



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## House Rules

### Hebrews 10:19–25

Tim Badal | February 28, 2021

It's a pleasure to have each and every one of you with us this morning. My name is Pastor Tim, and I have the great privilege of leading our time in God's Word together. I'm going to ask you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews. For the last 20 or so weeks we've been in a series titled "Jesus, the Greatest of All Time." We've been studying this New Testament letter that was written to a group of Hebrew Christians who were getting beat up and beat down for their walk with their newfound Savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. They were starting to feel like they needed to give up on this relationship.

The writer tells them that would be the most foolish thing they could do. He writes what is actually a long sermon, which we have been studying verse by verse. Today we find ourselves in Hebrews 10:19-25. We look forward to what God is going to teach us this morning.

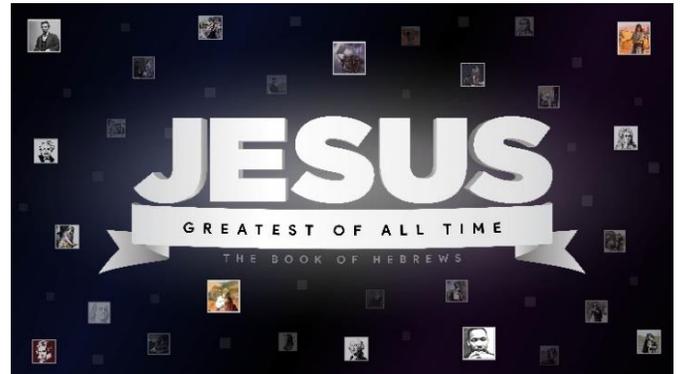
A couple months ago my wife and I were visiting a family from the church. As we walked into the foyer of their home, we were met by a "House Rules" sign. The list of house rules included a number of attributes, activities and practices they wanted for everyone. In essence, because you were entering their home, the rules of the house were that you live in a certain way.

The sign had the family's name on it, which personalized it all the more. It was communicating, "Now that you've entered so-and-so's home, you're expected to live this way." None of the rules were difficult. You wouldn't call them drudgery. They were just reminders of what it means to be part of a very loving and kind family.

In our passage this morning, the writer of Hebrews tells us that there are some house rules when it comes to being a part of God's family. For the last nine and a half chapters, the writer has been telling us a lot about Who Jesus is. He's said over and over again that Jesus is better and greater than anything these Jewish followers could have imagined. He is better than the patriarchs. As great as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were, Jesus is greater. He's better than the prophets, these men who spoke on behalf of God. Jesus is far greater than any prophet before Him. He is better than the tabernacle or the temple, the place where God's presence dwelled in the Old Testament days and the place where God's people would worship. He is even greater and better than the Mosaic law, those 613 rules and regulations that led and guided the people to obey and honor God in all they said and did.

Maybe some of you have been thinking, "Pastor Tim, let's move on. I've got it. Jesus is greater." We want to remind you that Jesus is not just greater—He's the greatest of all times. Now we're at a pivot point in Hebrews 10:19 that hinges on the word "Therefore." The writer is indicating that in the rest of this letter, he will be saying "in light of, since, because" Jesus is the greatest of all time, we are to live differently. Because Jesus is Who He is, it should change the way we worship and interact with other believers, other family members in this house of God. It should also change the way we give, the way we invest our time, the way we engage in our marriages and the way we interact with Christian leaders.

In addition, understanding that Jesus is the greatest will change the way we deal with persecutions, trials and difficulties in our lives. It will change the way I respond when God disciplines me as a father disciplines a son. The reality that Jesus is the greatest of all time is not just an idea in our minds, but it should transform every aspect of our lives. So in light of the nine and a half chapters



the writer has spent telling us about Jesus, now he's going to give us some house rules indicating how we need to change. In fact, the idea of "house" is in the passage itself. In Hebrews 10:21 we read about being in the house of God, that we have a great high priest over God's house.

