

Spiritual Growth in a World of Resistance

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Hebrews 10:24-25
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What seems kind of a lifetime ago, I was a high school track and field coach, so I coached the high jump team. For nine years, my job was to make the students the best high jumpers they could be. So, I'd develop the workouts. I'd motivate them at the meets. I'd do my best to help them succeed at the high jump. Every day, it was various workouts and all of that, but every year, the kids had a favorite workout because they had amnesia. Because they would think, are we going to go to the pool today to do our workout? Are we going to go to the beach today to do our workout, and I'd hold off a little bit, but eventually, I'd say, okay, today's the day. Let's hop in our cars and go to the beach. Let's go to the pool, and they were so excited until the workout started. Then they went, wait a minute, wait a minute this is hard. The resistance that I'm getting from the sand and from the water is making the workout even harder than it would be if we stayed on the field. Running was harder, jumping was harder, exercise was harder because of that resistance.

Well, the Christian life is very similar. Like those workouts, spiritual growth and your commitment to Jesus happens in a world that resists you. You want to do good, and evil is right there to resist you. When you want to grow, every excuse in the book seems to show up to resist you. You want to read the Bible, and it's, okay squirrel. Oh, wait, what was that? What was that noise in my attic? What's going on, then you got to find that. Or, okay, I need to pray, and so I'm going to sit down, I'm going to pray. Lord Jesus... Right? That's never happened to you, I'm sure. You want to do right at school or at work, temptation is suddenly really strong to resist you. Our culture adds to that. Our culture mocks holiness. Our culture champions immorality. This world full of resistance is the same world you and I are trying to become more like Jesus in. That's not easy. It's hard to live for Him. It's hard to grow as a Christian with all this resistance.

The same was true for the Christians who got this letter that we call Hebrews. Their resistance was different. They'd done nothing wrong, but they were being resisted in the form of severe persecution simply for being followers of Jesus. So as you think about the people reading this, they're suffering, worried, tormented, afflicted, and this letter shows up, and it doesn't say to them, hey, that's just the way it goes. No, it says, I know it's hard. I know it's rough. I know you're worried about being killed for being a follower of Jesus, but listen, Jesus is better. So, stand firm. Don't give up, don't give in. He is better, don't go backwards. Take the next step of obedience in your commitment to Him. Stay committed to Him. Press on. Why? Because He's better. If they wanted to live godly lives, and if you want to live a godly life, you're going to have to do it in an environment, in a world where everything is working against you. That's why God puts passages like this in the text. It says, If you're going to survive, if you're going to grow, if

you're going to change, if you're going to help people know, love, and serve Jesus, you're going to need what is in this text. This text tells you and me what a church should be like.

In other words, the answer to a world that resists your commitment to Christ... You ready for this? The answer to the resistance that you experience, that I experience to being a follower of Jesus, the answer that God gives for that resistance is a local church. It's not a podcast. It's not a book. It's not a celebrity preacher. It is a local church. But I need to warn you. It's going to be different than you expect it to be because when we hear the words what a church should be, we tend to think preaching, music programs, potlucks. We're good. But look at verse 24. Here's God's plan for people living the Christian life in a world of resistance. Verse 24, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." Notice he's not talking to the pastors, hey, you pastors, hey, let them consider. Let them think about how to stir all the rest of you up to love and good works. No. It says what? Let what? "Let us." That's everybody. "Let us consider how to stir up one another." Let's all of us stirring up all the rest of us with a direction, notice, "spur them on towards more love out of their lives, spur them on to more good works out of their lives."

In other words, what a church should be like. It's not just preaching and potlucks. What a church should be like is seen in each of us. What a church should be like depends on your selfless engagement. Your selfless involvement with the other people around you will make Redeemer the church God wants it to be, and our text tells each of us what our engagement with each other should look like. In other words, Redeemer will never be the church that we should be, the church that God wants us to be... We will never be the church that other people need us to be if we're not selflessly engaged with the other people that are here. Why? Because the resistance is just too strong. Simply put, each one of you must be involved, must be engaged. Now, I know I'm saying this. Unfortunately, to Americans who think that we can do the entire Christian life out by ourselves without anybody else, me and my Bible, me and my savior, and that's all I need. By the way, Christian leaders are notorious for this. So, I'm not just speaking to all of you. When you think about it, we commit ourselves to a personal savior. We have an individual relationship with God.

