

# ONE ANOTHER

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*Cultivating Christ-Centered Community*

LESSON FIVE

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# THE FRUIT OF MOTIVATING ONE ANOTHER TO ACTS OF LOVE & GOOD WORKS

- Becoming part of a community that is larger than your own independent journey
- Participating in a small group where you are known and encouraged to grow in your faith
- Cultivating authentic relationships that connect you to God and his plan to serve and love the world
- Allowing a trusted friend to stretch and challenge you
- Building up others in Christ; speaking words that motivate, nurture, and give courage to others
- Seeing others grow and change
- Investing in what lasts—the growth and fruitfulness of others

## MOTIVATE ONE ANOTHER TO ACTS OF LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

Christian community exists when believers connect with each other in authentic and loving ways that encourage growth in Christ. We don't automatically change our ideas, attitudes, and behaviors just because we learn something new that is good for us. Most of us need more help than that. We need examples, relationships, support, and empowering. We need others to accompany and motivate us to grow to our God-given potential.

Throughout church history, people have been shaped and guided by mentors and teachers. Gregory (AD 213-270) wrote of his teacher Origen:

He motivated us by the acts he performed more than by the theories he taught....Less obvious, but more important...was the fellowship with this man. Where I was blind he guided me. He taught me the truth concerned the Word. It was like a spark dropping into my inmost soul and catching fire there.  
(Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*)

The body of Christ is called to accompany and encourage others to grow to their God-given potential. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to show up for another and help one another grow. We believe in one another. We empower one other to grow and flourish. We encourage and support one another in times of hardship and struggle.

The author of Hebrews recognizes that real faithfulness cannot be done alone. It requires community—a community that remembers God's faithfulness, that allows the cross to instigate love and do good deeds, that meets together for the sake of mutual encouragement. One of the results of the death and resurrection of Christ for us is that we, the people of God, ought to work together to encourage one another to live lives that are more faithful to God.

Few of us remember who won the last five Heisman trophies. We don't remember who wins the Nobel prize each year. But we all remember those who believed in us and equipped us to become more than we ever could have been on our own. May we be that for one another.

— Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (164-65)

# MOTIVATE ONE ANOTHER

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**“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” Hebrews 10:24**

**Read Hebrews 10:19-25**

**Our need of one another for growth and perseverance is the focus of today’s passage.** The sermon the church has called “Hebrews” is addressed to a struggling community of believers. **Some have already given up the habit of assembling with the community, some are drifting out of the community, some are regressing, and others are discouraged.** The preacher speaks numerous words of encouragement.

In this section of Hebrews, the author applies the significance of Jesus to the lives of his original hearers. Specifically, he encourages them to persevere in their faith as a community because of the significance of what Jesus has done for us. Faith draws strength for the journey through recognition of what Jesus has done and from the communal experience of faith in the past and present.

The body of Christ (10:14) has opened a new way for us — it has opened the curtain that separated God from his people. Now, the people of God have immediate access to the Father through Jesus. Given this opening, this access, the author encourages his hearers to “draw near” to God. The term “draw near” is important. It’s an Old Testament liturgical term that refers to the coming of a worshipper. It means to come before God (Leviticus 9:5,7,8; 10:4,5; 21:17,18,21). We come into the presence of God through Jesus. To draw near is to experience God’s presence as a faithful worshipper.

**The author recognizes that real faithfulness can’t be done alone. It requires community.** It is striking that Hebrews does not picture isolated individuals coming to Jesus but rather a community gathering in the presence of God. Throughout this section the readers are addressed in the first person plural, as a group. The writer tells this community that what is ongoing is not blood sacrifice, since God’s action in Christ is complete and definitive. Rather, what is ongoing is gathering and keeping the faith. What is ongoing is encouraging others and provoking others to acts of love that embodies the grace that Christ himself made tangible and has shown to us.

**The encouragement is to remain a community — to hold together around the hope and love of the community in the light of the confidence we have in Jesus.** These encouragements should be read in light of the community’s apathy, neglect, and discouragement. The preacher’s encouragement is rooted in what Jesus has done, and this is the demonstration of God’s faithfulness. Because God is faithful and God has acted in Jesus, we hold onto our hope without wavering.

**The author encourages his hearers to consider and pay attention to each other** — to consider each other, to fix our eyes on each other. Do you know someone who is doubting? Discouraged? Struggling? In need of community? In need of hope? We must give thought to the condition of those around us.