We've seen this motif of family and house a couple other places as well. Hebrews 3:6 tells us that God is building His house and we are the material He's using, but it goes even deeper than that. We're not just a building, we're also a family. In Hebrews 2:11 we are reminded that we are brothers and sisters to Christ. He says here that even though we have sin, even though we've let God down so often, Jesus is not ashamed—as great as He is—to call us His brothers and sisters. We're part of His family.

The questions this morning are, "What are the house rules for this house of God? What are the family rules? How are we to engage one another? What are we to focus on? What are the things we need to make priorities in our lives?" Three times in our text we're going to see the phrase, "*And let us...*" Each of these times brings us to ask, "Am I engaged in this? I've been asked to be a part of this household, but am I living it out in my life?" Therefore, in light of all Jesus has done, how now are we supposed to live? There are three house rules in our passage that I want to break down, giving attention to the life applications for each rule.

## **We have been invited. Will we go in?**

The first thing I want us to see is that we have been invited. Now, will we go in? Let's look first at Hebrews 10:19-22:

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>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.

Here we see an invitation: "*Let us draw near...*" The first thing the writer wants us to know is that we are invited to get close to God. We'll talk about this more in a moment, but this would have been earth-shattering for the original recipients of this letter. They were part of a nation that had a relationship with God, but this idea of a personal relationship with God was foreign to them. They would have understood themselves to be part of a nation that honored God, a nation to whom God spoke. Every once in a while God would even speak to a particular person like Moses or the prophets or King David. But they were sure God wouldn't speak to them individually. But here in this new covenant was an invitation for them to draw near to God. What did that mean?

### **This invitation means a new association.**

"Therefore, brothers..." or better, "brothers and sisters..." The super-Christian who was writing this letter could have said, "I'm speaking on behalf of God. I'm up here and you're down there." But he doesn't say that at all. He says, "We're brothers and sisters."

That was different from what these Hebrews would have known in their time of worship. When they went to the temple, they brought their sacrifice and handed it to a go-between, a priest. The priest had a higher status than they did. He had a closer relationship with God. The person would expect the priest to be their advocate or mediator between themselves and God. There was essentially a laity, the people in the pew, then the spiritual leaders. In the family of God, this distinction is gone. No longer are there priests and then everybody else. No longer is there the idea that only certain people could do certain things or go certain places, while everyone else stood by the wayside. Within a family, we have this new personal interaction. We know one another in a new and real way.

### **This invitation means total access.**

Because of Jesus Christ, this new association led to total access which is so important. During Old Testament times, access into the temple was restricted. Only certain people could go certain places. There was an outer court where every Jew could enter. Then there was the Holy Place, where all the priests could go to be part of the various aspects of worship. Finally there was the Most Holy Place, sometimes called the Holy of Holies. Only the great high priest could enter that place, and then only once a year. It was as if there were "No Admittance" signs or "Do Not Enter" signs in various parts of the temple. Yet as we join God's family, He is telling us, "You get to go anywhere you want. You get to access all the places."

In the temple, the most formidable "Do Not Enter" sign was a curtain that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. If you've studied the Bible, you will remember that this curtain played a huge part in the Easter story. On Good Friday, when Christ

gave up His Spirit, we read in Matthew 27:51 that the curtain was torn from top to bottom. The curtain previously served to keep people separated from the sights, sounds, smells and activities that belonged in the Holy of Holies. The curtain was so thick that anyone inside the Holy of Holies could not hear the sounds outside that space. It was therefore a sanctuary, a holy dwelling place for God. When the great high priest would enter there, it was just him and God. The curtain was actually 60 feet tall, 40 feet wide, and 5-6 inches thick. For those of you who are old, think of the thickest Yellow Page books you've ever seen. Kids, ask your moms and dads about that.