You do know that's more American than it is Bible, right? That's more American than it is Christian. Church now is a personal self-help conference every week, where I come in with my Bible and my coffee, and I listen with the goal being my personal growth. If the sermon applies to me, great. Hit a home run. If it doesn't apply to me, well, nobody bats a thousand. Everything at church is evaluated based on me. It's all about me. We come to church, we get some tips, put them to work where? On ourselves. Because it's all about us. You see, if we're ever going to grow and change and advance in our Christian lives, you need other Christians engaging with you, and you need to allow other... You need to be engaged with other Christians for their benefit, not just yours. Church was never meant to be all about you. So, well, from this text, what should we all be doing? Let's take a look. We should be engaging one another selflessly with

being like Jesus the goal. Look at it. "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

I think I've told you this before. I had a professor in seminary who was known for his sayings, coolest professor ever, and he was kind of coming after us seminary students one day, oh, you guys think you're so smart, and you know your Bibles, you know what a verbal schwa is, and you can define propitiation. You guys are at the top of the heap, and you don't need anybody else. You got this whole thing all by yourselves, then he started talking about a pack of wolves and how wolves look out for each other, care for each other. They protect each other. Food is shared, protection, all of that and then he said, you know what happens if one of those wolves leaves the pack, it's separated? It dies. He looked at us he goes, it dies gentlemen, because the lone wolf is the dead wolf. Some of you have been, and you know Christians who are lone wolf Christians, walking alone, got Jesus. Got my Bible, got my podcast, got my earbuds in. Don't bother me, it's me and Jesus. Engaging and being engaged by nobody. 99% of the time, the lone Christian is the dying Christian, the stagnant Christian, the not growing Christian. But our text, based on the words "us" and "one another," based on those words, we see what selfless engagement in your local church should look like. It'll happen when you, point #1) **Reject Lone Ranger, Consumer Christianity. Reject it. Resist it.** Notice it in your own heart and say, I'm going to fight against the desire for my Christian life to be lone ranger, all by myself.

Your flesh loves lone-ranger Christianity, so does our ruggedly individualized culture in America, and especially in the western part of America. That rugged individualism was awesome for building a country out of nothing. It is death for the Christian life. You have to discard the concept of the Christian life that it is just you and Jesus on your way to heaven. It's not. Your Christian life was meant to engage and be engaged by other Christians, maybe even starting with the people in your own home. Deep inside of you, you must agree with the idea that being a lone-ranger Christian is the path to becoming a not-spiritually-growing Christian, and I say this because this text is not a suggestion. Like, you've got lone-ranger Christianity and engagement Christianity and, you know what? I mean, I could choose either one. They've both got benefits and negatives. I'll just choose the one that kind of fits me, it's an option. It's not an option. This is a command. It's disobedience if we're not like this. Why? Because if you think about the savior, he did not come here to be served, but what? But to serve. If you think about it, as you contemplate his love, his care, his concern for you, our response to that should be, that's the way I should treat you too. He had all that love and mercy, and concern for me. Well, I can't show him mercy. He doesn't need it because he never sins against me, but I can show love and mercy and grace and kindness to you. That's how it's supposed to be.

Notice this is a command for all of us and to all of us. That's everyone here stirring up everyone else here. Notice, what's the direction of that stirring up? To more love and to more good works. We're to do this together for each other, with each other. This is everyone, in other words, assuming responsibility for the growth of everyone else here, which means using what you know, using the way that God has worked in your life to be a blessing to other people. How can I

help you take the next step of obedience? It's asking that. It's thinking that with the people that you interact with. That's not my job as a pastor. Well, no, let me rephrase that. It's not just my job as a pastor. It's all of our jobs as we interact with the people in our lives. I want you to see this. Turn to Hebrews chapter 3. Hebrews chapter 3. If you get to Hebrews chapter 2, you've gone too far. Hebrews chapter 3. Thanks for laughing at that. Trying to help the medicine go down a little bit easier.

