June 21, 2020

Coming Together: Part 1

RENEWED Series

Hebrews 10:19-25

Pastor Josh Luse

We say it all the time, but it is so good to be together this morning with you, is it not? Oh man, it is fun to see you guys, as you're coming in, you're spotting those faces that you've missed, and you wave and you're giving air high fives. If you're at home with us, air high five to you. It's good to have you joining us as well; we can't wait to join you at some point back in person in here as well.

But man, if you're anything like me, you've been doing a lot of different reading over the last several weeks. I read something just this last week—the title talked about the "Quarantine 15". Instantly I knew what they were talking about. Anybody else in here with me? I knew that I've kind of been feeling a little more squishy lately. And what was so interesting is that at the beginning of the quarantine, almost three months ago, my wife and I had decided we are really going to focus in on some core health areas in our life and for our bodies. And so we had started off with a 10-day detox. It was great; it was horrible, all at the same time. We had a great start into it, and then weeks turned into months and routines changed and flipped. And so far we find ourselves back starting over with that renewed focus for core health. And what the article went on to say is that the average American, over this time period, has gained eight pounds. We're not out of it yet. I don't know where that number is going to continue to land. Why in the world is Josh talking about this? Great question. You know, part of it, I grew up with parents that were very health conscious and showed us the importance of having a healthy body and a healthy core that helps us all throughout life. But also, I mean, just even as a story. If I was good when I was little, for a snack and a treat, I would get sprouts and raisins. So that shows you where the bar was from a young age.

But I think it kind of mirrors a little bit of the church too. It's so important for us to stop at times and evaluate and reflect on the core areas of the church, to have health there. I remember Bryan, giving a message ten years ago, as he talked about the *Decade on Purpose*, and how important it was for the core of the church to be healthy, because that allowed us to dream and to think of incredible ways far beyond what we could imagine, how God could continue to use our church. And over the last decade, He has absolutely done that, and God continues to work in and through our church. But we also realize it's important at times to stop and focus and give a centralized attention to some of those core areas. And if you're anything like me, in the midst of that, I just want to do it with everything else that I continue to do. I want to just add it in. But sometimes to have core health, we have to stop and focus and put other things aside to give it enough time to establish a route in our lives where we can then build and move forward.

So, over the next couple weeks we want to unpack what we're thinking about—the core health of our church. We're going to start a series called *RENEWED*. It's nothing new. In fact, the stuff we're going to be talking about is thousands of years old. It's what God has told the church to be

from the beginning. But sometimes that comes with new strategies or new ways to flesh that out. Now our mission stays the same. We long to be people that, "*Glorify God by presenting everyone complete in Christ,"* and that will stay the same. But some of our strategies and attention will change over the next probably months and years as we continue to position ourselves to be effective as a church in Lincoln. We have renewed vision with focused intentionality, with new zeal and united strategy. So we wanted to cast a little vision for you. So the vision statement that we're putting before you is this: *We long to be a people coming together to know Jesus, become more like Him, and help others do the same.* It's nothing new. It's actually very simple words, but how we flesh this out comes with a lot of complexity. And so we want to start to unpack this over the next several weeks.

We've already read part of Hebrews chapter 10 together, but if you would like to join me, that's where we'll be this morning. Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 19, and I'm going to start it out as you find your way there. It starts with the word ***therefore***. Now, whenever you see it—therefore—you've got to stop and see what it's *there for*. Right? And since we're jumping into the end of Hebrews, let me give you a little context about what we're diving into. The book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish believers. We're not sure exactly who that was, but what we do know is that this group of believers was facing a very hard time. They were facing persecution. They were facing imprisonment. Even some of them, at this point, were walking away from the faith. And so in chapters 5 through 9, the writer starts to unpack what has been true of the people of Israel, and the sacrifices and offerings that they've made. And then what now is true for them is the sacrifice, the ultimate offering that Jesus Christ paid for them.

