

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

GENEROUS TOGETHERNESS

FEBRUARY 22-28, 2015



MAIN POINT

A healthy church requires devotion both to the truth of the gospel and to a generous togetherness.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. What is your favorite hobby? Why do you love it so much?

2 What about hobbies creates community?

Leader: Even those hobbies that we do on our own are not as enjoyable if we can't talk about them with our closest friends. Some experiences just aren't the same when you can't share them with other people. Your daily walk with God is one of those things. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, they immediately devoted themselves to doing certain things together: hearing God's Word taught, fellowshiping together, praying together, and giving generously to one another (Acts 2:42-47). Through the example of the early church, we see that a generous togetherness is absolutely essential both to our individual spiritual growth and the growth of the church. When Christians identify with and commit to the church, they find a source of love, encouragement, and accountability. Without such generous togetherness, believers would be joyless and ineffective, and the church's mission would stall.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 10:19-25.

3. What is so significant about the statement, "We have confidence to enter the holy places" (v. 19)?

4. How might knowing that it is only Jesus' blood that makes us confident to enter God's presence change the way we think about community? As we seek to live in community with other believers, why must we remember that we are saved by grace through faith and not by our good works?

Leader: The decisive fact that makes us able to enter into God's presence is the blood of Jesus. These verses refer back to Hebrews 9 where Jesus' sacrifice is contrasted with that of the high priest who would enter the Tabernacle through the sacrifice of "goats and calves" (9:12). Jesus, in contrast to the High Priest, entered the "Tabernacle" and made a "once for all" sacrifice for sins that secured an "eternal redemption" (9:12-13). It is also important to note that Jesus did not merely die to redeem individuals to Himself—He died to redeem to Himself

a people, a church. He redeems us to live in community with Him and with one another. When we recognize that it is Jesus, and not our good works, who makes us able to enter God's presence, we will see the church as a place where we serve rather than a place we go to be served (Mark 10:45).

5. What three commands arise out of having confidence to enter God's presence through the blood of Jesus (vv. 22-24)? If we took these commands seriously, what would change in our lives?

Leader: The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as our "great high priest," meaning that He is the one who has made full atonement for our sins. When we recognize that Jesus shed His blood to restore us to a right relationship with God, we will draw near to God (v. 21), "hold unswervingly to the hope we possess" (v. 23), and "consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds" (v. 24). Trusting in Christ's sacrifice on the cross makes us able to draw near to God because through His death and resurrection, Jesus has cleansed us of our sin. This reality allows us to remain firm in our commitment to God, because Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate act of faithfulness. And finally, Christ's sacrifice demonstrates the manner in which we are to encourage and serve one another, as Jesus set aside the glory due Him in order to meet our deepest need (Phil. 2:5-11).

6. How might participating faithfully in the community at OEFC and in our growth group help you more clearly see the areas in your life that need to grow or change?

Leader: Notice that the writer of Hebrews says, "let us ..." in each of the three commands that he gives in verses 22-24. This tells us something important about how God intends for us to mature. God saves each of us individually, but He calls us to grow in community. Our sin natures keep us from having an accurate view of ourselves, but when we commit to biblical community, we surround ourselves with people who can help us begin to see ourselves the way God sees us. Living in community also helps us to see the way we might generously give of ourselves to help others pursue Christ. Our church is a gift from God, which He intends to leverage to help us seek Him, remain firm in Him, and help others seek Him, too.

7. What does it look like to "spur one another on to love and good deeds" (v. 24-25)? What are some practical ways that we, as a growth group, might demonstrate a generous togetherness in the way we live in community with one another?

Leader: The writer of Hebrews gives us two ways we might spur each other on to love and good deeds. First we must not neglect to meet together, and secondly, we must actively encourage one another. In other words, generous togetherness requires faithful commitment. If we hope to cultivate spiritually edifying relationships with each other we must take the time necessary to build meaningful relationships with one another so that we might learn how to encourage, pray for, and hold each other accountable.

8. Why did the writer of Hebrews remind his readers that "the Day" is "drawing near" (v. 25)? What is taking place in our world today that causes us to take this seriously?