Hebrews chapter 3. Look at verse 12. Speaking to this group of people, remember, persecuted for being Christians, some of them executed for being Christians, people they knew and loved, he says to them, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." If anyone had an excuse to fall away from the living God, it would be them. They're dying for being Christians, and he says to them, "To you, do not let an evil, unbelieving heart take over so that you fall away from the living God." Now, verse 13 tells you, tells us what the remedy is for that "evil, unbelieving heart." Notice. It says, verse 13, But exhort yourself every day. See that? Exhort yourself. Encourage yourself. Take that truth and apply it to yourself. Is that what the text says? Oh, yeah. Contacts aren't working. "Exhort one another every day." Exhort them about what? That evil, unbelieving heart. Well, how would the people know to be exhorted about an evil, unbelieving heart unless what? Unless they knew that that person had an evil, unbelieving heart in order to exhort them about. There was a mutual understanding, a mutual sharing of life so that they would know, there's an evil, unbelieving heart in you, and I need to encourage you. I need to exhort you. Notice. "Every day..." Can't miss that. "Every day, as long as it's called today," here's the reason, "so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

For many of you, the chance of engaging another Christian once a week is almost impossible, let alone, verse 13, "every day." So what's the result of that? Many Christians aren't growing. Verse 12, they're "falling away." Verse 13, they're becoming "hardened to God and His word and to love for people." How? By the deceitfulness of sin. Why? Because they are a total lone ranger. I know this point goes against everything inside of many of us. Our flesh strongly resists this. But this might be the key to spiritual change, is resisting being a lone ranger. Why do people become lone rangers? A lot of times, they do it because they're hiding something. They don't want anybody close to them because, you'll find out what I'm doing, and I don't want you to find out what I'm doing. Or, I've got so much shame about what I'm doing. I don't want to be found out, and so instead of having somebody exhorting you day after day and helping you and serving you and caring for you, you just sit in that sin, I'm ashamed. I don't want you. Keep people at arm's length. Other people are lone rangers because of pride. They've got the education. They've got the length of time being a Christian, their position amongst other Christians and so, all of that is then propped up, and then that creates a distance, a barrier between them and having people in their lives that can help them grow and become more like Christ.

People can become lone rangers because they've been hurt by friends, hurt by people that they've allowed into their lives, and so because of fear, not faith, not trust in God, but because of fear,

they isolate. Just them and the Bible, which often becomes just them and no Bible. Right? So listen, unlike high jump or golf or tennis, Christianity is not an individual sport. It's not, running my race, me and Jesus. Christian life, eyes on the prize without anybody, not thinking about anybody else. That's great if you're running the 100-yard dash. That is death for the Christian life. If you follow football, maybe you remember this. One of the Buffalo Bills player had a horrific internal injury on the field. Do you remember this? A couple of months ago? He collapses on the field. What happened right after he went down? I didn't see the game, but I know exactly what happened right after he went down. There was an army of doctors and trainers that ran out on the field to help him, and I want you to imagine that player unconscious, desperately needing help, and nobody comes to help him. Even though the medical team is on the field, nobody comes to help him. What would that player start to do? Well, if he doesn't die, if he regains consciousness, he would start to fix himself, right? He'd start to try to move himself off the field. He'd try to stabilize himself. No clue about what he's doing. He has no idea. That's not his training. He doesn't know what he's doing, but he needed the help of the people that have the help to help him with.

Well, that's the kind of Christianity many of us are practicing today because we're lone rangers. We come to church, and we think, hey, give me some truth, preacher boy. Pass that X-ray, give me the bandages. I'll set my broken leg while I'm driving to the ambulance. I'm going to work on myself, preacher. So thanks for that. You were not meant to be the player in that illustration. You are the medical team in that illustration, not thinking about themselves, not there for themselves, but their very existence is to engage others, to give them the help that they need. Each of them has different jobs and specialties, but they work as a team with one goal, helping hurting people, giving them the help that they need, and that's us. If you're familiar with 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, it's God working in our lives so that we can take the work that He's doing in our lives and not go, oh, good. Thank you for that work in my life, Lord. Oh, that's awesome. Write that in my journal. But that we take the work that God has done in our life so that we could help those who need that work in their lives. That's how you should be here at Redeemer or whatever your local church is.