As we get to chapter 10, it starts to turn the corner. It's kind of almost a hinge that sweeps—if this was true, if what we had in Christ is true—then this is how we walk it out. Since we have this promise
of this truth in Christ, then let us live it this way. He is about ready to talk through what that is. Jesus is the Son of God, and He's shown us the way to the Father through the ultimate sacrifice. So he does one final recap, and then he dives into the how we flesh it out. I'm in verse 19 of chapter 10, if you want to follow me there.

> **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…**
>
> (*ESV Hebrews 10:19-21)

Now I'm going to just stop there for a bit. For many of us, this just seems like typical Bible talk, right? We were like, "Okay, I've heard a lot of these words or terms or things like that, but it's not a lifestyle that we live." Let me illustrate a little bit for you. Anybody this week do any animal sacrifices? Nobody in the room? Good! That might be an appropriate time to social distance if somebody raised their hand next to you. Right? It's just not part of our culture. It's not something that we do. And so we don't typically think through, "Well, what's the reality of that?" The closest thing we'd have, maybe, would be, "I was on a farm when they're slaughtering a cow," right? And in those experiences, there's a lot of emotions and a lot of senses involved in each one of those. There's what you see and what you smell and what you hear.

But for the first readers, as they're hearing these words, instantly pictures start to pop into their

minds. They're thinking through, "Wait, **we have confidence to enter into the holy place**? And then it goes on to talk about the blood offering. Okay, get that in, and then they start to read and think through all of the sacrificial systems that took place in the temple or the tabernacle. They realize that the priests—not priests like you and I are thinking of these guys walking around in black robes with the white collar—right? but the priests that God had set up to administer the sacrifices in the temple system that would offer sacrifices daily. But then once a year, there was a very special offering made, and they realized that this is alluding to that, because it's talking about entering into **the holy place**. It's actually called the *Day of Atonement* or *Yom Kippur*. And the priest would not only offer sacrifices for himself and do this ceremonial cleansing of washing, he'd wash his body and he'd wash these special clothes and place them on. He'd grab two goats—and I would love to continue to talk more about that—but we don't have time right now. But he would take blood from the goats in the offering, and he would walk around the temple and get it on his hands and he would sprinkle it around the temple to show the cleansing that the offering was providing. And then what's crazy is, he would enter into the Holy of Holies—the place where God's presence dwelt.

Now there's a tradition told by rabbis you don't find anywhere in Scripture, that they would actually tie a rope around the priest's leg or put bells around his waist before he entered in. That way if he died in the presence of God in there, no one could go in after him. No sin could be in God's presence. I don't know. I'm trying to imagine those priests who are tying this rope to his leg as he's going in, "Why are you guys doing that?" The guy tying it is like, "Uhh, you didn't tell him?" "We will tell you after you come out." Right?

This is something incredible, and it's a brand new thing, as they're thinking through this. "What? We could enter into God's presence?" But what he's telling us is that God has done away with this tabernacle system. Now we can walk confidently into the holy place because we are a kingdom of priests, and the ultimate high priest sits and intercedes on our behalf. We don't have to clean ourselves up to come into God's presence. His sacrifice has done that for us. This is what we mean when we talk about Jesus paying the price for our sins. The cross is God's open arms to you and me, inviting us to come into His presence and have relationship with Him. And this, for the first readers, is a whole new way to think. They see all these words: the *holy place*, the *blood*, the *curtain*, the *priests*, and they realized that Jesus Himself is the sacrifice that tore open the curtain, that opened the way for us to enter into that relationship with God. So, if this is true, then let us live in this way. Verse 22:

