

Encourage One Another

Hebrews 10: 19-24

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Not too long ago, I read an article about a true story that broke my heart. Please allow me to share it with you. "Recently, a young man in another state graduated from high school. 13 years of school was coming to an end and they could see the end of the path that they had taken from Kindergarten to 12th grade. The whole family was excited as aunts, and uncles, cousins, and grandparents all made plans for the big day. But in the midst of all of the excitement there was a small complication.

For some reason, that I still have to figure out, it was decided that Graduation would be held a 6:30 on Wednesday night. The small church where this family had attended for years offered to move their mid-week services to either Tuesday or Tuesday night so that the family and the rest of the church could all be present at this mile marker event without feeling guilty. It seemed like a reasonable idea at the time.

The young man's grandparents, who were the oldest members of the congregation and held considerable power, vetoed the schedule change. They had decided years ago that they would have a mid week Bible service and that decision would not change for any reason. And on that Graduation night, at that small little church, services were held as they have been for the last 50 years or so at 7:00. There on their pew sat the grand parents -- at church. That evening their grandson received his diploma without their support and without their blessing.

That night two different sets of people went to bed. The grandparents went to bed confident in their compliance to Hebrews 10:25. While their grandson went to bed that night confused about whether or not his grandparents really cared about him at all." **The Lyon County Herald Ledger Newspaper, Kentucky**

You know what **Hebrews 10:25** is, don't you? It's the "go to church or else" passage. **"Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."** Or as most of us learned it, **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is."**

Many of us grew up with a rather limited understanding of that verse. We were taught that the Hebrew writer simply wanted to say, **"You need to go to church every time the doors are opened. Don't be like some, who skip church go fishing or watch the Superbowl or some other poor excuse."** And so, church attendance became one more notch on our Bibles.

If we went three times a week, we were in compliance with this passage and ready to move on and master whatever was next. Now while I believe that church attendance is important, and obviously that is a part of what this text says. ***But like so many other***

passages we have made sure that we make technical compliance and then we still miss the meaning.

Church, technical compliance is a poor substitute for the intent of the command. **The intent of this command is not church attendance. It is encouragement.** I thought that it would be good for us to talk about what it means to encourage one another.

There are a lot of discouraging things that happen to people every day. **Newton's third law of motion** says, "**For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.**" I would like to offer another law for you; "**for every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.**"

Did you know that the average person growing up in an average household hears "**No,**" or is told what they can't do more than 148,000 times by the time they reach age 18. We live in a discouraging world.

Former CBS News anchor Dan Rather was being interviewed and began to discuss his fascination with the sport of boxing, even though he was never good at it. He said, "In boxing you're on your own; there's no place to hide. At the end of the match only one boxer has his hand up. That's it. He has no one to credit or to blame except himself."

In high school, he said his coach's greatest goal was to teach his boxers that they absolutely, positively, without question, had to be "get up" fighters. "If you're in a ring just once in your life, completely on your own, and you get knocked down but you get back up again, it's a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Your sense of achievement is distinct and unique. And sometimes the only thing making you get up is someone in your corner yelling for you to get up one more time."

That's what Encouragement is. It's standing in someone's corner, yelling for them. **Will Rogers** said we can't all be heroes because someone has to stand on the sidelines and clap for them. Encouragement is cheering for the people on the field.

So if we are to be encouragers, how do we develop the habit of encouraging one another? If the point of **Hebrews 10:25** is encouragement, doesn't it make sense that the rest of the passage might help us understand how to do that? Let's read what the writer is saying before we get to **verse 25**.

Look in **Hebrews 10:19-24**. (Read).
Today I want you to leave here with three things everyone needs to know about encouragement.

- 1. Encouragement flows from godly confidence.**
- 2. This passage teaches that encouragement is rooted in God's faithfulness.**
- 3. Finally, encouragement is focused on celebrating success.**

1. Encouragement flows from godly confidence.

In **Hebrews 10:19**, the writer affirms that we can enter the Most Holy Place, the presence of God, with confidence.

The writer is talking about Godly confidence, not that type of confidence that notches a Bible every time we think we've mastered a particular command. Godly confidence is confidence based on what God has done, not on our performance.

When we think back on our lives, we can remember how great and powerful the God we serve is, and how He has gone to extreme lengths to bring us back home to Him. It is those memories of what God has done that should instill confidence in our lives.

In **Hebrews 10:20**, he says we confidently enter the Most Holy Place by a new a living way opened for us through the body of Christ.

That is a reference to the crucifixion. Once again when we think back to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us, we are reminded how deep His love is for us. In **Hebrews 10:22** he says we can draw near to God with a guilt free conscience.

We approach him guilt free not because we haven't done anything wrong, but because our hearts have been sprinkled and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

That is a reference to baptism. You see we remember how God has provided for us in the past, we remember the sacrifice that was made, and we remember our Baptism. We understand how great God's love for us truly is and that's what gives us confidence.