You were saved to serve others. God has placed you here not to be a lone ranger, not to consume, not to be dominated by self. God brought you here to be engaged in the lives of other people. You're to use your gifts, your knowledge, your passions to help other people know, love, and serve Jesus. That means doing something that's weird. It means doing something that's uncomfortable. It means working on other people's spiritual lives. That feels weird, and something that might even feel weirder, letting other people work on your spiritual life too. It's hard because the norm is, live and let live. None of my business, don't get involved, that's what pastors are for. That's the norm. But this text right here... Turn back to Hebrews chapter 10. This text, Hebrews 10:24, says your spiritual growth is all of our business. It means rejecting the idea of having a private life, rejecting the kind of hypocritical, well, nothing is wrong with me. Hey, how you doing? Oh, I'm doing great, Pastor. Praise the Lord. Sha la, la la la. Hallelujah. Liar. When I see that, it's typically, I know this guy's lying and hiding something. Don't want you to know.

Can we just all be honest that this whole Christian thing starts by all of us raising our hand and saying, I'm a sinner, and I need a savior. I haven't figured it all out. I don't have all the answers. My life isn't this pristine, angelic thing that I don't need a savior before I actually need a savior. Then a text like this says, actually, we need people in our lives to spur us on to more love and to more good works as we're still sinners after we get saved. Each one of us should look at this text seriously, and listen, if we did, Redeemer would be an oasis in the spiritual desert of our times. The lost, the hurt, and the broken and everyone else in between would be cared for, and they would thrive despite the resistance that all of us experience to our Christian lives. May lone-ranger Christianity, consumer Christianity always be rejected by us here. May we look at that and say, that is not allowed in my life, and may this selfless spiritual engagement with others be what we value here. No more lone rangers, okay? No more. Now, what does that look like practically? Look at verse 24 again. It says, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." Two words I want you to look at.

First one is the word "consider." It's an interesting word. It means... It's beyond just notice or glance at. It means to think about, focus, reflect, even ponder or meditate on what? On how to stir somebody else up "to more love and more good works." It's putting away all the distractions. It's putting away all the judgments and justifications and going, okay, I need to think about not myself and what I need, which can dominate our thinking, but it's meditating, thinking, praying, God, how can I help someone around me take the next step of obedience in their commitment to you? It's in your mind's eye, scanning the people in your life, maybe scanning the people in the room and saying, how can I help him? How can I help her become more like Jesus when this preacher's done talking? Because this guy's given me the tools that I need to help somebody else. Or I put it this way. Point #2) ***Look for People to Help Know, Love, & Serve Jesus***. I know there's a typo on your thing. That's all my bad. But listen. ***Look for people to help them know, love, and serve Jesus***. What does that look like practically? It means getting out of your car, coming onto the campus, praying in your mind, God, show me who you want me to serve today. Show me who you want me to bless. It means arriving with other people on your mind, in other words. It's exchanging, what's going to be in it for me today with, what can I do for someone else today?

It means eyes open, intentional, pondering, purposeful, considering, scanning the crowd, having conversations, looking for people in the seats around me, praying, God, give me your eyes. Give me your ears. Help me see who I can help. Help me see who I can bless. Help me to not be here for me. Help me to be here for that person that you know I can help and be a blessing to. Notice we're supposed to be thinking about how to stir up, consider and stir up. Some of your Bibles might say, "To spur someone on." That word is rarely ever used positively. It's usually negative, so it's usually translated with provoke or incite. So we don't usually say something like, the crowd was incited to help the homeless. It's like, the crowd was incited to riot. The crowd was incited to rebellion. But that's this word here, that we need to incite each other, provoke each other to love and good works. Provoke them. Spur them. Think about a spur. Think about a spur with a horse. That horse starts to go in the wrong direction, and the spur gets them back in the

right direction. The horse starts to slow down. The spur keeps them going. The horse wants to stop and take a seat. The spur gets them up and keeps them going.

