

The Body of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 11: The Worship and Work of the Local Church

Hebrews 10:24–25

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrine in view is the gathered life of the local church: the apostolic pattern of assembling for worship and mutual encouragement, and the seriousness of faithful participation. Hebrews 10:24–25 makes the assembly a matter of obedience, not preference, and frames it with its purpose: stirring one another up to love and good works and encouraging one another. What is at stake is a right view of the assembly, against the modern drift toward a churchless, assembly-optional Christianity. The lesson should establish both why we gather (mutual provocation to love and encouragement, especially as the Day nears) and what we do when we gather, according to the New Testament pattern.

Teach the apostolic pattern of worship positively and clearly, as a matter of following the New Testament rather than human preference. The early church gathered on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and engaged in specific acts of worship: the Lord's Supper as a weekly remembrance proclaiming Christ's death (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26), giving as prospered on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1–2), prayer, congregational singing that teaches and admonishes (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19), and the teaching of the Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Present the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as the apostolic day of assembly, not as a Christian Sabbath under Old Covenant rules but as the day the disciples gathered to worship the risen Lord. The point is reverent submission to the revealed pattern, with hearts engaged, not mere mechanical correctness.

The formational aim is to move students from a consumer, attend-when-convenient posture to committed, giving participation in the gathered life of their congregation. Hebrews makes the assembly something we do for one another; help students come as givers of encouragement, not only receivers, and examine honestly any drift away from faithful gathering. Use the image of coals keeping each other aflame: their presence keeps others burning, and their absence withholds warmth the body needs. Press the seriousness of the command without legalism, and revive the heart behind the acts of worship, especially the Lord's Supper, so that the gathering is both faithful in form and alive in spirit.

Question 1

Student Question:

The writer urges, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (v. 24). What does it mean to "stir up" one another, and what does it tell us about the purpose of the

church's gathering that this stirring is something we do for each other, not merely something we receive?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the striking command of verse 24: "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." The word translated stir up is strong, even provoke; we are to spur one another toward love and good deeds.

Stress that this is something we do for each other in the gathering. The assembly is not primarily a place to receive a religious service but a place where members actively provoke and spur one another toward Christlike love and action.

Note the word consider. We are to give thought to how to stir others up, to come intentionally, considering whom we might encourage and how. This is the opposite of passive, accidental attendance.

Reframe the purpose of gathering. If a main purpose of the assembly is to stir up one another, then my presence is for others' sake, not only my own. The gathering is mutual ministry, not a performance to be watched.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The assembly as mutual provocation to love and good works.
- Gathering as something we do for one another, not only receive.
- Intentionality: considering how to stir others up.
- My presence as a gift to others, not only a benefit to me.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to stir up or spur one another to love and good works?
- How does this purpose change what the gathering is for?
- What would it mean to come considering how to stir up others?

Question 2

Student Question:

The text assumes you have a responsibility to provoke others toward love and good works when the church gathers. Do you come to the assembly mainly thinking about what you will get, or also about what you will give to others there? How would coming as a giver change the way you show up?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question presses the giver versus consumer posture. The text assumes we come responsible to provoke others toward good; many come only to receive.

Help students examine their actual mindset at the assembly. Do they evaluate it by what they got out of it, the singing, the lesson, the comfort, or do they come asking whom they can encourage and stir up?

Expose the consumer trap. A consumer rates the service and leaves dissatisfied when it does not meet his preferences. A giver comes to minister and finds purpose regardless. The consumer mindset slowly erodes commitment.

Aim for a concrete shift: coming to the next assembly as a giver, with one or two people in mind to encourage, one good work to spur in another.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The giver versus consumer posture at the assembly.
- Evaluating the gathering by what we receive versus what we give.
- The consumer mindset eroding commitment.
- Coming intentionally to encourage specific others.

