

The Five Warnings

Companion to "Hebrews — Five Warning Passages" • Bible Connections with Joseph

Five times in Hebrews the argument stops and turns directly on the reader. They are not scattered — they are spaced through the letter deliberately, and each one interrupts a section of teaching to say: do not walk away from this.

They are also the most misused passages in the letter. Handle them carefully, and say out loud when you do not know.

Read all five before working any of them: 2:1-4 • 3:7-4:13 • 5:11-6:12 • 10:19-39 • 12:14-29. Reading them together is most of the work, because the pattern only shows up when they sit side by side.

1 • Read It — find the pattern

◆ Work through all five and fill this in. What is the danger named in each one?

◆ Now the part people miss: what sits right next to each warning? Read 2:17-18, 4:14-16, 6:9-12 and 6:19-20, 10:19-23 and 10:32-39, 12:28-29. What do you notice?

◆ Is the writer threatening these people or encouraging them? Defend your answer from the text.

2 • Cross Over — who wrote it, to whom, and what was happening

The second warning is the longest and it is built entirely on Psalm 95, which is built on Numbers 14 — the generation that came out of Egypt, reached the edge of the land, heard the report, and refused to go in, and even talked of appointing a leader to go back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4).

Hebrews calls it rebellion (3:16) — and from the inside it looked like stalling: people who started, who saw real things, and who stopped within sight of the thing they were promised.

◆ Read Numbers 13:26–14:10, then Psalm 95:7–11, then Hebrews 3:7–19. Trace how the writer uses the story. What is he claiming about his own readers?

◆ The Greek word Hebrews 3:7, 3:13, 3:15 and 4:7 keep landing on is *sēmeron* — today. Why would that word be the pressure point for people who had been believers for years?

3 • Stand in Their World — hear it the way they heard it

The first warning, 2:1, uses an image the English usually flattens. The Greek verb behind "drift away" — *pararrheō* — suggests the picture of something slipping past, the way a boat slides by a mooring when nobody is holding the rope. The danger it names is not a decision to leave. It is the absence of a decision to stay.

◆ You are in that room, tired, and someone reads 2:1 aloud. Does it land as accusation or as description?

◆ Which of the five warnings would have been hardest for that room to hear, and why?

4 • Verify It — hold it up against the fullness of Scripture

This is where you have to be most careful, and where I will not pretend to more certainty than I have.

kreissōn — "better things" in 6:9, in the middle of the hardest warning in the book, in the same breath as "beloved." It is the same comparative the letter has been using of Jesus all along, in its alternate spelling (*kreittōn* / *kreissōn* are one word in the lexicons). The warning and the word of hope are not two different voices.

Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26–31 are genuinely contested. Careful readers land in several places. The three main ones: that genuine believers can fall away and lose their salvation; that the warning targets a profession of faith that never took root; or that this is severe covenant language, a father raising his voice to shock a drifting church back onto the road. Others read it as hypothetical, or as a warning about losing reward, not salvation. Each position has serious people behind it and each has a text it struggles with.

If you teach these, say that out loud. Not as a hedge — as the honest state of things. And notice that on every one of these readings, the instruction to the reader is identical: keep going. The dispute is about what is happening to the person who does not, and that person may be in the room in front of you, showing up regularly without roots. Teach it as a call for every heart to examine itself.

◆ Which position on Hebrews 6 were you handed, and by whom? Had you ever checked it?

◆ Find the passage elsewhere in Scripture that makes your position hardest to hold. Write the reference and what it says.

◆ Make no assumptions. What have you heard taught from Hebrews 6 that the text does not actually say?

5 • Come Back — put what you found into today's language

Put the five together and the shape is clear: every warning sits right next to an assurance, and every one asks each reader to examine their own heart, inside a community told to exhort one another every day. And the writer keeps saying "let us," which puts him inside the warnings with his readers.

◆ Count the "let us" statements in Hebrews. What does that pronoun do to how the warnings should be taught?

◆ In ordinary words: what are these five warnings for?

6 · Carry It Home — what it asks of you, and how it points to Jesus

◆ Hebrews 3:13 says exhort one another daily, as long as it is called today. Who is one person you could do that for this week, and what would it actually look like?

◆ Where in your own life are you drifting rather than deciding — slipping past the mooring with nobody holding the rope? Then read 12:2. How does this letter point you back to Jesus?

◆ If you teach these five, what will you refuse to say?

A note on the steps. This sheet is structured by the six: Read It, Cross Over, Stand in Their World, Verify It, Come Back, Carry It Home. If you counted fewer while watching, that was the short version — six is the full process, and The Six Steps companion works all of them.

Cross references from the video. Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19 (the law delivered through angels, behind 2:2) · Psalm 95 and Numbers 14 (the wilderness generation, behind 3:7–4:13) · 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 (the wilderness as an example for believers) · 1 John 2:19 and the parable of the soils, Matthew 13:1–23 (faith that never took root) · Deuteronomy 17:6 and 32:35–36 (the lesser-to-greater argument in 10:28–30) · Genesis 25:29–34 (Esau, behind 12:16–17) · Haggai 2:6 (the shaking, quoted in 12:26) · John 10:28, Philippians 1:6 and Jude 24 (held by God).

The five warnings as the video names them: drifting away (2:1–4) · hardened hearts (3:7–4:13) · falling away (5:11–6:12) · willful sin (10:19–39) · rejecting the voice (12:14–29). Check your first answer against these.

The message of the warning passages was never hold on harder or else. It's this: the one you're holding on to has never once let you go.

Open your own Bible for every passage — this companion quotes only a short line where a point turns on the wording, and leaves the rest to you, because reading it is your step. Scripture references from the Berean Standard Bible where quoted; the video reads a different translation, so some wording will differ — same passages, same references. Bible Connections with Joseph · bibleconnectionswithjoseph.com