The text in Hebrews 10 tells us that this curtain has now been taken away. Just as God tore the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple, He also did some tearing of another kind. Verse 19 tells us that we are able to "*enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus.*" Verse 20 goes on to explain that this opening of "*the new and living way*" happened "*through his flesh.*" When Christ went to the cross of Calvary, He was torn open for us. As we go through the blood of Jesus, through His sacrifice, you and I now have total and unfettered access to God. This would have been unthinkable for the Jewish Christians who were reading this letter.

Notice that all of this is true because of Jesus. This is what made Jesus so much greater than anything else. It's not because you've done anything. God isn't looking at you as if you're on the playground and He's picking the best people to be on His team. He isn't looking at you saying, "You're really good. I want you on My team." No, we are broken and frail and dysfunctional people. But God in His mercy and love, through the work of Jesus Christ, has invited us into His family. He gives us total access.

### **This invitation means full assurance.**

However, God not only wants us to be part of a new association with new access, He also gives us full assurance. We read in verse 19 that we are able to enter the holy places "*with confidence.*" Then later, verse 22 says we draw near to God "*in full assurance of faith.*" These are two different words in the Greek language, but they both mean about the same thing. Essentially they mean we have total freedom to do a couple things.

First, we are free to be ourselves. Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, you and I have freedom to enter God's presence and we don't have to do anything. We don't have to fix ourselves up. Why not? Because the Bible tells us that as we enter through Christ—Who is the only Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5)—He sprinkles us with His blood.

Maybe you're here today thinking, "I'm hearing about being invited into the family of God, but surely I have to fix this and this and this before I come." No. Jesus says, "Come. Enter through Me, and I will make you holy. I will make you clean. I will make you what you need to be to enter the presence of God." It's a full assurance. This full assurance also means there's no fear of reprisal or retribution. You can be fully at home in the presence of God.

Now, I'm 44 years old and I have two places where I feel at home. One is my house and the other is my mom and dad's house. Right after I got married, I knocked on the door and my mom yelled at me, "This is still your house! You're always invited in. You don't knock. What an offense to me that you would knock. Am I a hotel that you would do this? No. This is your house."

That's the idea of full assurance and confidence that you are home with God. You are able to live there as you are. Now, does that mean you can do whatever you want? No, there are certain house rules for living in God's House. God doesn't want you walking around on pins and needles. He wants you to have confidence. He knows we're going to struggle. He knows we're going to sin.

My mom wouldn't say, "Hey, Tim, you're invited in when you've got all your ducks in a row." No, a loving mom would say, "Hey, I don't care if you're dirty, you come. You're a part of the family." The writer of Hebrews is trying to tell us when we enter into the family of God, it changes our relationships with one another and it changes our relationship with God. We have been invited in.

Now, the question is will we go in? Jesus talks a lot in the Bible about masters inviting people to parties. In Matthew 22, He tells a story about a great master in the land who wanted to invite everyone to a great celebration. He sent his servants to invite all his friends and acquaintances to the event, but no one came. Then Jesus said that because the man had prepared a banquet and other festivities, he decided, "Surely we can find people who will come from somewhere." So the servants went to the highways and byways, finding other people to invite to the celebration.

Maybe some of you are hearing for the first time that you've been invited by almighty God into a relationship through His Son Jesus Christ. The question you've got to answer today is, "Will I accept that invitation? Will I, by faith, believe and trust that this invitation brings me into the Most Holy Place with God Himself, with all the benefits and blessings of being a part of the family of God?"

Now, there are some who have been invited in, you know you've been invited in, and you go in—but you're walking around God on pins and needles. You think God is this mean, dictatorial God. If you spill something on the carpet during the festivities, God's going to kick you out of the party. Or maybe you don't like the other people God has invited to the party.

You see, Jesus tells a story about that as well in Luke 15:11-32. A young man wanted to go sow his wild oats, so he told his father, "Give me my inheritance. I know you're not dead yet, but I want to leave. Give me money so I can rebel against you." He took the money from his father and sowed his wild oats with prostitutes and wild living. Then he came to his senses. After he had spent all the money, after he had run out of all he had, he remembered that even the hired servants of his father lived better than he did. He was living in squalor in the pig pen, fighting the pigs for the food. So he decided, "I'll go back and be a servant to my father."