> **…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.**

Again, the sacrificial terms are being used in this, with the *washing*, and the *sprinkling* taking place. What's so interesting in this verse is he doesn't just say, "Let us draw to God," or, "Come to God." He says, **"Let us draw near**." "Let us come close to God." Now, again, think of the first readers. In the Old Testament covenant, God would tell them you can come by Me, you can kind of be in the vicinity, in the perimeter. In fact, the tabernacle would sit in the very middle of the whole Israel nation, and they would put their tents around it, and it would be their focus. But God also gave them warnings to keep their distance. They couldn't enter into His presence. Only the priests could, and only under certain circumstances. But remember God's heart? Go back even

farther, clear back in the Garden of Eden. God created Eden because he wanted a place, not for Him to live, but a place for Him to live with us. They would come and He would walk with Adam and Eve in the garden. And ever since that time—the Fall—and sin has taken place, His desire has been to be back with us, with His people in our presence. And all of a sudden, now He's not saying, "Come by Me." He's saying, "Come **near**. Come close. Draw in." It reminds me that these verses are not about a place where God dwells. They are about people that He dwells in, because now He tells us that His temple is us. He lives within His people. So it's so important to understand God doesn't live in a church building. You don't have to come here throughout the week to meet up with God. God lives in His people. That's why we often say to our kids, "We're on the way to this place," or, "We're going to the place where our church meets." We don't say, "We're going to church, because the church is not this building. The church is you and me.

And so we have an opportunity to draw near to God, but it says **with a true heart**, or you could say *a sincere heart*. But we always go to this place where we worship, don't we? The Samaritan woman did the same thing. Jesus, talking there, stops through some area, meets this woman at the well. They start having a conversation and something starts to click in her mind. She realizes this guy is legit. What He says is true. And so what's the first thing that she asks? "Okay, where are we supposed to worship then?" Right? "You Jews say we are supposed to worship in Jerusalem. But we say we should worship over on this mountain. Where is it that we are supposed to worship?" What does Jesus say? He says that God is looking for worshipers, but the kind of worshipers that God is looking for are those that worship Him in spirit and in truth.

God is after our heart, not our location or our church attendance somewhere. He wants a passionate relationship. So, you could come here weekly; you could check in for a day or two. God really wants to spend every day with you. I want to ask you this question. "Are you drawing near to God?" Through this season, there are maybe a lot of family that you've drawn a lot closer to you because you're trapped in the house with them—like roommates! But are you drawing near to God? He's made a way for us to be with Him, so let us draw near. It continues to move on in verse 23:

> **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.**

It's interesting, it says **without wavering.** But he gets it. This Christian life is not easy. The people he's writing to, they get that; they know that. They're facing imprisonment. Some are walking away. They're facing persecution. If we tell people, "Come follow Jesus and your life is smooth sailing," we are telling them a lie. Yes, we have hope that extends far beyond our circumstances. But life as a follower of Jesus, it's not easy. It could bring persecution in your life. It could bring more difficulty in your life as you actually live out and follow Jesus' ways. It's not easy. So he's saying *hold tight.*

In fact, there was somebody that said, "Once every six months, on the average, there's a major life-changing situation, a tragedy, that takes place in everyone's life." That means for you, and maybe
you're in something right now. Just before the service I talked with a couple that's walking through a difficult situation. Maybe for you, you're just coming out of a really hard situation.

Maybe those two aren't true for you at all. That's where I'd give you encouragement and say, "Well,
that means you're probably heading into one, right?" Very encouraging as you walk away this morning, there you go. But the reality is we're going to face difficult things. So how are we supposed to walk into them? We're supposed to **hold on to the confession.** This isn't me going and confessing my sins and that kind of thing. No, the confession is a statement or it's an acknowledgement or an affirmation, a statement of what I believe or an affirmation of the truth that I hold on to, an acknowledgement of the reality of the life with Jesus that He offers us—everything that has been talked about in verses 19 to 21. So, hold on to that confession because the One is faithful.

