

August 28, 2016 by Steve Brandon



Stir Up One Another

Hebrews 10:24-25

As most of you know, this summer has been quite a whirlwind for me and our family. I was gone a week at youth camp. I was gone for two weeks at Southern Seminary. I was gone for two and a half weeks for our vacation in California. During all of that time, I was gone for three Sundays, which gave me (and my family) opportunities to visit other churches.

I very much enjoy going to other churches. I love experiencing what God is doing in other places. It's a chance to sit back and let others lead. I love listening to others preach the word. It's helpful to me to see how other churches arrange their services and their ministry. It's very edifying.

It's also very helpful for me to see the church how you all see the church. When I'm not preaching, my Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings look a lot different. Rather than having a mind that is intensely thinking about my message and what I'm going to say, it is much more relaxed. I go to bed at ease. I wake up at ease. And I must confess that I pray a lot less than when I'm preaching. There is something that preaching does to my soul to create a healthy dependence upon the Lord every week.

And perhaps this has to do a bit with my experience this summer. Here's what I experienced: I went away from these churches a bit cold. It was no fault of the churches, themselves. The music was good. The preaching was good. The people at the churches were friendly. I had some good conversations with people of the church.

But, I still went away cold. Perhaps I went away cold because of my own coldness of heart. And that is certainly some of it. Perhaps I went away cold because my intensity in prayer and preparation isn't nearly what it normally is. It's a bit like a football player who has prepared all week to play the game. His experience is a bit different than the fan who simply came along to cheer his team on! That may explain my experience of coldness this summer.

But I think that something else was going on. I think some of the coldness was due to my relationship with each of these churches. It's not that my relationship with the churches is bad. It's simply that my relationship with the churches is shallow.

See, when we attended these churches, we only knew a few of those who attended as family or friends of ours. Furthermore, we had no intention of returning again. That is until, perhaps, the next time that we visited California. And it felt as if I was simply attending church to perform some sort of religious duty. As if it was my duty to attend a Sunday morning church service. And I had done my religious duty. And I was on my way.

But, I'm telling you, something didn't feel quite right. And as I reflected upon it for some time, I think that it had much to do with my relationship with the people of the church. I think that everything would have been different if we were planning to return the next week.

Then, we may have gone to the picnic that people of the church invited us to attend. I may have met with that pastor who wanted to get together with me during the week, but I couldn't because we were already out of town before he called. I may have gone to a fellowship group or a Bible study sometime in the week. And then, I would have seen the people of the church again the next week. And with the experience of community, I think that all of those things would have made a difference on my heart. But simply going and attending a church service left me sort of empty.

Now, again, I'm not placing any blame on the other churches that we attended this summer. The blame comes squarely upon me. But it is to note that there is a big difference between going to church and doing church.

I really felt that difference this summer as I was away from this church. I was away from the place where I "do" church, where I am in community with people I love, where I am in community with people who love me. I simply went to church for those Sundays that I was gone. I went and sang some songs. I heard a good message. I had a good talk with those who were there. But then I left, without any connection to the people of the church. And it left me empty.

And what really struck me is that there may well be people here at Rock Valley Bible Church who simply "go to church," but know very little about "being the church." And every week there may be people here who go away from this place feeling a bit empty.

And it very well may be that when you think of Rock Valley Bible Church, your experience is that of my experience at the churches we visited this past summer. Like the church doesn't really do it for you. Not because of a fault of Rock Valley Bible Church, but because you have very little connection here throughout the week. And if this is you, may I simply say that you are missing out on a great blessing. You are missing out on the privilege of being the church. And you might come, week in and week out, and leave feeling a bit empty. It may well be because you are simply "going to church," rather than "being the church."

Here's a little test for you that might help. This past week, how many times did you connect with people of this church? I'm talking a phone call. I'm talking a meeting. I'm talking having others in your home. I'm talking exercising together at the gym. I'm talking coffee together at

Starbucks. I'm talking eating a meal together. I'm talking a text or an email. I'm talking any connection. How many times did you connect? If your number is low, know that you are missing out on a great blessing.

