

Consider One Another  
Hebrews 10:24-25

On September 21, 1987, the world was introduced to Waldo and through a series of graphics laid out depicting various scenes past, present and future we were invited to find him hidden somewhere in plain sight amidst the many characters on the page. In time we met Wilma, Wenda, Odlaw, Woof and Wizard Whitebeard and were invited to find them along with Waldo. *“Where’s Waldo”* continues to be a craze today.

On May 30, 2003, we were invited to look for Nemo in Disney’s animated movie *“Finding Nemo”*. Until Toy Story 3, finding Nemo was the highest grossing G rated movie and since 2006 it was the bestselling DVD of all time with over 400 million copies sold. For those of you still looking, your search is over. I’m glad to report that Nemo has been found.

This past year another invitation was extended. Through technology and an app for your smart phone or tablet you can embark on a journey to find Pokémon. He is a yellow blobby creature. Several weeks ago I received a text from someone telling me that Pokémon was found in our church parking lot. Someone else told me that a group of teens showed up during their Sunday service because Pokémon was somewhere in the church building. Another friend of mine was telling me that one church has instructed their youth pastor to become fluent with Pokémon Go so that when anyone shows up at the church they can engage in conversation and share the gospel. One college is even offering a course for credit in Pokémon Go.

Our one another passage today is found in Hebrews 10:24-25 where we have a command with continuous action that begins now. It is a search for another group, a search that is more than a passing fad. We find in our passage the command to “consider one another”.

We’ll take a look at the following thoughts from this passage:

A call to attitudes

A call to action

A call to attendance

I want to tell you that I have wrestled with this passage. It wasn’t so much the content as it was the audience. As we drove to church last week I told Robyn that had I realized the weekend we would be discussing this passage fell on Labor Day weekend I would have considered moving it to another more attended Sunday. This weekend is historically low in attendance with many of our folks taking advantage of the last summer weekend before the fall kicks in.

But then I realized it’s a passage not for the vacationer or about the vacationer. It is really about the sporadic attender, the person who believes it’s okay to miss church for stretches at a time, that their relationship with God can be just as impacted by their own quiet reflection on spiritual truth sitting at home or in a boat or hiking some trail.

But it’s not just for them. It’s for the person who may attend regularly, but who has drifted from a love and devotion for God they once had and now only attend out of duty or habit.

But it’s not just for them. It’s for the person who has drifted away from the things of God altogether. Jesus addressed them in His letter to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2. He describes them as having left their first love.

Truth be told, it’s a passage for all of us.

We are given a command. It’s a command to consider each other and encourage one another to maintain a strong faith in Christ. It is a command to give serious consideration to the spiritual well-being of one another.

Millennials are now the largest generation in America surpassing my Baby Boomer Generation. There isn't a clear date that delineates their demographic. Typically researchers use the early 1980s to early 2000s for the Millennial Generation. What is of great concern about the Millennial Generation is their absence in church is quite obvious. According to an article in *Outreach* magazine, only 8% of them say they don't attend church because it's "out of date." They cite a host of reasons for skipping church altogether. The article continues by noting that more than anything else this missing generation craves authenticity more than the misconception of "cooler" worship services.

In 2015 Pew Research conducted a survey that described the religious landscape of America. In it they note that the Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing. It is most significant among young adults, the Millennials, but it is occurring among Americans of all ages. They surveyed 35,000 people and found that from 2007 to 2014 there was an 8% drop in those who identified themselves as Christians from 78% to 70%. There are two things that are of concern to me. The first is that they no longer consider themselves affiliated with any religion. They are called the "none" and I don't mean ladies like Mother Theresa.

Just last week Pew Research came out with the results of another survey. 78% of the religious "nones" indicated they were raised with some religious affiliation before shedding their faith. Here are some of the reasons why they left. They are disenchanted with church or no longer believe the Bible to be true – chalk it up to science. They are no longer interested or felt they don't need religion. It's not relevant to them. Their views evolved – reason has trumped faith. They experience a crisis that left their faith shattered.

They dislike organized religion. It focuses on power and politics and causes too many conflicts. They claim to be spiritual but not religious. They are too busy.

The second thing that perhaps is of even more concern is that if 70% of the population still considers themselves Christian why are we not having a greater impact on American society and culture related to moral and ethical issues? Or for that matter why isn't the church having a greater impact on the people who attend?