That's how you and I are supposed to be with each other in our commitment to Christ. Hey, I noticed you're starting to deviate. Hey, bring you back. Hey, I noticed you're not coming to church. I noticed you're not in Bible study. I noticed you're not as engaged. You're pulling back. What's going on? Typically, it's like, well, you know what? Live and let live. They probably have a lot going on in their lives. I don't want to bother them. This text says, bother them. Spur one another on to love and good deeds. That's the kind of involvement, the kind of engagement with others is what verse 24 says your job is every time you are here. Sadly, nobody in American Christianity is praying that when they come to church. Again, why? Because the consumer mentality dominates the American church. We arrive thinking about what we hope we're going to get out of church for ourselves. We're thinking, what's in it for me? How can I be helped? How can I be blessed? Did I get what I was looking for? I'm going to leave if I'm not being fed, if I'm not being blessed by the music or the kids' ministry, the other programming. Why? Because church is, 1, 2, 3, all about me, rather than, One, two, all about you.

That's because we don't treat church like we're all part of a medical team. We treat church like we're all going to a restaurant. True confession time. Never been to In-N-Out or Cheesecake Factory and thought like a medical team, how can I help? Does that cook need encouragement in the back there? How can I bless the people working here right now? Never done that. You know what I'm thinking? I want my food, better not wait too long, better be good. Right? I mean, that's how we are. If anything's not to my liking, no tip for you. I'm not coming back. I'm telling all my friends not to come back, and I'm going to post something on Yelp to let everybody know how horrible you were to me. I'm the only one, right? Now, that might be accepted behavior for a restaurant. It's the service industry. They are here to serve me. But that is just deadly when it comes to church. Worship better be good, not too soft, not too loud. I'd better know all the songs, and I'd better like all those songs. That message better be biblical and relevant to my life, profound yet easy to understand, funny and engaging, also very serious, convicting, encouraging, not too long. Don't you ever talk about money, Preacher. No. No money.

Better have all the ministries I want too, and they better be good. My kid better have fun, and they'd better learn and like their teacher, and if you give them candy, it better be sugar-free because if they freak out after church, I'm coming for you. By the way, your communion better have a gluten-free option, or you are insensitive to me. My small group better be deep and fun. I'd better like those people; they'd better be like me. Better be home missions and world missions. But don't ask me to do anything, preacher, because you know what? I'm busy. I got a lot going on. I'm not too busy to criticize, though. Serving, that's for other people. Giving, that's for other people, and if you don't have all of that and more and to my standard, I'm gone, I'm telling other people I'm gone. I'm going on Google, I'm going to destroy your reputation, and I'm going to go home, and I'm going to pray to God, why aren't there any good churches here?

Because church was never meant to be about you. Ever. Church was about creating the environment to unleash you to minister to others, to care and love and serve and be a blessing to others. That's what this is for. That's why we're here. It's not sitting here in a conference watching me do my stuff and watching them do their stuff. No, it's about you taking the truths that you know and saying, how can I help you? How can I help you? Who needs this help? God, show me who that is because I want to help them because I'm here for them. I'm not here for me. Listen, church was never meant to be a spectator sport where you come in, put a Bible in your lap, listen to a message, sing a few songs, smile, shake a hand, eat a donut, and get in your car, and on your way home, eat roast pastor before you eat your lunch. That's not what this was supposed to be. That was never what this was supposed to be, but that is church for most people, and that's why most people are stagnant and drifting and just plain immature, selfish, spiritual teenagers. Remember when you were a teenager? You thought, I'm more mature than my parents. I know things, and my parents don't know. We confused ourselves into thinking we were mature when we weren't, and if you come to church with you on your mind, and you are all that matters, then you are a spiritual teenager. You need somebody to come alongside. You need to allow people into your life who will spur you, provoke you to be done with that, and to move forward in love and good deeds.

