

**“...Assist Our Community Through Service...
January 6, 2008 * Hebrews 10:19-25**

*We are members of God’s family, dedicated to the teachings of Jesus, and committed to seeking God’s will. In our church, we glorify God through worship, reach others through evangelism, assist our community through service, care for each other through fellowship, and equip our members through Biblical instruction.
(Grace Baptist’s Mission Statement)*

I. *What did Victor Frankl do to help survive the horrors of imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp?*

II. *What did Jesus tell his disciples they needed to do if they truly wanted to find life and freedom?*

III. *Hebrews 10: A Roadmap For Helping Us Learn How To Serve*
A. *What is the context of these verses?*

IV. *How can we become a church which effectively, faithfully assists our community through service?*

Action Point #1 – “Let us draw near to _____...” (vs.22)

A. *What thing might we be tempted to do first?*

B. *What does the Bible say is the foundation to a powerful spiritual life?*

C. *Why is this so?*

Action Point #2 – “Let us hold unwaveringly to the _____ we profess...” (vs.23)

A. *Can we be effective for God when we are doubting?*

B. *When can doubt be understandable, even good?*

C. *What must happen sooner or later? What is God looking for in his people?*

D. *What was the author of Hebrews trying to say to his readers – and to us?*

Action Point #3 – “Let us _____ how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (vs.24)

A. *What is one of the biggest barriers to serving others?*

B. *What’s the proof that we are this way?*

C. *What do we have to do to counteract our selfishness?*

Action Point #4 – “Let us not give up _____ together...”

Action Point #5 – “Let us _____ one another” (vs.25)

A. *Why should we go to church each Sunday?*

B. *Should we go to church because it’s “fun”?*

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I. What did Victor Frankl do to help survive the horrors of imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp?

He never letting go of the truth that his life mattered – because he had people to love, and a work to do, and a community to serve. He would spend entire days thinking of his wife, having imaginary conversations with her. He would spend other days going street by street through his town in his mind, then room by room through his house, remembering the good things of life and what he had to live for. He pictured himself giving lectures to auditoriums filled with people, describing his experiences in the camp.

II. What did Jesus tell his disciples they needed to do if they truly wanted to find life and freedom?

According to Jesus, we don't find our lives till we lose them – in service to others. We don't live until we die – to ourselves. We don't become free until we become slaves to one another.

III. Hebrews 10: A Roadmap For Helping Us Learn How To Serve

A. What is the context of these verses?

These verses come at the end of a long section where the author is explaining the greatness and superiority of Christianity to everything that came before it, particularly Judaism, the Old Testament way of doing things. With Jesus, the New Covenant has come. Jesus, the Messiah, has fulfilled everything the Old Testament was pointing to. He fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies. He fulfilled the Old Testament priesthood. We don't need priests to offer sacrifices for us anymore. Jesus is our Great High Priest. His death on the cross brought us once for all the forgiveness of our sins, and more than that, his death on the cross

made it possible for the Holy Spirit of God himself to come and live inside of us, which means we now have God's power and help to live a new and holy life. A believer in Christ is a new creation. New possibilities exist for us. We don't have to keep on being slaves to sin. Living the same old, selfish rotten life we lived before. We now can live for God and live for others. The Old Testament was just a shadow, a copy, a snapshot, of what was coming – Jesus was it, the real deal.

IV. How can we become a church which effectively, faithfully assists our community through service?

Action Point #1 – “Let us draw near to God...” (vs.22)

A. What thing might we be tempted to do first?

The temptation might be for us to say: I know! If we want to serve our community better, let's have a dream meeting, and let's throw up on a board all the ideas that come to mind for how we can serve each other, and then we'll have focus groups, and inventories and surveys, and...

B. What does the Bible say is the foundation to a powerful spiritual life?

“Apart from me, you can do nothing,” Jesus told us. *You're like a branch. I'm the vine. Connect to me, let my life-giving sap flow into you, and that's how life works best.* This is why strong Christians read their Bibles and pray and go to church.

C. Why is this so?

To be willing to assist others through service requires that we have a certain measure of compassion in our hearts for others, and a certain selflessness in our hearts, and on our own, we just can't muster this. In fact, none of the activities we list in our mission statement can be done on our own steam. And this is what is wrong with all those churches on the liberal side of things that are so into social justice, and so into community activism, but they have no experience of worship, and no respect for the authority of the Bible, and little time for prayer. These types of churches and groups invariably end up collapsing in on themselves. They end up bitter and cynical and depressed because life is just too hard

and there are just too many needs, and their compassion dries up. And that's because they're not connected to the One who is the very Source and Spring of the River of Compassion.

