



Central
Peninsula
Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

We Need Each Other

Hebrews 10:19–25

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Community Life Sunday

Good morning. My name is Adam Darbonne and I'm the High School Director here. My wife Michelle and I just moved here from the midwest. I grew up here, in San Mateo, then I went to college at UC Davis, and then I moved to the Midwest for four years. I spent a year in Madison, Wisconsin and then three years in Chicago.

One of the things that happens when you move somewhere totally new—and some of you know this—you find out that the normal way people do things isn't the normal way people do things everywhere. For instance, the first time I heard that a rather large home in Wisconsin costs between \$200-300,000 I could hardly believe it.

But the midwest has some normal things that seem weird to us. It's normal to see kitty litter in the back of someone's car. That isn't for cats; it's for ice. They eat deep fried cheese; it's called cheese curds and it's delicious. Also, in the winter people flood their backyards to create ice rinks.

So I learned a whole bunch of cultural norms while living in the midwest, a lot of them pertaining to winter. One of those that I learned is that everyone keeps a jacket and boots in the back of their car so that if they see someone pulled over on the side of the road they can stop and help.

That was weird to me. Where I grew up, I never stopped on the side of the road to help someone. First of all, stranger danger. But second, they were fine. They were going to get help. AAA or the police or someone whose job it was to help them was going to come along.

Here's the problem. In the midwest, especially if you are outside of town (a concept that doesn't exist on the Peninsula), if you slide off the road during a storm, you may not be able to get help. It's during a storm. There aren't very many people on the road. And if you don't have cell service, you're in big trouble. Because sometimes it gets this cold. And if you're sitting in a ditch and it is this cold, or even 13 above, you could die. It's legitimately dangerous. So everyone keeps a jacket and boots in the back of their car because they need each other. You never know when you might need to help someone.

I know you want to move to Wisconsin now! It's really not that bad. I actually loved living there.

Here's the point: Being a Christian is sort of like living in Wisconsin. It's hard and so we need each other to make it

through. We need each other. That is a nice phrase, "we need each other," but do we really believe that? It sounds good, but do you really believe deep down that if you didn't have the people in this room you would be in trouble? Not only would you be better off with them, but you actually need them like you need food to eat. I think that most of the time I think that I would be okay without most of the people in this room. But that isn't what our passage says today. It says we need each other. So how do we move from self-sufficiency to a deep loving community full of people who need each other?

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24–25).

We are going to pick apart this passage and look at what the author of Hebrews tells us to do, how he tells us to do it, and why we should do this. So let's start with the **what**. The author of Hebrews tells us to "**Consider how to spur one another on to love and good works.**" We are supposed to spur each other. Literally the word means to incite, or provoke. It is almost always used in a negative sense to provoke someone to fight or to argue. But not here. Here we are supposed to provoke, spur each other to love and good works. We are supposed get on each other's backs, push with our heels into each other's side and spur each other. Because you know what, I don't really want to do love and good works a lot of the time.

I want to do my fair share. I want to be a good person. I love Jesus, I want to love Jesus with all my heart soul mind and strength, but when I really think about it, I often do not want to love my neighbor as myself.

Sometimes I just want to do me. I want to care about me. I want to talk about me. I want to make my own decisions. I want to come home from work, eat some delicious meal with my wife and watch *The West Wing*! I don't want to hang out with some downer friend that is having a bad day again. I just want to enjoy going to a Giants game, so I don't want to pause long enough to look in the eyes of the homeless guy begging for money, because then every time someone pays \$9 for a bag of peanuts at the game I might see his face and that will really put a damper on the game for me.

Michelle and I were driving home on Friday night from the East Bay and we got to the Broadway exit at about 9:40 pm, which, if you missed it, 101 got shut down at 9:35 pm. It took us 2.5 hours to get home. So I was feeling sorry for us; what an inconvenience. I'm tired, and bored, we are going to be here forever. I was reading some news on my phone and read about the Syrian refugee crisis. I didn't know this but did you know that because of the civil war over 3.5 million men, women and children have had to flee the country? 3.5 million people will literally never go home. Not for just a few hours, but for the rest of their lives. Many of them are dying on the way, but the risk of dying is better than the risk of staying. So while I am whining about a 2.5 hour delay in getting home, 3.5 million people are running for their lives away from their homes that they will never return to. But in that moment, I didn't want to care. I wanted to focus on me. I wanted to whine and feel sorry for myself. I didn't want to do anything for those people. I didn't even really want to pray.