Paul warned Timothy in the first letter written to him to "Guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge' – which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith." (I Timothy 6:20-21)

In their book *Already Gone*, Ken Ham and Britt Beemer write "a mass exodus is underway. Most youth of today will not be coming to church tomorrow... It's not just happening on the normal fringe; it's happening at the core of faith."

They continue: "Despite strong levels of spiritual activity during the teen years, most 20-somethings disengage from active participation in the Christian faith during their young adult years... six out ten 20-somethings who were involved in a church during their teen years are already gone."

This research was very extensive reaching out to some 20,000 participants. And they weren't just from random denominations. These were from what we would consider fundamental, biblically solid churches.

When do you think those doubts about faith began?

You may be surprised to find out that they didn't begin in the college years when we would most expect that to occur because of academic challenges to Christianity. Their research showed that most

begin to doubt about their faith as early as middle school.

That's where our passage and command to consider one another becomes most relevant. But this isn't just about our youth or teens. It's about everyone. In just a few weeks we will celebrate our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a church. A couple of you are still here from that very first gathering to begin a new church here. Regardless of how long you have been here take a moment and consider those who have come and gone, not from a death but because of any other number of reasons. Of that number how many no longer attend anywhere?

This passage is for you, for them.  
It is first a call to attitudes.

## I. A CALL TO ATTITUDES

The word "consider" is more than just giving something or someone a passing thought. It means to give close attention, give continuous care to, or to perceive clearly.

Jesus challenged His hearers one day to consider or give careful attention to the lilies of the valley and the birds of the air in how God cared for them and then consider that if He cared for nature in that way He would certainly care for individuals.

In the context of this command in Hebrews, the author has been concerned with those who have become disengaged from church. Christians who had been saved out of Judaism, hence the title of the book Hebrews, were being persecuted. Those who were being persecuted for their faith considered the trials too much to bear. Some were giving serious thought to going back to Judaism while others had already made the switch to avoid further persecution.

The author's challenge is to give close attention to

those who were wavering in their faith and encourage them to remain and maintain their faith. In essence he is saying to give close attention to the spiritual well-being of one another to keep them strong and growing in their faith so they won't abandon it. What would help bolster their faith was regular attendance in their assembly.

Let's read verses 22-25.

In this passage there are five exhortations that are centered on each individual and are necessary if we are to encourage others to stay strong in their faith.

1. "Let us draw near to God." We can't encourage someone else's faith if we aren't making the effort ourselves to grow spiritually in the Lord. It would be like telling your child to do as I say not as I do. It won't work.

The author then gives four conditions that are necessary if we are to draw near to God.

a. It must be with a "sincere heart". We must have undivided commitment and faithfulness to the Lord. I think the Psalmist said it well when he told us to delight in the Lord and trust in Him. (Psalm 37:4-5)

b. It must be with "full assurance of faith". It's a faith that trusts God without hesitation.

Noah, build an ark.

Abraham, leave your family.

Joshua, march around the city of Jericho.

Paul, preach to the Gentiles.

Solomon says this faith in the Lord is with the whole heart. When Jesus tells us to drop our nets or leave our tax booth and follow Him it is without hesitation. James says a double minded person is unstable in everything. Full assurance of faith.

c. It must be with "hearts sprinkled from a guilty conscience". We are free from guilt because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Romans 8:1

d. It must be with “bodies washed with pure water”. The author isn’t talking about the act of water baptism, but a figurative cleansing symbolically seen in the old covenant when the priest would wash before his service to the Lord. It is a cleansing that has occurred in the inner person through cleansing from sin by the washing of regeneration that comes from the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.

Let us draw near to God.

2. “Let us hold unswervingly to hope.” It’s the idea of having firm grip on the hope of God’s promises, especially during trials. The hope they were to hold onto was in the One who is faithful, the One whose promises never fail, the One whose word is truth.

We are told in Lamentations 3:23 that God’s faithfulness is great.

Numbers 23:19 and Titus 1:2 tell us that God never lies.

Hope in God and His promises does not disappoint.

Everywhere we turn in Scripture we see the faithfulness of God which gives us assurance that what He promised He will do. Not one word will fail of all He has said. Hold onto that hope without wavering. Take courage and totally trust Him.

Folks, if we are not drawing near to God ourselves or living in the hope of an unchanging God who has made promises, then we cannot expect to encourage others in the other three exhortations.

3. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on.”

4. “Let us not give up meeting together.”

5. “Let us encourage one another.”

As we consider our one another, Bible scholar Kenneth Wuest writes “The exhortation is to take careful note of each other’s spiritual welfare. The purpose of this attentive, continuous care is to provoke each other to the exercise of love and good

works.”

This series on the one another passages has been a call to the body of Christ to act with godly character toward each other. It begins with an attitude. That attitude is framed in love for one another. Both the Old and New Testaments give us that exhortation of loving each other.

Leviticus 19:18 – Love your neighbor as yourself.

John 13:34-35 – Love one another.

An unconditional love for each other is a distinguishing mark of the Christian. A non-Christian can never love in this way, because he or she does not have the Holy Spirit in them who develops this godly characteristic in the believer. The best they can hope for is a friendship kind of love and affection for someone else. Sure they may say their love will bring them to do anything for another person, but it falls woefully short of what Jesus meant and what we understand comes from God who demonstrated it by sending Christ to die for His enemies.

When we consider others who are absent from our assembly do we spur them on through love and to love?

Then we are told to provoke them. In the NIV it’s the word spur. It does not mean to irritate or annoy. It literally means to call, to excite to action, to stimulate.

In a negative sense we see it in the book of Acts when many in Ephesus were “provoked” or excited into action against Paul who spoke out against the false god Artimus. They were moved to riot.

In a positive sense we see it when Paul was urging Timothy to fan into flame his spiritual gift, to stand strong in his faith, and to keep pressing on.

Here in Hebrews 10:24, we are called on to urge one another on to the godly attitude of love. If this

attitude was evident in the body of Christ, how many would still be active today?

## II. A CALL TO ACTION

“Consider one another to urge on to good works.”

*Attitudes always result in some form of action.*

This past week I had a day that did not start out very well. I was getting breakfast around and the dog happened to be lying right in the middle of the traffic pattern. David was trying to get himself ready for school, Robyn was trying to get David's lunch packed, I was trying to get breakfast and there was the dog smack in the middle of the floor. She didn't leave me much room to open the refrigerator door. So I was nudging her with the door to spur her to move. Her 13 year old bones weren't having any of that. I'm not sure how it happened but one of the detachable shelves on the door of the fridge came off and bottles of salad dressing fell to the ground. Fortunately they were all plastic. However...the bottle of Heinz 57 broke and splattered into 57 different directions.

That was the beginning of the day.

At the end of the day, I had just crawled into bed weary from the day after just getting home from being out. Robyn was headed up to say good night to David when she said to me the dishes from supper needed to be taken care of. It was not a suggestion.

So I got out of bed and went to the kitchen and began to rinse dishes and put them in the dishwasher. I was just finishing up when Robyn came back downstairs and told me I only needed to rinse them and leave them in the sink. I retorted that would be a job half done. I took the dishwasher bud in my hand, tossed it in the machine and proceeded to start the washing cycle. She then told me the dishes in there were washed earlier. I then

responded by saying they would get washed a second time.

That, my friends, was not love in action. A loving attitude would have resulted in a loving action. I would not have needed prodding.

If godly love is in us, then godly action will come from us and we are to encourage one another to love and good works of some kind.

There are two words in the Greek for good. One means to be good in quality.

At the end of each creation day, God looked at all He had made that day and said it was good. It couldn't have been done any better. The quality was outstanding. That's why He could say at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> day when it was all said and done that His creation was “very good”.

Think for a moment about the evolution of the automobile from the first horseless carriage to today. We might say that this year's model is good, but we know that next year's model will have something added, something changed, something different. While we can say that it is good in quality because it meets all the standards, we cannot say that it is the best it will ever be.

The second word for good denotes what is intrinsically good. Good in this sense has to do with worth, value or something pleasing. That's the kind of good work we are to spur one other to do. We are to encourage one another to do something that brings value or worth to someone else, to show them how much we care.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said we should let our light shine before others that they may see our good works the result being that God will be glorified (Matthew 5:16).

As we consider one another there is a call to attitudes.

As we consider one another there is a call to good works.

As we consider one another there is a call to attendance.

### III. A CALL TO ATTENDANCE

This is more than just a phone call to someone or dropping them a note telling them we missed them in church on Sunday. It is a genuine concern about their spiritual well-being. The longer a person is away from the assembly, the colder that person will become to spiritual things. It's like taking a flaming hot ember out of a fire. Pretty soon it will go out and become cold.