This text says, when we get together, everybody's job is to incite someone else to become more like Christ, to help them know, love, and serve Jesus. With the truth, with the things that I have in my spiritual medical bag. I take that, and I can give it to others. In other words, are you ready for this? We should see everyone else's spiritual growth as our responsibility. How? Just like the sports medical team sees the physical health of every player on the football team as their responsibility. Just think about, just imagine in your mind what this place would be like right now if everybody walked from their cars onto this campus thinking, who can I help today? Praying, God, give me your eyes. Again, give me your ears. Help me to see and hear what you hear and see in the people that I interact with so that I can take what you've equipped me to do, and I can be a blessing to someone else with it. This would be a place that is just incredible for hurting people and confused people and lonely people, incredible for doubting and searching and despairing and just plain... People that's not dealing with any of that. It would just be amazing for them. We'd be talking with each other, not about superficial things but real-life stuff. We'd be writing emails and sending text messages and talking to others.

We wouldn't be running to our cars to get out of here because, I got to get to lunch fast before the line. Mailing cards and making phone calls and visiting people and baking cookies and cooking meals and meeting for coffee, and calling each other on our lunch breaks to say, you know what? I know you're going through it. You told me about it at church. I know you're going through it right now. You got a surgery right now. Or whatever it is. I just want to let you know that I'm praying for you. Yeah, your phone bill might increase, and you might have to wait in a longer line at Costco on Sunday, and you might not be the first one out of the parking lot. The amount of time you spend on your phone might decrease. The amount of time watching TV will

decrease. But you will have more rewards to show for your life on your judgment day, as we've been talking about the past two weeks.

This should be your mindset. Not, what's in it for me? but, God, who did you bring me here to be a blessing to? You're talking to your friends; how can I help you grow? See, the American church has lost this. Why? Because we've taken the consumer mentality. We look at the list of ministry offerings and go, check, check, check. Okay, I can do it here. Or, you know, that preacher, he's okay. Or, that music, it meets my threshold, so I can put up with it. Whatever it is. Take that consumer mentality into these walls when it does not belong here at all. That's fine for American culture, whatever, but when it's here, it is the exact opposite of our savior who came to this world not to be served but to serve. He says, you want to be a Christian, you want to be a Christian leader, that's how you need to be.

Well, in this moment, it's easy to think of excuses. I'm an introvert, I've been hurt, I have a weird smile, had a hard week, don't know the Bible, have a mean face, I sweat a lot. Whatever it is, the amount of excuses that we give to this moment, to this clear teaching in the text, so, I have this special dispensation that I don't need to obey this. These guys had that, they were being persecuted, thrown into jail, and I want you to see this. Look at verse 32, Hebrews 10:32, "But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction." So it's not someone in your family, your job, your school making fun of you for being a follower of Jesus. Notice it's, "Publicly exposed to ridicule and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one."

The author of this book is looking out at this group of people and saying, you're doing this already, and many of you hearing this, you're doing this already, so excel still more. But what I want you to see is they were doing this even when their life was on the line, even when going to prison was a real possibility. They were doing it anyway because they understood that Christianity was not about them. So, let's all of us arrive here to our small groups or the ministries that we serve in with this thought, show me who I can help know, love, and serve Jesus today. To this church suffering persecution, being tempted to leave Christ to go back to Judaism... because the Romans weren't persecuting the Jews, they were persecuting the Christians to find safety in Judaism. To this group of people, he says to them, verse 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 approaching."

So, in a world full of resistance to everything that God wants for you and everything that you want as a follower of Jesus, the Bible says, in face of that resistance, we need to get together more. I mean, if you think Jesus could come back in any moment, if you're looking out at the world and you're like, am I seeing UFOs on the news right now? If you're looking at that and going, if that's on the news, Jesus is coming back tomorrow. If that's your thought as you look out at this crazy world right now, this text says your response should be, build the bunker, right?