I don't want to do love and good works all the time. I want to do them when it is convenient, when I have set aside time for it. I want to forget about my duty until I decide it's time. It's hard! Especially in a place like the Peninsula where everyone seems to just care about themselves. So I need you to spur me on. I need you to get on my back and push your heels into my side as hard as you have to until I forget myself enough to remember Jesus.

And you need me to do the same thing. We need each other.

But we often don't do this. We don't spur each other on. Maybe because we're so busy. Sure, we live in a high functioning area; there are other things to do. But I think there are two more fundamental reasons you don't do this. First, you don't want to be the bad guy. You don't want to be the one who calls that friend out on sin. You don't want to be the one who says, in love, "you should really stop doing this, and start doing that." That could ruin the friendship! Is it really worth it?

But what is friendship for? Does friendship really exist to provide us with fragile relationships that make us feel kind of good about ourselves most of the time? Or do friendships within the body of Christ, the Church, exist for something more? I think having a friend is less about me and more about that friend. Friendship in the body of Christ is more about helping each other transform into the image of Christ as we participate together in his mission in the world. That's the kind of friendship I want. That's the kind of friend I want. Someone who cares about me like that.

But the second reason we don't do this is because we want to be autonomous, modern human beings. We live in the 21st century. We want individualistic freedom. The objection sounds something like this: Isn't that judgmental? Who am I to tell someone else what to do? I wouldn't want someone to tell me what to do.

When we hear something like "spur one another on," something inside of us jumps and says, "that is going to encroach on my

freedom, and I live in America." And it's true. Living in a loving community that spurs one another on to love and good works will mean you will give up individualistic freedom. It will mean other people will have claims on your life, your time, or actions, your activities. But, if you hold onto individualistic freedom, it is also true that you will give up loving community. You can't have both. They are mutually exclusive.

So the question is, do we, as CPC North, want to have individualistic freedom, or loving community? Do we want to be a bag of marbles—a whole bunch of individual spheres that sometimes come near each other, or do we want to be a cluster of grapes—a group of spheres that are intimately connected and tied to each other?

This passage calls us to be the second, and I want to be the second. I want a loving community. Don't you? Spur one another on to love and good works.

That's the **what**. Let's talk about the **how**. The author of Hebrews gives us two things to do to help us spur one another on. First he says, "*Spur one another on to love and good works, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.*" The word "giving up" is actually stronger than that. It means forsaking or deserting. It's the same word that gets used of a deserting soldier.

The point is simple. You can't spur anyone on if you aren't with them. We have to meet together regularly. When you aren't here, you desert your brothers and sisters. We need each other. This is a tough place to be a Christian. It is hard to keep doing love and good works. Coming to church, and community group, and Men's Frat, and Women's Bible Study isn't about you getting filled up. According to this passage it's about your brothers and sisters.

We don't exist for ourselves. We exist for each other. We are a community of people in a covenant before God and before each other to do life together. It's a pretty simple point, so let me dig my spurs in a little and just ask you: Are you in the habit of deserting to meet together? If you are, you need to find a place where you can spur brothers and sisters on to love and good works. After this service there are going to be tables outside where you can join a smaller community within this bigger community. If you're not sure where to go, I want to shamelessly plug the High School Ministry table! High schoolers on the Peninsula totally need people who are willing to spur them on to love and good works.

First, we can't desert meeting with each other. The second way we spur one another on to love and good works once we are together is by, "*encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*"

A little earlier in the book the author of Hebrews elaborates on what he means here. Hebrews 3:13-14 says, "*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you*

may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end." Sin is deceitful. It tricks us. It is easy to see everyone else's sin, but we are blind to our own.

