

The Body of Christ

Lesson 11: The Worship and Work of the Local Church -- Hebrews 10:24-

25

A single coal pulled out of the fire and set by itself on the hearth will not last long. For a little while it glows, stubborn and bright, but soon the red fades to gray, the warmth leaks away, and before long it is cold and dead. Put it back among the other coals, though, and it catches again. The coals keep each other burning. There is a reason a fire is made of many pieces close together, and there is a reason God made the Christian life to be lived among other Christians, gathered close, keeping each other's fire alive.

The writer of Hebrews knew that some of his readers were drifting away from the assembly. Times were hard, persecution was real, and slipping out of the gathered life of the church must have seemed like the safe and easy thing to do. So he writes some of the most pointed words in the New Testament about why Christians gather: "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 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."

Notice that the command to gather is wrapped on both sides in purpose. We meet in order to "stir up one another to love and good works." We meet in order to keep "encouraging one another." The assembly is not a spectator event we attend and rate. It is a gathering of coals, where each believer's presence helps keep the others burning. When we stay home, we are not just missing something for ourselves; we are withholding our warmth from everyone else.

This lesson is about the gathered worship and work of the local church, the rhythm God designed for His people. It is about why we assemble, what we do when we gather, and why faithful, committed participation in a local congregation is not optional for the Christian who wants to keep the fire alive. The New Testament shows us a clear pattern: believers gathering on the first day of the week to worship, to remember the Lord in His Supper, to give, to pray, to sing, to hear the Word, and to spur one another on. This is the ordinary, beautiful, life-giving work of the church.

Group Discussion: Think about the difference between watching a concert online and being in the room with thousands of other people singing together. What does physical presence with others add that watching from a distance cannot? How might that apply to the gathered worship of the church?

Personal Reflection: Be honest about your own pattern of gathering with the church. Is it a settled priority, a convenience you fit in when nothing else competes, or something that has been slipping? What does your actual pattern reveal about what you believe the assembly is for?

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?

10. 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?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 2:42, devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers; Acts 20:7, gathered on the first day of the week to break bread; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2, giving on the first day of the week; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, the Lord's Supper as proclaiming His death until He comes; Colossians 3:16, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.