I remember learning as a little child a song. It went like this:

The church is not a building;
the church is not a steeple;
the church is not a resting place;
the church is a people.

And this is the idea of my messages this summer: to focus our hearts' attention upon God's call for us as a church. As most of you know, we have been looking at the "One Another's" of Scripture. These are some of the ways that God calls us to act and behave toward one another. We have looked at the command to "Encourage One Another," and to, "Pray for One Another," "Serve One Another," "Love One Another," "Show Hospitality to One Another," "Honor One Another," "Forgive One Another," "Accept One Another," "Bear One Another's Burdens."

And the fact of the matter is simply this. You cannot do these things with one another if your sole contact with each other is on a Sunday morning. It is especially hard if it's your habit to arrive here at 10am, perhaps a little bit later, and leave shortly after the service is over. You may never see one another again until 10am the next Sunday. It's simply impossible.

God's call upon us as a church is to have lives that intersect so that we can Encourage One Another, Pray for One Another, Serve One Another, Love One Another, Show Hospitality to One Another, Honor One Another, Forgive One Another, Accept One Another, and Bear One Another's Burdens.

Well, this morning, we are going to look at the command to "Stir Up One Another." It comes from Hebrews, chapter 10 and verses 24 and 25. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to open your Bibles there. The book of Hebrews was a book written to Jewish people (thus, the name Hebrews). It was written to Jewish people who had come into the church. They had come to hear about Jesus, their Messiah. Many had come to faith. Others were still on the fence. Others were thinking about returning to their Judaism.

And the author says, "No!" "Don't go back!" He argues through the letter that what you have in Jesus is so far better than what you ever had in the synagogue that there is no reason to return. Instead, they should "press on" in their pursuit of Jesus.

In fact, the argument of the book can easily be summed up with these six words, "Jesus is Better, So Press On!" Don't return back to your old ways, because Jesus is better than angels. Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is better than Joshua. Jesus is better than Aaron. Jesus is better than all of the high priests. Jesus has brought a better covenant that has been enacted upon better promises. The sacrifice of Jesus is better than all of the Old Covenant sacrifices. So, don't turn back. "Press on!" in the ways of Jesus. It is your best option.

And, beginning in verse 19, he brings many of his arguments to a head. He writes, ...

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And 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.

In other words, because Jesus brings us to God in a new way that the Old Testament priests were never able to do, "Let us draw near" to God (verse 22). "Let us hold fast" to our confession (verse 23). And "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (verse 24).

And what is particularly helpful to us about these verses this morning is that the author is telling us that it's not enough simply to draw near to God on your own. It's not enough to "hold fast" to your faith alone. The call of this author is for you to help others around you to draw near to Jesus and hold fast your profession of faith. Isn't that what verse 24 says?

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

And I think, in some measure, that the reason why I left the churches this summer cold is that verse 24 is difficult to do on a Sunday morning when those at church don't know you. When you don't know them, and you won't see many of them ever again. Again, this isn't the fault of the churches I attended. In many ways, it wasn't even my fault. The fault lies in how I had very little relationship with those at church.

Because, to fulfill verse 24 requires a relationship. You can't stir up others to love and good works if you don't know them. That's the idea of verse 25.

Hebrews 10:25

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.

In other words, you need to come together regularly for the purpose of encouragement. That's why Christian churches gather together for encouragement to keep walking in the way. That's one of our purposes every Sunday morning. Every Sunday, a key purpose of our gathering is to remind of the gospel. We seek to remind ourselves that Christ Jesus died for our sins; that we aren't made righteous through our own efforts; that we are justified through faith in Christ; that these beliefs should translate into our lives.

Our songs are geared to remind us of the realities of our faith. We read the Scriptures to show us where our hope remains. We pray to God to help us in our weaknesses. We preach to open up God's word to our hearts.