Action Point #2 – “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess...” (vs.23)

A. Can we be effective for God when we are doubting?

If you're stuck in the valley of doubt, caught between the mountain of belief on one hand and the mountain of unbelief on the other, then you're going to be of little use to God. James 1:6 – says “He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind; that person should not think he will receive anyone from the Lord.”

B. When can doubt be understandable, even good?

Here at Grace, we give a lot of grace to those who are seekers, those still trying to figure out if this Jesus fellow is the true of Son of God. We want to you do your homework. To study, research, think it through, ask questions. Jesus himself said you need to count the cost before you decide to follow him. The apostle Paul said that we are to ‘test everything’. Well, that requires a measure of ‘good doubt’. We also give a lot of grace to Christians who have been slammed by life, and they're trying to find their way again. It's a natural thing to question God and question our faith in tough times. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” King David once wrote in a dark period in his life. Jesus himself quoted those words from the cross. Every great saint has had to wrestle from time to time with their faith. That too could be called “good doubt”.

C. What must happen sooner or later? What is God looking for in his people?

But the point of doubting is that you eventually come out of it. You eventually find solid ground. You find the answers you're looking for, or the hope you need, and you make your stand. The point of thirst is to compel you to find a drink. The point of doubt is to compel you to find something to believe in. And great faith is what God is looking for in his people.

D. What was the author of Hebrews trying to say to his readers – and to us?

The author of Hebrews is writing to a group of Christians who have experienced real suffering because of their faith. He discusses this with them later on in chapter 10, and verse 33. “You were publicly exposed to insult and persecution,” he writes. In verse 34 – “You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property.” And so he's writing this book to them to not only convince them how great Christianity is compared to everything that came before it, but also to encourage them to hang in there and have great faith. Verse 35 – “Do not throw away your confidence.”

Action Point #3 – “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (vs.24)

A. What is one of the biggest barriers to serving others?

Our selfishness.

B. What's the proof that we are this way?

Someone might protest, “Pastor Barry, the reason I don't get involved in a lot of service activities at Grace is not that I'm unselfish. I just don't think about it all that often. I'm just too busy.” Hello?! You've just proven the point! What's the reason why we don't think about it that often? What's the reason we fill our schedule with activities that don't involve serving others? It's because we are selfish. And it's not just you. It's me. It's all of us. We're born into this world with a sin nature, and this sin nature is oriented toward self first.

C. What do we have to do to counteract our selfishness?

To counteract this selfishness, we have to push ourselves to think about ways to serve others. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” A horse has to be spurred on to go a little bit faster, work a little bit harder. So do I. My wife's birthday was Friday. I had to intentionally think: “Okay, how can I make this a special day for Janis?” It didn't just come naturally. I don't ask that question very often. I should, if I love my wife as Christ loves me. But it's not my reflex. I had to be spurred on to let my better angels win the day.

Action Point #4 – “Let us not give up meeting together...”

Action Point #5 – “Let us encourage one another” (vs.25)

A. Why should we go to church each Sunday?

Because we have to? No. To check a boring ‘ole duty off a list? No. We come together because this is where spark is lit, that lights the fire, that changes the world around us for the good. This is where the magic begin. And that brings us to the final “let us” – “let us encourage one another.”

Why did Jesus create the church in the first place? To be his body. To be his hands and feet. To be the instruments of his power on this earth to do good, to heal, to push back evil, to bring light into the darkness. And all of that begins right here. When two or more gather in Jesus’ name, when two or more gather in whom dwells the Holy Spirit of God, great visions are brought to birth, great ideas are generated, and great works are unleashed. “Let us encourage one another.”

B. Should we go to church because it’s “fun”?

That’s not the point. I hope it’s fun. But it’s not that we’ve been entertained. It’s not the feeling you get when you go to a movie, or play volleyball. Honestly, there are probably a dozen things we do each week that are more fun than coming to church. But there is a deeper sense of satisfaction we get here, a deeper sense of belonging and purpose and connection we get here, than we’ll find anywhere else. The universe seems to get put back into balance on Sunday morning. There’s a wholeness and holiness here that we desperately need to be human, that reminds us we are more than animals. Where two or three are gathered, there I am in there midst Jesus said.