But you know one other thing that's really interesting to me. As I read through all of verses 19 through 25, I noticed that there's so much community and collective language. Here's what I mean. It talks about us *together*. It's not saying "you". So even from verse 19 he says, **"Brothers, since we have confidence,"** right? If I continue to pick out words, I see "us", "we", "us", "our", "us", "one another", "together". There's such a community and a collective theme running through all these verses. Yes, it's intensely personal. Every one of us has to digest this portion for us personally. But he is also saying this is what we're in together. And what is so important during these times where you walk through difficulty, where you tend to waver, is that you are doing it in community—that you're not running alone—because you need others to remind you to cling to the hope that you have, to remind you that God is faithful.

It reminds me of a friend I had that ran marathons. It was his first marathon. I've never run a full marathon. For me, a half marathon, anything you do like running or whatever, I do the half of it. That's more my speed. But he was running his first marathon; he was training and prepping, and he had been working with another guy for that. And he said he was on the run the day of the race, and he would continue to run by and he would see these faces of people he knew, and it was so encouraging for him to keep running. They'd be holding up signs, saying words, and he said it just carried him through until he got near the end, the last couple of miles. But he and his friend had talked through this. They knew that would be a tough point to continue forward with. So they made a plan that his friend would be there. As he continued to come to that most difficult portion of the race, he's going to be in. All of a sudden he spots his friend's face on the sideline. He's cheering for him. "Keep going. Keep going." He gets closer and closer and as he gets close to him, his friend comes off the side and starts to run beside him in the race. And he continues to run, telling him, "Keep going. You can make it; you can do this; we're just going to get to that part; you're near the finish line…almost…keep going," He continues to run with him all the way through to the finish line. He said, "There's no way I could have kept going without my friend walking and running through that point with me."

One of the things he's challenging us, "Let us continue to remind each other to hold on to the hope and the confidence that we have, as difficult times draw near, because He is faithful." He goes on in verse 24:

> **Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting meeting together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.** (Vs. 24-25)

He says, **"Let us consider how to stir up one another**." It's interesting how in verse 25, he says, "**not neglecting meeting together, as is the habit of some**." This is maybe thirty-some years after the church is established, and they already have to be reminded, "Don't stop gathering together; don't stop coming together; don't stop living together," because the reality is this. As people, we will always tend to drift towards isolation and individualism. You and I know it. But I want to remind you again: As people, you and I will always tend to drift towards individualism and isolation. So he's giving us a stern warning to continue to gather together.

It reminds me of the church in America and it makes me wonder what will be drawn up through this period that we are walking through? Because so often the church and the culture that we live in is the church of "me". What do "I" get out of church? What can the church do for "me"? What do "I" want the church to look like? But I don't see that kind of language anywhere in here. In fact, the language all throughout this, "Let us consider how to serve others—**stir one another to love and good deeds** and **encourage one another**. Don't stop meeting together. It's not a "me" focus at all. It's not what I can get. It's actually what I can give, what I can join in helping others with. The focus is, "What can I give? How can I help? What does God want the church to look like that I can join with, in order to reach and help shepherd others around me?"

Maybe this helps out a little bit, this word actually **meeting together**. Or maybe your translation says *assembly*. It's the same Greek word for *synagogue*. It's the same Greek word actually, that we get our word *congregation* from. And there's a big difference between a crowd and a congregation. We could pack this place out; we could have tons of people in for some kind of concert, and individuals from all over, but a crowd is not a church or congregation. A crowd is a collection of individuals, and when the Bible speaks about the church, it never uses that kind of language. What it uses is *togetherness*. It gives words like, "We are a body working together. We are all a family. We're a flock." It's a unified together piece. So we are a congregation, which is a community in which all aspects of the members' daily lives touch. It's life together for purpose. I think somebody said it really well, "A crowd is like a bag of random marbles. But a congregation is like a cluster of grapes, all united on the vine." We are together here for a purpose. What is that purpose? Well, it's to serve one another. It's to encourage one another, to spur one another on; it's to continue to stir up one another. And some of that can be done as we gather together. Some of you are encouraged even from the time that we gather this morning.