Discussion Prompts

- Do you come mainly to get something or also to give something?
- How would coming as a giver change the way you show up?
- Whom could you come prepared to encourage this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

The writer commands, “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some” (v. 25). Why does the New Testament treat faithful assembling as a matter of obedience and not mere preference, and what does it reveal about a Christian’s heart when gathering with the saints becomes optional or easily set aside?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a doctrinal block. Verse 25 commands, “not neglecting to meet together,” and notes it was “the habit of some” to neglect it. Faithful assembling is presented as a matter of obedience.

Establish that the assembly is commanded, not optional. The New Testament everywhere assumes the gathered church (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:18, 14:23). To neglect the assembly is to disobey, not merely to miss a beneficial event.

Explain why God commands it. Because the Christian life is corporate (the whole study has shown this), and because we keep one another's fire alive. Neglecting the assembly cuts us off from the very means God uses to sustain and grow us, and withholds our ministry from others.

Examine what neglect reveals about the heart. When gathering with the saints becomes easily set aside, it usually signals a deeper drift, cooling love, competing priorities, or a creeping individualism that no longer values the body. The pattern of attendance is a spiritual barometer.

Avoid legalism while keeping seriousness. The point is not mere attendance-counting but a heart that treasures the gathered body. Yet that heart will show itself in faithful presence; love for the body and faithful assembling go together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithful assembling as a command, not a preference.
- The corporate nature of the Christian life requiring the gathering.
- Neglect cutting us off from God's appointed means of grace.
- Attendance as a barometer of the heart's true priorities.
- Seriousness without mere legalistic attendance-counting.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the New Testament treat assembling as obedience, not preference?
- What does it reveal when gathering becomes easily set aside?
- How do love for the body and faithful assembling go together?

Question 4

Student Question:

The text notes that neglecting the assembly was already "the habit of some," a pattern of drifting away. Are there habits or priorities in your life that are slowly pulling you away from committed participation in the church? What is driving that drift, and what would reversing it require?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question follows "as is the habit of some" (v. 25). Neglect is usually not a decision but a drift, a slow accumulation of habits and priorities that pull us away.

Help students identify the drift. It rarely announces itself. It comes through over-busyness, weekend travel, fatigue, letting other good things crowd out the gathering, until absence becomes the new normal.

Trace the drivers honestly: misplaced priorities, exhaustion, discouragement, conflict, or a cooling heart. Naming the driver is the start of reversing the drift.

Aim for one concrete step to reverse a specific drift: a priority to reset, a habit to change, a recommitment to faithful presence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Neglect as a slow drift rather than a decision.
- Busyness and competing priorities crowding out the gathering.
- Honest diagnosis of what drives the drift.
- Concrete steps to reverse a specific drift.

Discussion Prompts

- What habits or priorities may be pulling you away from the church?
- What is driving that drift?
- What would reversing it require of you?

Question 5

Student Question:

The writer says we gather to keep “encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (v. 25). Why does the nearness of the Day, the return of Christ and the judgment, intensify rather than lessen the need to gather, and how should an eternal perspective shape how seriously we take the assembly?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 25 ties the urgency of gathering to the approaching Day: “all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” The nearer the end, the more we need to gather.

Explain the logic. As the return of Christ and the judgment draw near, the dangers of drifting, growing cold, and falling away increase, and so does our need for mutual encouragement. The end-times perspective intensifies, not relaxes, our commitment to the body.

Counter a common error. Some imagine that focusing on Christ’s return means withdrawing into private spirituality or speculation. Hebrews says the opposite: the nearer the Day, the more we gather and spur one another on toward faithfulness.

Apply the eternal perspective to the assembly. If we truly believed the Day is coming and our brothers and sisters must be ready, we would not treat the gathering as optional. We would prize every opportunity to encourage one another to endure.