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 9. It is easy to cultivate surface level relationships with others at our church or even in our growth group. What could you do this week to go beyond the surface and deepen your connection with other believers?**

- 10. How should being a part of our growth group spur you on “to love and good works” (Heb. 10:25)? What have you gained from participating in growth groups at our church? How has God used you to encourage and support spiritual growth in others?**

- 11. Why is generous togetherness essential to fulfilling our mission of making disciples? What is one step we could take as a group to cultivate generous togetherness?**

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for the members of OEFC who have invested in our spiritual growth. Ask God to bless our church with a unity born of the genuine love that we as Christians have for one another. Ask God to build up the faith of each person so that he or she may love God with all his or her being and that each might truly demonstrate love for one another.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - **How has this week’s study expanded or deepened your understanding of community and your part in the community of faith at OEFC?**
 - **How are you currently serving at OEFC? Take a moment and pray for the ministries of OEFC. Ask God to make you willing to serve Him in any way He might lead.**
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Hebrews 10:23-25.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

HEBREWS 10:19-25

10:19. We experience Christ's power by drawing near to God, maintaining our faith, and loving other believers. "Therefore" emphasizes that in view of what Jesus has done, believers can approach God with confidence. "Confidence" describes a boldness believers have because of our new relationship to God. "The Most Holy Place" was that part of the sanctuary which symbolized the presence of God. This verse uses the term not for the tabernacle but for the presence of God. All believers can come to God's presence. This privilege is no longer limited to the priesthood. Believers can approach God because of the blood of Jesus. Not animal sacrifice but Jesus' sacrifice of Himself has opened the door. All who have found a new relationship to God through Jesus can experience this privilege.

10:20-21. We have the boldness to enter into the holiest place because Jesus has opened for us a new and living way. He serves as our great priest to encourage us to enter God's presence. Christ's way to the Father is new because he opened it by his death. The resurrection of the sacrificed One has made the way living, or effective and enduring. "Curtain" refers to the veil that stood between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. In Hebrews it becomes a symbol of Jesus' human life. As a human being, Jesus opened up a new way to God. Jesus presented his human life to God to bring us to him. Jesus' human life and sacrificial death have made the Most Holy Place wide open so believers can enter directly into God's presence. This was part of Jesus' high priestly service.

10:22. We can now approach God and have the mercy and grace of our High Priest standing over us. How? First, we are to come with a sincere heart. This calls for genuine devotion rather than hypocrisy. Second, we are to come in full assurance of faith. This demands a bold confidence that God has provided full access to his presence through Christ alone. Third, we are to have our hearts sprinkled from a guilty conscience. This demands constant confession of our sins and openness to God. Finally we are to have our bodies washed with pure water. This may be a reference to baptism as an outward commitment to Christ, or it might be symbolic as is the previous reference to hearts sprinkled with blood. If it is symbolic, the hearts sprinkled from a guilty conscience would picture our salvation, and our bodies washed would symbolize a righteous lifestyle. In this new state of purity made possible by Jesus, believers can come boldly to God and claim his grace and mercy.

10:23. This exhortation appeals to us to maintain spiritual consistency. We are urged to hold firmly to the hope we profess. This hope offers glory which beamed more brightly than the glories of the old order. "Unswervingly" denotes an object which stands absolutely straight, not departing from the perpendicular. We are to lay hold of Christ and never let go, even in the slightest. No persecution, real or feared, was to lessen the ardor of these believers for Christ.

10:24-25. This exhortation calls us to responsibility to one another. The appeal to consider demands concentrated attention. The goal of this attention was to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. As Christians we have a corporate responsibility. We must help others who stumble and falter. We must concentrate on the needs of others and not on our individual salvation only. To spur other believers forward in the Christian life, followers of Christ must meet together. Some of the readers of Hebrews were neglecting to meet together for worship, and this limited their ability to give and receive encouragement toward good works. Christians who meet together with the aim of promoting godliness and love for one another can be remarkably successful in their ventures.