But as much as of this public ministry helps, there is still an element that's missing. It's the personal ministry of interaction of "One Another." Let's dig into the "One Another" command given in verse 24.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

This verse is a simple call to do what God calls all believers to do. We are called to love. We are called to be engaged in doing good deeds. Jesus said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (John 15:12). John reminds us that this love isn't simply a word, spoken in affirmation of another, "I love you." No, love comes with actions. "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18).

In other words, love will express itself in good works for one another. When God saves us from our sins, He saves us for a purpose. He saves us to produce in us fruit. He saves us to do good deeds. Titus 2:14 explains, "Christ Jesus ... gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Ephesians 2:10 tell us that, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." James says, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). God saves us to produce a people who will act upon their faith, for such is the will of God.

And that's what this verse is calling us to--to love and good deeds. Sort of. Look again, closely at verse 24, ...

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

Verse 24 is a call for you to encourage one another on to love and good deeds. In other words, the emphasis of the text isn't so much on how you are showing love and good deeds. Rather, the emphasis of the text is upon you encouraging another to love and good deeds. Do you see it? The main thought in verse 24 is this: "Let us consider how to stir up one another." See, it's not merely enough to be engaged in love and good deeds yourself. God's call upon your life is to bring others along in love and good deeds.

We are called "stir up" one another. The NASB translates this, "stimulate one another." The NIV says, "spur one another on." In the original Greek, this word is usually used in a negative sense of provoking or irritating or rousing to anger. A great way to translate it would be, "provoke."

I trust that you know what I'm talking about. This sort of thing comes out especially with children. Kids, you know what this is about, don't you? Your brother is sitting there, minding his own business. But, you start to poke him in his leg. Not to hurt him, mind you, rather to annoy him. At first, he thinks it's an accident, so you poke him again. And then, again, and again and again. Pretty soon, he acknowledges the problem that you are and gets angry at you. And you have succeeded (in your sin) to get him to sin. That's how this word is usually used. 1 Corinthians 13:5, "[Love] is not irritable."

But, in this context, the provoking is a good provoking. It's a provoking to love. It's a provoking to good works. This is the sort of provoking that you and your friend does when you decide to work out together at the gym. You say, "I'll meet you there at 6am." And when the alarm sounds at 5am, the last thing that you want to do is get out of bed. But, knowing that your friend is going to be at the gym in an hour has a wonderful way of provoking you to do what is good.

And this is our text this morning. We are called to be those who provoke others (not to anger), but to good things, like love and good works.

"Well," you say, "how is this to be done?" First of all, you need to spend some time thinking about it.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

"Let's think about it." It requires some effort in the mind. It requires some study--not of doctrine, but of people. Not of people in general, but of specific people--those in the community of faith.

It's done like this. You get to know others at the church. You study them by asking them questions. You find out their strengths. You find out their weaknesses. You discover what their gifts are. You notice what areas of need are in their lives. You observe the areas in which they flourish. You detect the areas in which they are floundering. And then, you think about these things. Then, you do what you can do to encourage them on to love and good deeds.

When you see something commendable, you honor them by telling them that you noticed God's work in them in a specific way. This would

encourage them to pursue these things more. When you see those who are weary in doing well, you encourage them that you have noticed their work and are appreciative. This will encourage them to keep going. When you notice a lack of love, you speak to them gently to encourage them in the right way. If done right, this would encourage them in the ways of love.

In other words, it takes a bit of thought and discernment to see and understand what's going on in the lives of others. And when you see it and think about it, you respond appropriately to help keep them on the right track. This is what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all." This is responding to one another in such a way that directs others toward godliness.

But, many times, it's more than simply words of encouragement or reproof. It may be that you match up opportunity for love and good works with the one who is especially equipped to do so. For instance, you hear of a financial struggle. So you match up the one struggling with one who has financial expertise, like Gary or Phil or Ray. Or maybe you hear of someone whose lawnmower isn't working quite right. So you match them up with one who just purchased a new lawnmower and is trying to figure out what to do with the old one. Or maybe you hear of someone with a computer problem. So you match them up with the computer whiz, who is more than willing to help.