But as we look throughout the New Testament, we start to see these words that are showing up and hear **one another**, both in verse 24 and 25. We see that term over and over and over again throughout the New Testament. Now sometimes we can do some of those *one another's* together collectively like this, but a majority of those *one another's*, we can't do sitting in rows. We have to do as we share life with one another. And so it goes back to, "What does this life look like?" Because this life is meant to be lived out, the *one another's* are meant to be lived out throughout all of life, throughout all of the week.

So let's backtrack a little bit and go back to verse 24. He says, **Let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works.** So this word **consider** means *to pay close attention to.* Fellas, it's kind of like you meet that girl and you start to date her, and you notice everything about her. She gets her hair cut and you're on it. You're like "That haircut is phenomenal!" That's great,

right? She wears a blue shirt for the first time since you've been dating, and you're like, "I think that's the first time you've ever worn a blue shirt." She says, "Thank you for noticing; I think you're right." A little creepy, maybe; I don't know. But you notice everything about them because you care about them. You're paying close attention. It's kind of also like my wife and I once a year will travel away. We'll get together and we'll pay close attention. We'll evaluate; we'll consider where our kids are at. Now we do this all the time, but once a year we make it a point to really consider what are areas that they're growing in and that we can continue to encourage? What areas do we need to continue to challenge them in that they're not growing in? And we pay close attention because we want them to become more like Christ and continue to follow Him.

This is what it's talking about. Pay close attention to one another; consider them; listen. But then he goes on to say **how to stir up one another**. Now the Greek word gives this idea of irritate, right? You say, "Great, I got a pass to irritate somebody." But it's also to *give insight* or maybe your translation says to *spur one another on*. That's something we all can understand. I'm not a cowboy, but I know you put spurs on, you get on a horse and you can get action going pretty quick, right? That spur goes in the horse and it motivates it towards something. We are to motivate each other towards something, to spur one another on, to stir them up.

I think what's really important—you see this play out like in sports—is the coach says, "Hey, come together," and the team rallies in the huddle, and he's encouraging them to go and win that victory in the game. Or you see a parent that comes next to a child and they're giving them the stern warning as they spur them on towards the correct action to take. It's this challenge, this encouragement that fleshes out the action. But the key thing is that there's a consideration that's taken place before this, because if we try to help somebody without paying close attention to them, we can do a lot of damage.

I think of not too long ago. I was walking; I had my backpack on. I was headed to a coffee shop and it was one of those really hot days. You know what I mean? Like you crack an egg on the sidewalk, and it starts to boil up for you. And as I'm walking along—I'm kind of on mission to my next thing— and I see this little green caterpillar on the sidewalk, and it's struggling. It's not doing too good, and I figured I'm going to help it out. I'm just going to kick it over to the side where there's some shade and plants, and it will help it, and then I'll go on to my next thing in life, right? So I walked by, go to kick it and the thing just explodes. It's like somebody sneezed all over the sidewalk. And I sit there going, "No, I wanted to help it," and I definitely did not help it out. Now if the caterpillar were in my home, I would be way more tough. It's invading my space and then we're going to talk, but I mean this was its home and I was going to help it out. When I realized what I needed to do at that point was actually consider what's happening, that it's stuck to the sidewalk at this point. I needed to help it dislodge before I kick it with my shoe because, what I thought I would do to help, without considering that, it actually made it even worse. It's important that we take time to listen, to stop. I can tell you I made it through that day okay. I have survived the caterpillar catastrophe.

But I wonder this week, how much have you been considerate of others? How much time in the last two weeks have you been quick to stop and judge someone or even maybe share an opinion, without taking time to stop and consider, to listen, to pay close attention to them because the desire in this is to produce something—**to produce love and good works**. Let me just talk about this for

a minute. I know there's a lot of racial tension going on within our city and within our nation at this point. And it makes me wonder how much are we stopping and listening and considering, before we try to do love and good works? How much are we trying to adjust things in the way that we would try and help, rather than listening and praying and seeking God's Spirit's guidance to join in with Him?