That's what it says? Your response, my response, should be, move to Montana. No. It should be, get together more. Well, if these guys got together more, that would tip the authorities off, so they had every excuse to go, no, I'm staying home. You guys go ahead and meet, I'm staying home. You guys can go to jail, you can get executed, I'm going to stay home. He said, that's why it had become a habit for some of them. Because they were afraid, terrified and he says, no, no, no. Even though the Romans want you dead, even though they're going to come after you, even though it's going to be more susceptible to you being captured because you're meeting together, he goes what, "don't neglect meeting together."

Well, you and I, as we look out and we see the return of Christ coming at any moment, you need to be in environments where you can engage others and where others can engage you. Everybody helping each other know, love, and serve Jesus together. In other words, you and I, we cannot selflessly engage anyone at all, unless point #3) ***We Commit to Being in Church Regularly. Commit to Being at Church Regularly.*** There is a direct correlation to the strength of your Christian life and being here in church, being with other Christians, under the preaching of the word, feasting on spiritual food, and I know I'm saying this to an American church that puts on surveys, I'm highly committed as a follower of Jesus to my local church. How often do you come to church? Once or twice a month. I know that that's the American church today. This verse says, "Do not neglect meeting together." Don't make missing church a habit of your life. Make the habit being here. Make not being here something that is abnormal to your life, and parents, listen, you are showing your kids the importance of Christianity by how often you are here. If this is not a priority for you, if it's like, well, we've got no soccer. We've got no baseball. We've got no dance. We've got no meets. We've got no family stuff. Finally, nothing is on our schedule, so hey, let's go to church, you are telling your kids that all of that stuff is more important than being here.

Acts 2:42 put it this way. The first Christians, quote, "devoted themselves to fellowship." What would your life be like if you devoted yourself to fellowship, if you were engaged, zealous, eager, passionate about being with and engaging with other Christians spiritually? That's what fellowship is. Fellowship is not watching a game or going skiing or eating with other Christians. That's not fellowship. Fellowship is doing all of that stuff but with the purpose of helping people know, love, and serve Jesus through those things. It's engaging and being engaged with other Christians so that we're all becoming more like Jesus. Now, in saying that, there are people that are watching right now that might feel guilty. Like, if you're a shut-in. Listen, I'm not talking to you if you're a shut-in. I'm not talking to you if you have health issues. I'm not talking to you if you would love to have a local church, but there's nobody near you. I'm not talking to you. It would be much better for you to watch a solid church online than to not go to church or to go to some church that's going to harm you spiritually.

But I'm talking to the people right now who are watching this in your PJs, drinking their coffee, saying, man, it's so much better because I don't have to drive. I don't have to get dressed. I don't have to be around other people, all the introverts, I can just sit here, watch this whenever I want

to. Now listen, again, there's good, better, best. Better watch online than go to a bad church, but best is being with other Christians, and unfortunately, consumer mentality again, I can miss this no big deal. I've got a lot going on, I can read my Bible anyway, and see it on YouTube, listen to a podcast. You know what? The preachers on Christian radio are better than that guy anyway, so I'm good. I'm fine. Those radio preachers, they're my pastor anyway. No, they're not your pastor. They don't know you, it's impossible. That's the unbiblical, selfish consumer mentality again. If the focus is on others, then I want you to think about the radical implication of that. Think about it, if the church is about engaging with others and allowing others to engage with you, then not being here regularly would be like the heart specialist on the Buffalo Bills medical team not being there that day when there was a heart injury on the field. That's like one player not showing up for the tournament. It's like a coworker on your team not doing their job. It's like that student who doesn't do their part of the group project.

Everyone else suffers, which means... Think about this. If selfless engagement is your mindset, then not being here means someone will not get the help that you can give them, think about that. That's going to mean that you won't notice who's not here so that you can reach out to them. It means that student who's struggling, that couple whose marriage is crashing, that person who's sick or whose heart is breaking, won't be prayed for or encouraged or blessed, or loved because you're not here. Well, that's what the pastors are for. Yeah, that'd be great if the whole church was this right here, a hundred people, and we got 10 pastors, and 10 for each of us. That'd be awesome. There are 800 members and 2000 people that come here every week. But that was never the paradigm that Jesus created when He started this whole thing. The paradigm was not, we pay a group of guys to do all the ministry. The paradigm is, these guys train... what? You to do all the ministry, you doing all the ministering to each other, you doing all the care and the help and giving the hope and encouragement that people need. That's what this whole thing is like. But again, the consumer mentality comes in, so we don't think about walking onto a church campus or going into our small group or going to our Bible study thinking about, what I can contribute, but it's, what I can consume. It's, what I can get, instead of, what I can give.