The word "forsake" means to leave behind or abandon. The Message translates it with the word avoid. It's the word Jesus used on the cross when He cried out asking why God had forsaken Him.

When I played basketball in High school our coach grilled into us the need to stay in our position on defense. The second your spot is abandoned is the time the other team will capitalize on the abandoned position and score.

Bible scholar A.T. Robertson writes "Already some had formed the habit of not attending public worship, a perilous fire then and now."

When we abandon our position in the body of Christ there is a void that is left that someone else must fill.

When someone is absent they miss the opportunity of someone else spurring them on to love and good works.

When someone is absent someone else misses the opportunity of spurring that person on to love and good works.

When we miss assembling together we miss being strengthened in the faith, a strength that can't come

by our own efforts.

The word assembly is a compound word from which we get our English word synagogue. It means to go with.

The author is telling us to go with one another to a gathering where you can encourage each other and grow in your faith. And let me just add that me, myself, and I is not an assembly.

Again some of these readers were under persecution and abandoned meeting together with others in worship.

This passage is more about what a believer gives to the assembly than what it gets from the assembly. H.A. Ironside tells us we are not to act in isolation. We need each other, and in the days ahead we will need each other more and more.

Now there are two general thoughts about what the author had in mind when he closes the passage with the phrase "until you see the Day approaching." Both can be a correct interpretation and understanding.

Some scholars believe the author has mind the coming destruction of the Temple that would happen in A.D. 70. It was foretold by Jesus and the Day was drawing closer. From the beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost many Christians continued to meet in the Temple for services. After it's destruction that would no longer be possible so they would have to find somewhere to assemble.

Other scholars also believe the author is referring to the coming of Christ in what we have come to call the rapture of the church. Paul spoke about it to both the Corinthians and Thessalonians. Jesus, Paul, and Peter all warned of persecution for the believer before that event. The author stresses the need to get together for mutual encouragement and growth during those perilous times as a way of

keeping some strong in the faith who might otherwise consider forsaking the assembly. Hang in there, don't give up. The local assembly is a shelter during times of turbulence, so don't abandon it when the going gets tough, that's when we need it the most. We need to assemble regularly. We should make every effort to attend regularly.

Growing up in Communist Czechoslovakia Josef Gabor's father taught communist doctrine classes. His mother though was a Christian who took Josef and his brother to church. Every Sunday they got up and took a 3 hour train ride to Prague, walked to church where they sat through a 2 ½ hour service. They would then eat lunch at a nearby park, return for the afternoon service which was another 2 ½ hours and finally take the 3 hour train trip home. Today he is a missionary to the Czech people and when he tells about going to church as a child, his eyes fill with tears of gratitude for a mother who cared enough about his spiritual welfare to help him come to know and love Christ.

Make every effort to assemble. If you are a husband or father lead your family in coming to church. Help everyone in the family look forward to attending. Be the spiritual leader to encourage family worship together with other believers.

If you are single, know how important your presence is as well to the body of Christ. Never think of church as an added activity if it can be fit in, something done when it's convenient.

As one pastor so aptly put it "the service you miss is the service you need."

It's a place to be motivated, encouraged, grow, worship. There will always be competition for your time on Sunday. It can be tempting to stay home and listen to any number of gifted pastors on TV. If you really need to watch them set your DVR to record the program so you can watch it later or look in your TV listings when they'll be on again.

Watching a sermon does not make an assembly. It may be helpful, even okay from time to time because of circumstances like illness or work, but if at all possible meet with the local assembly regularly.

It is evidence you love the Lord and you love the Lord's people. It will be a time to grow in your faith and encourage each other in theirs as we motivate one another to love and good works.

This week's challenge is to consider those who haven't been here in a while, maybe they don't go anywhere to church anymore, consider how you will encourage them to love and good works and not forsake getting together.

Some of our folks physically can't get out. Make an effort to go assemble with them. Take a hymn book and sing a couple songs. Take your Bible and read together. Pray together.

Finding Waldo, Nemo or Pokémon can be a lot of fun, but some folks may need to seriously start looking for Jesus. Let's be the encouragement they need to find Him.

Communion -

I John 2:1-2

I John 4:9-11

#79 My Jesus I Love Thee