I can tell you a couple weeks ago, a few of the leaders here from the church went and gathered with several other churches, and some black pastors in Lincoln helped lead out in time for us just to listen and to pray. And our whole objective was just that—listen and pray! Now we start there, because we want to move into love and good works. But I wonder, are you listening? Are you taking time to pay close attention? Because that he says is what goes on to love and good works. Or another way we could say this is, "It's an attitude of love and an action that follows that attitude." And I can't get the motivation—I can't spur one another to love and good works out of my anger, or out of my frustration, or out of my annoyance. It doesn't work that way. I've got to come and walk in love, to help motivate them, and to help lead them.

That's why it's important to also look and see where the next verse goes on to say, **but encouraging one another.** This verse **encouraging** is from a Greek word *parakaleo*. There's a couple of different ways that it plays out. One is *to call to one side*, so I'm saying, "Come over here." I'm encouraging someone, "Come here," I'm directing them; I'm teaching them. Another one is *to come alongside*. There are other times where I walk over, and I join, and I walk alongside them. It could be encouragement; it could be exhortation. It could be a strong warning or it could be a way to just walk alongside them and comfort them. But what he's telling us is that we're here as a church for one another, to serve and encourage and pull others up as we follow Jesus. ***And all the more as you see the Day approaching*** is saying it's not going to get easier and easier. It's actually going to get more and more difficult. So how I continue to walk is so important in these times.

I want to ask you this question in calling us into community to come together. So, if I were to ask you, "Are you in community right now," how would you respond? I'm going to give a shameless plug right now here for our online connection groups. I think it's important. If you don't have someone that you're walking along side of or you're sharing life with, we have another eight-week session starting this week, and you can still sign up till tomorrow. It's a chance for you to log in online to share what's going on in your week, to dig in the Scriptures, to pray together and walk alongside one another. If the world started to take one of those difficult turns, and the bottom dropped out in your world, who would you call? If you're in a spot where you needed encouragement, who is it that's going to come and encourage you? If you are walking into something and someone needs to come challenge you, who is going to challenge you? If you have blind spots in your life, who is going to call them out in love for you? This is community!

But what I'm realizing when I read through Hebrews, it's actually flipped. It's not thinking of who's going to do that for me? It's who am I going to do that for? Whose world that you know of has just had the floor drop out from underneath them? Could you go and encourage them? You could be there for them. Who needs some difficult words? Maybe a challenge? Or somebody to walk alongside them and help bring them back to following Jesus in the way that He's called

them—that you could be a part of playing a role in their life to help shape them and transform them to be more like Christ? Who could you think of this week to even encourage?

You know, as we wrap this up, and as we go through the next couple of weeks, I know that a lot of people are talking about wanting to go back to normal—and I get it! Man, I want to get routines back. I want to be able to put things on the calendar and know that they're going to happen. I want to go to the movies with my family. There's a lot of things that I want. But I don't want to go back to the way things were. I want to go to a new normal. I want this to be a season where God continues to renew us and show us areas that we have to grow in and show us areas where we need to strengthen and become more healthy in the core of our church. And I want to respond to that. I want us to come back together as a church that's changed and transformed. I want us to be the church that doesn't just walk in this room to "get" but walks in thinking, how can we "give"? How can we help?

I long for us not to be a church where we come as spectators, but instead, one that comes and joins in on a unified strategy all together with everybody participating and playing their part. I long to be a church that doesn't just gather here on the weekends but shares and lives life with one another throughout the week. I long to be the church, not defined by programs or busyness, but it has enough margin to consider one another, a church that is known for their love of Jesus and their worship of Him, for their discipleship that they're fostering—and everybody is playing a part in. For their prayer for the community, the church—united together—a church, renewed in zeal and love for Jesus and one another in this city, and the rest of the world—a church that is coming together to know Jesus, become more like Him, and help others do the same. I think that's Jesus' heart too.