Note that this also frames our worship. We gather as those awaiting the Lord, proclaiming His death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26), living between His resurrection and His return.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The nearness of the Day intensifying the need to gather.
- Increased danger of drifting requiring increased encouragement.
- The error of making Christ's return a reason to withdraw.
- An eternal perspective raising the value of the assembly.
- Worship offered by a people awaiting the Lord's return.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the nearness of the Day intensify the need to gather?
- How does an eternal perspective change how we value the assembly?
- How should awaiting Christ's return shape our gathered worship?

Question 6

Student Question:

The whole passage assumes that Christians need one another's encouragement to keep going and not fall away. Where in your own walk do you most need the regular encouragement of other believers, and where might someone else be depending on encouragement that only your faithful presence can give?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question follows the mutual encouragement of verse 25. The whole passage assumes Christians need one another to keep going, both to receive and to give encouragement.

Help students name their own need. Where are they weary, tempted, or discouraged, and in need of the regular encouragement of the body? Admitting need is part of belonging.

Turn it outward as well. Someone in the congregation is being kept faithful, in part, by their presence and encouragement. Their absence is felt; their faithful presence strengthens others, often more than they know.

Aim for both directions: a place to seek encouragement, and a specific person to encourage by faithful presence and a word in season.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The mutual need for encouragement to persevere.
- Admitting one's own need of the body.
- The unseen strength one's presence gives to others.
- Both receiving and giving encouragement.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you most need the regular encouragement of other believers?

- Who might be depending on the encouragement of your presence?
- How could you both seek and give encouragement this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

The New Testament shows the early church gathering on the first day of the week to worship through specific acts: the Lord's Supper, giving, prayer, singing, and the teaching of the Word (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 2:42; Colossians 3:16). Why does it matter that we look to the apostolic pattern to guide how the church worships, rather than to mere preference, tradition, or what we find most appealing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a doctrinal block on the apostolic pattern of worship. The early church gathered on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and worshiped through definite acts: the Lord's Supper, giving, prayer, singing, and teaching.

Establish the principle of pattern. The church does not invent its worship by preference, tradition, or what is most appealing, but looks to the New Testament for how the apostolic church worshiped under the guidance of the Spirit. We seek to do what God has shown us, with reverence.

Walk briefly through the acts: the Lord's Supper each first day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26); giving as prospered on the first day (1 Corinthians 16:1–2); prayer (Acts 2:42); congregational singing that teaches and admonishes from the heart (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19); and the teaching and preaching of the Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

Address the first day of the week. The disciples gathered on the first day, the day of the Lord's resurrection, to worship (Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10). This is the apostolic day of assembly. It is not a Christian Sabbath under Old Covenant rules; we are not keeping the law of Moses but worshiping the risen Lord on His day, under the New Covenant.

Keep the heart central. The point of following the pattern is not cold correctness but glad, reverent submission to God in worship. We seek both to worship as He has shown us and to do so in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The apostolic pattern as our guide for worship, not mere preference.
- The acts of worship: Lord's Supper, giving, prayer, singing, teaching.
- The first day of the week as the apostolic day of assembly.
- The Lord's Day as worship of the risen Lord, not a Christian Sabbath.
- Reverent submission joined with worship in spirit and truth.

Discussion Prompts

- Why look to the apostolic pattern rather than preference for worship?
- What acts of worship marked the early church's gatherings?
- How is the Lord's Day different from an Old Covenant Sabbath?

Question 8

Student Question:

Among the acts of worship, the Lord's Supper stands out as a weekly remembrance in which we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Acts 20:7). When you partake of the Lord's Supper, is it a meaningful proclamation and remembrance, or has it become routine? What would help you engage it with a fuller heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question focuses the heart on the Lord's Supper. It is a weekly remembrance in which we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Acts 20:7).

Recover the meaning. The Supper is not an empty ritual but a proclamation and remembrance: we look back to the cross, around to the one body sharing it, inward in self-examination, and forward to His return. It is rich with meaning when engaged with the heart.

Name the danger of routine. Anything done weekly can become mechanical. Familiarity can dull us until we partake without thought. The remedy is not to partake less often but to engage more deeply.

