfall in the wilderness.

Book Recommendation: "Soul Survivor" by Philip Yancey

"Soul Survivor: How Thirteen Unlikely Mentors Helped My Faith Survive the Church" is a deeply personal exploration by Philip Yancey. He reflects on how thirteen unique individuals, including Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Annie Dillard, profoundly shaped his faith and helped him reconcile with the church.

Why Read This Book?

- **Faith Reaffirmation:** Inspires perseverance in faith despite disillusionment.
- **Diverse Mentors:** Offers diverse perspectives to enrich one's spiritual journey.
- **Authentic Challenges:** Tackles real issues like racism and hypocrisy within the church.
- **Practical Lessons:** Provides practical insights for those questioning their faith.

Recommendation:

"Soul Survivor" is highly recommended for anyone feeling disheartened or questioning their faith. Yancey's authentic exploration offers valuable lessons for holding fast to our confidence in Christ.

 <https://philipyancey.com/soul-survivor>