> *Father, I thank You so much for who You are and what You've done for us. Jesus, You've done incredible things for us, to provide a way for us to be with You, not just by You, but experience Your presence in our lives. God, thank You for that. Thank You that You long and you challenge us to draw near to You, to come close. God, help us continue to encourage those around us as we all draw near to You even this morning. God, thank You, that You continue to remind us to hold tight to the hope that we have because You are faithful. God, thank You for Your faithfulness. God, thank You that You also encourage us to spur one another on and to encourage one another, to call one another up as we follow You and make a difference in the world that You've placed us in. Jesus, we want to be a church that is renewed in our zeal and passion for You, and that is ready and positioned to do even greater things in the days and weeks and the future ahead. We thank You for leading us; we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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RENEWED // WEEK 1

Online Connect Groups Questions
Coming Together: Part 1 // Hebrews 10:19-25 // June 21, 2020

Introduction

Welcome to a new sermon series!

This summer, we plan to come together to know Jesus, be more like him and help others do the same. On Sunday, we focused on the first part of that statement: come together.

Josh challenged us to rethink church and Sunday worship. The church is a people, not a place! This week in your groups, spend some time thinking through what it means to be the church.

Getting to Know Each Other *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

Begin your group time by learning more about each other. Open up, and have some fun!

→ What's your favorite summertime memory?

→ What's the most significant thing that's happened in your life in the last two weeks?

→ Do you have any summer projects or vacations planned? If so, what are they?

Getting Started

Begin to transition into group discussion.

1) Invite someone to open the group in prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. God to reveal His truth and love for the group
    b. Openness to each other and God's voice
    c. Friendships to deepen and grow
2) Invite someone else to read Hebrews 10:19-25 to the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

Please complete these questions before your group meets.

1) **Read Hebrews 10:19-21.** Prior to Jesus's time here on earth, the temple was the only place that people could enter into the presence of God. Even after travelling long distances, temple visitors were still separated from the Holy of Holies by a curtain. The High Priest was the only person permitted past the curtain, and only once a year! Through Jesus's work on the cross however, God's presence now dwells within us. The church building is not the temple; we are His temple!

   Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-17.

   a. Do you behave or present yourself differently at church than you do at work or at home? How come?

   b. Is it important that our life looks the same at church, home and work? How come?

2) Read Hebrews 10:22-23. There are many good things that come from weekend worship services. However, the Christian life is more than just the weekend. It's not meant to be lived in isolation, it's designed to be lived out together. We miss out if we try to live a Christian life without fellow believers!

    c. Other than meeting online, how can our group draw closer to each other as we collectively grow closer to God?

    d. How can we promote a group culture in which group members feel safe to be open and vulnerable with one another?

3) Read verses 24-25. We all long to be loved and respected. We want others to celebrate our best qualities, and we want to be encouraged and uplifted when we're down. However, we also need to be challenged and developed in areas where we need to grow. As believers, we have a profound desire to love and do good works—which Josh referred to as "spurring one another on."

    a. Who are you actively "spurring on" with the truth? Who could you add to this list?

    b. This week, what could you do for someone listed above that might spur them towards love and growth?

4) Changing our perspective from "church is a weekly activity" to "church is who we are" may be a foreign concept for many of us. Even among Christians, the idea can be countercultural. Take a few moments to reflect on your motives and intentions.

    a. Why do you attend weekend service at Lincoln Berean Church?

b. If you were to put your reasons in a percentage, what percent is to get (receive encouragement) and what percent is to give (encourage/serve others)?

c. If you tend to lean towards being a consumer, what needs to change so you are a participant? What needs to change if you find it difficult to allow others to love and serve you? What is makes this a challenge?

Prayer *(Suggested time: 10 min)*

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. Consider the areas you need to grow, receive help or show love.

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our fears, hopes and dreams. Sharing these things can be scary, but it also invites others to share in your life!