Remember what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 8:31-39**. **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

There is the source. So how does having godly confidence enable us to be encouragers? Well to answer that first we must ask ourselves if we have ever known anyone who was insecure and able to affirm others.

I haven't. If we're insecure in our ability to perform some activity, we're not going to celebrate the success of others. We're going to envy that success. And come up with all kinds of reasons why they can do it better than we can. We're going to find as much wrong with what they do and how they do it as we can.

On May 1, 1999 Forty thousand fans were on hand in the Oakland stadium when Rickey Henderson stole second and broke Lou Brock's career stolen base record. According to USA Today Lou, who had left baseball in 1979, had followed Henderson's career and was excited about his success. The day before the game Lou was asked what he thought about someone breaking his record. Brock said, "I'll be there. Do you think I'm going to miss it now? Rickey did in 12 years what took me 19. He's amazing."

That kind of encouragement can only come from someone who has asked the question, "Am I okay?" And answered it with, "Yes." The reason many of us fail to encourage others is because we answered the question, "Am I okay with God," with something other than, "absolutely." We say maybe. I hope so. I think so. No.

We can't celebrate someone else's success, we can't cheer for them to succeed, if we don't think we already wear God's victory crown.

Mark this down; **the degree to which a church is populated with encouragers is directly related to the degree to which they believe in the grace of God. Encouragement flows from godly confidence.**

2. This passage teaches that encouragement is rooted in God's faithfulness.

Hebrews 10:23. "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful"

If you can trust God to be true to his promises, then you will be an encouraging person. The writer of Hebrews actually models the principal I'm talking about. Look down a few verses to **Hebrews 10:36. "You need to persevere."**

Stop right there. He could go in a lot of different directions with that statement. Here's where it heads. **"You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay. "**

The writer bases his encouragement on the faithfulness of God. He operates by a very simple formula. **Your perseverance + His faithfulness = reception of His promises.**

He's writing like a man who has experienced the faithfulness of God. Almost like he's saying, "I've been where you are. I was in a tough circumstance and God delivered me. If you follow through, he'll deliver you, too."

Encouragement isn't simply minimizing the negatives and focusing only on the positives. The writer doesn't shy away from warning. He gets very specific and very graphic in **Hebrews 10:26-31** where he ends by saying, **"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."** But that isn't the final note. That isn't the dominant theme of this chapter.

The final note is in **Hebrews 10:39**. **"But we are of those who believe and are saved."** There's the formula again. We believe. He saves.

3. Finally, encouragement is focused on celebrating success.

Look at **Hebrews 10:24**. **"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."**

Instead of trying to catch people making a mistake, the writer urges us to look for opportunities, to consider ways to celebrate and spur people on toward loving relationships and righteous living.

You might feel superior when you take the opportunity to find some one in a fault and let them know about it, but you won't feel better long. Because no one does everything wrong. But if you get the opportunity to praise someone for doing something good then neither of you will be disappointed. You always get more mileage out of catching people doing something right.

A city in the Netherlands had a problem with litter. The sanitation department tried doubling the littering fine and even increasing the number of litter cops who patrolled the area, but to no avail.

Then someone suggested that instead of punishing those who littered, they could reward people who put garbage in trash cans. The first plan to devise a trash can that could dispense coins when litter was inserted was rejected as too expensive. But it led to another idea: the sanitation department developed a trash can that played a recording of a joke when trash was deposited! Different cans played different kinds of jokes, and the recordings were changed every two weeks. Citizens went out of their way to put garbage in trash cans, and the streets were clean again.

Here's another place where the writer models this very principal. Look at **Hebrews 10:32-34**. **(Read).**

He remembers and celebrates a time when they did exactly what they needed to be doing now. Standing firm. Instead of griping at them because of what they were not doing, he celebrates what they had done in the past.

It comes down to this. Most of the time when we fuss and gripe at people, when we are negative or nagging, we really do want to help. We are trying to motivate them to better living. We just get frustrated. And we've been programmed to fuss. But negative

criticism just doesn't work as well as positive encouragement.

Chuck Swindoll tells the story about one day when a woman opened the door to get the newspaper and was surprised to see a strange little dog with her paper in his mouth. Delighted with this unexpected "delivery service," she went to the kitchen and got the puppy some treats.

But the following morning she was horrified to see the same dog sitting in front of her door, wagging his tail, surrounded by eight newspapers. She said that it took her the rest of that morning trying to find the rightful owners and returning their papers. All she had to do was turn the paper on the dog and that dog would never have returned. It works that way with our relationships, too. **We swat people one time too many and they don't come back to us emotionally. They may still be there in body, but they'll be somewhere else in spirit. If you've tried everything else, try encouragement. It not only works its God's will.**