In all of these examples, you are considering how to stir up one another to love and good deeds. Because, often, there is the willingness, but the direction is lacking. And you can stir up others in a good way by connecting the need with a willing helper.

Or maybe it's a need that you have. And it's approaching someone who you know can help you with that need. Here, "stirring up one another to love and good works" may be as simple as asking someone for help in your own life. It may be asking a landscaper for some advice about the tree that needs to come down, is it a professional job or can I do it myself? It may be asking a handyman to help guide you in your house-repair project. It may be asking a friend for a recommendation for babysitting your children. It may be asking a godly couple to help you in your marriage.

Here's what I have noticed. If you are in a position of weakness, and see your need, and are willing to do all you can do to fix your need. There are plenty of those who are willing to help. They just need to know of the opportunity. And as you make the opportunity known, are your "stirring up others" to love and good deeds. When other opportunities come, I encourage you to let them be known.

Now, often, in stirring up others, it's more than merely connecting the need with the one who can help. It's often bringing others along to help you. "Hey, here's an opportunity to serve. Why don't you come along with me?"

The most effective way of provoking is to model it before others and bring them along, showing them how it is to be done. This is surely the most effective way in your family to do this. Fathers, model love and good deeds at home. Encourage your children to follow your model. The words of my father still ring in my ears, "Steve, I will never ask you to do anything that I haven't done first, or that I'm not willing to do myself."

So, fathers, don't merely order your children around, demanding that they do this and that. No, show them what a life of love and good deeds looks like. Then, use your God-given authority to stir them up to follow in your steps. Who do you need to stimulate to love and good deeds, but your children?

Now, one of the things that I want you to notice here is that it's not a program issued from the leadership of the church. Rather, it's a grassroots movement of those in the church, in which the people of the church are involved in each others' lives to such an extent that they know each other well enough to urge them on to love and good deeds.

Certainly, this kind of relationship takes time. And it takes effort. And it's not easy. Yet, it's the call of Biblical Christianity. It's God's call upon our lives of how we are to act with "One Another."

I also point out that you can't merely attend some church service and think that you have fulfilled your God-ordained call in your life. We are called to live in community with one another, to love one another, to serve one another, to help one another. And if you are off, doing your own thing, serving Jesus alone, then you are missing a crucial component to your life of faith: the body.

You say, "How do I do this?" Let me give you one big application this morning. Try attending a small group. Verse 25 says this, ...

Hebrews 10:25

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.

Now, certainly, this has an application for attending a church service on Sunday mornings. But, in some ways, it may have an even greater application for a small group setting. Notice what takes place at these "meetings together." There is an "encouraging one another" that takes place.

And certainly, encouragement takes place on Sunday mornings. But, perhaps in a greater way, it can take place during a small group, where you are talking back and forth about your life; where you are sharing your joys and struggles of life; where others are praying for you; where others are able to speak into your life, encouraging you to press on in your faith.

And so, I encourage you to make a small group a priority. We, as elders have talked about prioritizing our small groups this next year and making them a crucial component to our church, especially as it relates to new people coming into the church. You are going to start hearing the mantra, if you are visiting today at Rock Valley Bible Church, we are glad that you have come. If you want to be involved at Rock Valley Bible Church, the main way that we do this is through small groups.

You can see in our bulletin that we have four small groups. One meets at the Guske's home. One meets at the Hook's home. One meets at the Wiebe's home. One meets at our home. Times and locations are in the bulletin. I encourage you to try one out. It's in the small groups that you can get to know people and their needs.

And we are going to change our format a little bit. In the past, we have focused our attention upon the upcoming sermon. We will continue to do so. This is going to be especially helpful as we begin Romans in a few weeks. But, we are also going to make an effort to review the message from Sunday. We, as elders, have realized that this a great opportunity to help all of us in application. I will be emailing out a short list of questions based on my message. You can review these personally, but we will also discuss them in our small group time. I invite you to join a small group and see the how it is a great blessing.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 28, 2016 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