When we focus on ourselves, we miss this whole church thing entirely. When we focus on ourselves, and we miss church regularly, people who need your help don't get it, and when things aren't going well for you, that means nobody is... people aren't allowed to come into your life and engage you and minister to you and care for you and help and bless you. See, the resistance that each of us faces in this world... We are resisted by our own sinful inclinations. We are resisted by an evil world. We are resisted by spiritual wickedness in high places and all of that was never meant to be fought consistently with a message and a couple songs once a week. You are not going to be the spiritual athlete that you need to be to face the resistance that all of us face to our commitment to Christ going through seven days, which is one meal and a couple songs, and then that's it. But you know what does face that resistance? Hearts that have rejected personal Christianity. Christians who are here regularly and who arrive here looking, arrive to their small groups looking, arrive to their Bible studies looking, who am I here to help? I'm here now, which

means there is somebody here you want me to help. There's somebody here that you want to use me to spur them on to know, love, and serve Christ.

If I summarize it all, in the end, it's coming to church like Jesus came to this world. That's how it is. Think about it, as I said before, He didn't come here to be served but to serve and He served by giving His life to rescue people to buy them out of slavery to sin. If you think about it, His selflessness leads to the salvation, rescue from sin, death in hell for all who will turn from their rebellion, turn from their excuses, turn from their pride, and give their lives to Him. So listen, if that's you, I know this message has been focused on people who already know Jesus. So let me just say to you, you need to know Jesus. You need to turn from your sin and your rebellion and submit and believe and come to Christ, and then... Because what I've been saying today is something that hundreds of people here are already doing. You will be loved and cared for and disciplined and helped because there are hundreds of people here who are not here for themselves but are here to help you. So if that's you, take out this connect card in your program, fill it out on the back, becoming a Christian and either put it in the mailbox in the lobby here in the ministry center or give it to me. I would love to talk to you, love to be able to encourage you in this. Actually, everybody, you have a connect card in your program.

On this program, it's not just how to become a Christian, but there's also, I'm interested in serving. So I want to help you take the next step of obedience in what you've heard today from God's word. You can mark the connect card with an area of interest, and then you can drop it in the mailbox, or you can give it to me personally. You can drop... There's one along the wall in the ministry center right now. If you're watching online, you can email info@redeemeraz.org. See, the temptation right now is to hear all of this, walk out and say, good talk, Preacher, and not respond to the conviction that you feel right now and then pride will get in the way and go, If I make a change, I'm not going to look good because I haven't been doing it right before, and then people are going to think that I'm just changing because... Or whatever excuse we give. It's just like, forget that. Just respond in the way that God has already been spurring you on to respond by His word. Don't let the conviction of this text pass without response.

In the end, a church is what it should be when we are all selflessly engaged with each other for the spiritual well-being of the other people around us, just like our savior was selflessly engaged for our spiritual well-being. Now, you're not going to give your life for anybody, especially to buy their salvation, like Jesus did, but you can give your time. You can give the work that God has done in your life. You can give your gifts. You can give those things so that somebody else can be helped. We are not yet an eight-year-old church. We turn eight on May 17th of this year, so may this kind of involvement with one another, may this be what marks Redeemer Bible Church in the days and the decades to come.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for these truths. Thank you for the way that they challenge us to be more like our savior. He showed us in the gospel, He did not come to be served but to serve. He had this mind in Himself that sought the spiritual well-being of others as more important than His own, and the result of that is He's the savior of the world. May you take that paradigm, that

view of the gospel, of the work of Jesus, and instill that more and more in our hearts. Forgive us for our consumer mentality if we have one. Forgive us for the apathy. Give us hearts that are more engaged. Give us hearts that care for others as we seek to apply this to our lives for the glory of your name. Amen.