I remember doing this prayer thing at the church we went to in Chicago and during the sermon we spent time praying through the ACTS prayer model: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (asking for stuff). And I've used this before. I like this prayer model so I was pumped. First we did adoration and I'm in seminary so I am blowing God out of the water with my adoration. I'm praying in Greek, I'm using big theological words that no one else in the room understands. God is loving my adoration, And then the pastor says, "Okay, let's move to confession." So I start thinking, "Huh, I don't really have anything to confession. My sin level has been low lately. Let's move on to Thanksgiving."

And then it hit me. I have plenty of things to confess. I just can't see them because sin is deceitful. It hides itself in my ego. So I confessed my pride to God, we moved on to Thanksgiving and I thanked God that we weren't on the confession part anymore!

Sin is deceitful. We need each other to encourage us not to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. You can't do that by yourself. And neither can your brother or sister. We need each other because even though your sin may be invisible to you, it's incredibly visible to the people closest to you, and probably to people who haven't known you very long. And we have to find these areas and root them out in each other, especially as the day of Jesus' return draws near.

So what should you do? Encourage each other. Urge each other away from sin and to love and good works. Ask for feedback for yourself, and don't be defensive when you hear it, even if it hurts. Learn to give feedback to your brothers and sisters in loving, caring ways, and to walk with them through sin.

This is going to be messy and hard. It is going to require grace and humility. There are going to be people in this loving community that you don't really like. And there are going to be tough moments, and that's okay. We are going to do this together. We are going to be there for each other. We are going to encourage each other and meet with each other and push our heels into each other's sides and provoke each other to love and good works.

But **why**?

If it is going to be so hard, why would we do this? Why would we put ourselves in a messy situation like this? Why would we put our brothers and sisters above ourselves? Why would we give up our individualistic freedom for this? Why would we spend our time coming here every Sunday morning when we work all week? Why would we join a community group? And why would we hang out with high schoolers? The author of Hebrews gives us that reason just a couple of verses before.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, (Hebrews 10:19–21).

I've been married for three months, so mostly marriage has not been hard yet. But people say it's going to get harder, and I'm sure it will! But what if, when it gets hard, I just decided I was going to stop loving my wife and doing good works for her? What if I just decided one day, it's too hard, it's not worth it?

I think most of the couples that have been married for a long time (like, at least 8 or 9 months!) would tell me that I was robbing myself of something really great. Years of love and good works builds something really wonderful. Either way, we would still be married, but our marriage would be a totally different thing. I would be missing out on something incredible that I had every opportunity to have.

But—and single folks hear me on this—marriage is not the greatest prize. Jesus is. Jesus has opened a way to God that wasn't there before. Our sin made it impossible for us to go before God. A perfect being cannot be in the presence of imperfection. And because we were cut off from God we were dead; dead in our sin. Jesus came and he lived a perfect life and then he died. But in all of human history when someone died they stayed dead. There was no way back from death. There was no way from the grave to God. But when Jesus died, he broke the chains of death and opened up a new way to get to God. A living way. So now there is hope for every man and woman no matter what kind of sin has shaped, defined, and bombarded your life. Jesus has opened up a way to God.

So if you are willing to believe in him, to trust him with your whole lives, not only can you follow Jesus to God, but when you enter before God you can do so with boldness. Not with timidity. Not with embarrassment. Not with shame. But with boldness. You can come before God on his throne like you are a son or daughter of the king.

If you've been looking for the way to God, follow Jesus. Come up here after the service and pray with people about that. That's your community this morning. And for those of us who already do follow Jesus, we have this great hope! We have a new and living way that Jesus has opened up, but Jesus also said, "Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it."

How tragic would it be, in light of the great hope we have, if some of us missed out? If every one of us didn't hold firm until the very end? If even just one was hardened by sin's deceitfulness and decided doing love and good works for Jesus wasn't worth it?

That is why we spur one another on to love and good works because we can't bear the thought of our brothers and sisters missing out on this incredible good news. We can't bear the thought of deserting them. So we encourage each other, in loving community.

We give ourselves for each other. We trade our life for theirs. We meet together and encourage one another. We push our heels into each other and provoke each other to love and good works,

driving each other ever closer to the goal, as the day that Jesus returns draws near.

Brothers and sisters, if you aren't plugged into a place that fosters deep and loving community in the name of Jesus, do that today.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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