**The author also encourages them to motivate one another.** The Greek word *paroxysmos* literally means to incite or provoke or stimulate. What is to be considered are ways to “provoke” or “irritate” one another. Provocation can, of course, have a negative connotation, but the word also has a positive use in the sense of motivating the apathetic or fearful person into activity. **Such is its present use: to produce love and good works. The expression is strong but necessary for a community earlier characterized as inattentive, neglectful, and drifting.** We are to provoke—stir the pot—motivate each other to love and good works. Thus, the community is a source of encouragement rather than discouragement.

# MOTIVATE ONE ANOTHER

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## “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” Hebrews 10:24

**This requires that we show up and be a part of each other’s lives (10:25).** We do this by assembling with other Christians. Not merely going to a church building, but rather meeting with other like-minded believers, regularly, is the key to spiritual growth. **When we come together to share our lives and talk about where we see God at work around us, hope becomes tangible, joy is shared, and encouragement spills over onto one another.** The effects are contagious. The church in Acts understood this; **the book of Acts is filled with many accounts where believers would gather daily giving themselves to teaching, prayer, service, and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47 is just one example).** As a result of this life together they shared a common purpose and goal, they saw the presence of God at work in their midst, and they continually look out for the needs of one another, sacrificing their own goods and possessions so they would have the means to give when a need arose. They praised God continually because they were constantly reminded of what God had done and continued to do. As a result, the world saw what was happening and wanted to be a part of this beautiful community.

### **Reflection: Four Key Elements of Community**

We all remember people in our lives who believed in us and equipped us and motivated us to become more than we ever could’ve been on our own. Based on our text today, here are four ways we can be (and continue to become) that presence for one another:

1. **Show up!** Be present. Be intentional. Pay attention to others. Real faithfulness can’t be done alone. It requires community. From the beginning the body of Christ has practiced soul-shaping through many means: corporate worship, the breaking of bread, the teaching of the apostles, prayer, service, and holding each other accountable to live godly lives. Communal transformation into Christlikeness has been the aim and responsibility of the church from its beginning.
2. **Consider ways to see the beauty of others and remind them of who they are.** We are reminded of who we are in community with other believers. Those in whom Christ dwells and delights, a light to the world, salt to the earth. They tell us the story we need to hear repeatedly. In so doing we are shaped into a people, a community being transformed into the image of Christ and the fruitfulness that flows from a life led by his Spirit. Our memory is not that good, and the world we live in is telling us a different story. Only the community of Christ-followers has the truth we need to hear.
3. **Look out for others and motivate them to become all that God has created them to be.** Look for those people who are struggling, those who are thinking about quitting — and run with them. We need to tell each other “Good Job.” “Keep it up.” “Press on.” “You’re almost there.” We each need fellow Christ-followers who are absolutely convinced that we can do great things, who applaud us when we succeed, and who pull us up when we struggle. We need people around us who can encourage us to become the kinds of people Christ has called us to be—and we need to be that for others.
4. **Have the courage and commitment to hold one another accountable:** We all want to be a part of a community of believers that has people who take an interest in our own well-being, as well as a community who’s not afraid to ask us to make a commitment to our own spiritual growth and service to others. The community has a right to expect certain behaviors from us and can provide the encouragement and accountability we need. And we must be a part of that for others. But to do that we must continue to show up for one another. We must continue to encourage one another. And we must continue to think of ways to motivate others to acts of love that embody the grace that Christ himself made tangible and has shown to us.

# DISCUSSION

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1. Who are some of the great motivators throughout history? This can also include fictional characters from books, shows, movies, etc. Who comes to mind and what made them a great motivator?
2. We all remember people in our lives who believed in us and equipped us and motivated us to become more than we ever could've been on our own. Who has been a source of motivation, encouragement, accountability, etc., in your life? What made them effective in these roles? What difference has this made in your life?
3. When have you motivated/empowered another person to succeed, grow, or develop? What was that like for you?
4. In what ways does motivating others look similar to agitating or provoking them? How can this be good or helpful?
5. Why do you think Jesus developed a small band of disciples? As you consider the story of the church throughout the NT (in Acts and beyond), what do you think those small groups meant to individual Christians at that time – not only at the beginning, but especially those (as in Hebrews) who were struggling or fearful or apathetic?
6. How have small group experiences affected your spiritual journey?
7. In this lesson we've talked about four elements of building true community with one another: *Show up for each other. Remind each other of who we are. Show each other, by example, what we can be. Have the courage and commitment to hold each other accountable.* In what ways do you see the presence of these elements in your life right now? Which ones are you lacking or need more of? How can we as a community meet these needs for one another?