Offer practical help: examining oneself (1 Corinthians 11:28), meditating on specific aspects of Christ's death, remembering the body of believers around us, and renewing our hope in His coming.

Aim for one concrete way to engage the Supper with a fuller heart at the next assembly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord's Supper as proclamation and remembrance, not empty ritual.
- Looking back to the cross, around to the body, forward to His return.
- The danger of routine dulling the Supper.
- Self-examination and meditation to engage it deeply.

Discussion Prompts

- When you partake, is it meaningful remembrance or routine?
- What dimensions of the Supper might you be missing?
- What would help you engage it with a fuller heart?

Question 9

Student Question:

This passage, with the rest of the New Testament, presents faithful participation in the gathered worship and work of the local church as the apostolic pattern and a serious matter of obedience, not an optional extra for the especially devoted. Why is committed membership in a particular local congregation, with its regular assembling, worship, and shared work, so essential to living the Christian life, and what does the modern idea of a churchless or assembly-optional Christianity get wrong?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest block, making the case that committed participation in a local congregation is essential, not optional. The passage and the whole New Testament assume the gathered, worshipping, working local church as the normal context of the Christian life.

State the central claim: there is no New Testament category of a faithful Christian who lives apart from the gathered church. Believers were added to the church (Acts 2:47), devoted themselves to its shared life (Acts 2:42), gathered on the first day (Acts 20:7), and were commanded not to neglect the assembly (Hebrews 10:25). The Christian life is lived in the body.

Diagnose what churchless or assembly-optional Christianity gets wrong. It treats faith as private and individual, when the New Testament makes it corporate. It assumes one can grow and persevere alone, when God designed us to keep one another's fire alive. It separates Christ from His body, loving the Head while neglecting what He bought with His blood.

Show what committed local membership provides: the worship God seeks, the encouragement that guards against falling, the oversight of shepherds, the exercise of gifts, the bearing of burdens, and the shared work of the gospel. All the truths of this study come to ground in the committed life of a particular congregation.

Hold seriousness and grace together. The aim is not to shame the discouraged or the hindered but to recover the conviction that the gathered church is God's good design and our great need. Christ means for His people to belong, deeply and faithfully, to a local body.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Committed local membership as essential to the Christian life.
- No New Testament category of a churchless faithful Christian.
- The errors of privatized, assembly-optional Christianity.
- What committed membership provides: worship, encouragement, oversight, gifts, burden-bearing, shared work.
- The gathered church as God's good design and our great need.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is committed membership in a local church essential, not optional?
- What does churchless or assembly-optional Christianity get wrong?
- How do all the truths of this study come to ground in a local congregation?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Hebrews 10:24–25. Having seen that God designed His people to gather, to worship, and to keep one another's fire alive, name one specific way Jesus is calling you to give yourself more fully to the worship and work of your local church, and what is the first step?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone, calling the student to give themselves more fully to the worship and work of their congregation. The lesson has shown the gathered church as the place where the fire is kept alive.

Press for a concrete step that fits the student: reversing a drift in attendance, coming as a giver of encouragement, engaging the Lord's Supper with a fuller heart, taking up a share of the church's work, deepening commitment to a particular body.

Connect presence to ministry. Remind the student that their faithful participation is not only for their own good but keeps others burning. The coal returned to the fire helps the whole fire.

Close on the warmth of the gathered body, worshiping the risen Lord on His day, spurring one another on toward love and good works, all the more as the Day draws near. Invite the student to give themselves to it gladly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Giving oneself more fully to the worship and work of the church.
- A concrete step: attendance, encouragement, the Supper, shared work.
- Presence as ministry that keeps others burning.
- Glad commitment to the gathered body.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific way Jesus is calling you to give yourself to the church's worship and work?
- What first step will you take, and when?
- How might your faithful presence help keep others' fire alive?