Jesus says that as this man was returning, the father saw him and received his son with open arms. Then the father said to his servants, "Go kill the fattened calf. Go get the ring. Go get the robe. We're throwing a party!" There was an invitation to this son. "Come back into my house. You who were lost, you who were blind, you who were outside the household of God—now you've been found."

Remember, there was another brother and he was mad. "My brother isn't worth throwing a party for. My brother shouldn't be invited in." Some of you this morning don't like who you see invited to the party. Like you, the older brother said, "I'm not going in. I'm not going to be a part of that party." There are many who say, "I don't like the church God has put together. I don't like His family, so I'm not going to be part of that family. I may worship God from afar, but I'm not going to enter into that with confidence and with true fellowship."

What's holding you back from entering into this relationship with full confidence and faith? What's keeping you from falling madly and deeply in love with the God of the universe? Why aren't you willing to engage with Him? What's holding you back from experiencing the fullness of what God has for you in the relationship He wants so much for you to experience? There's an invitation there. Will you go in?

## **We have been invested. Will we grab hold?**

Once we're invited in, God invests in us. We're invested. The question is will we grab hold? Let's look at Hebrews 10:22-23:

<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

The writer is explaining that God has given us something we need. What is that something? It's a confession and it relates back to something he wrote in verse 22: "*Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*" This means we made the confession at some point in our past. Many commentators believe this is an allusion to baptism.

A couple weeks ago we had five individuals in our services go into the waters of baptism. Before they did, they declared to everyone in the room, "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. I've come to believe in Jesus, the greatest of all time, and I don't care who knows it. I want to announce to the world that I'm a follower of Jesus. He has all my allegiance; He is my priority and I'm going to live for Him."

These individuals in Hebrews were running the risk of giving up what they had declared through their baptism. The Greek word that's translated "hold fast" is *katecho*, which means holding on at all costs. It means not veering to the left or right. It was a nautical term, referring to a ship captain who would hold the wheel tightly in the storm. The ship is being tossed to and fro, yet he holds the wheel tightly because he wants to get safely to his destination. Similarly, we need to hold fast. But what are we holding fast to? It should be the confession of our hope. Jesus is the greatest of all time and we have to hold fast to that truth. When the readers in Hebrews were baptized, this was their declaration. From that point on, the world and their flesh had made a concerted effort to get them to renege on their confession and to go a different way.

The world says, "Really? Does Jesus need to be your all in all? Can't you figure it out on your own?" The flesh says, "Listen, Jesus says no to certain appetites; do things your way, in your timing, fulfilling those desires." We need to grab hold of truth as we're being tossed to and fro. We need to hold fast to our confession. That's our responsibility.

Let's look at a couple more things we need to know.

### **Grabbing hold impacts our standing.**

In verse 23 we read that this confession is "*the confession of our hope without wavering.*" We are hoping that all Christ has said about Himself—all the writer has talked about over the last nine and a half chapters—is true and that we are to live in light of these things. We are not to be anxious or worried. We're not to wonder, "What if this or that happens? What if this sinful opportunity comes? What should I do then?" Instead, we're going to hold fast, staying the direction we need to go. We're going to stand firm.

How well are you doing at steering the ship of your life? Is it on course with the destination Christ has called you to? Or do you find yourself doing well at keeping on course on Sundays or when you're around believers, but when you're by yourself or with a group of friends who don't follow Jesus, you begin to falter, swerving from one side to the other? Are you moving away from the true north of Christ in your life?

The reason why we can hold without wavering is because we know the One Who promised is faithful. When we feel as though we're faltering, we look to Christ. We'll read later in Hebrews 12:2 how He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross. He chose to stay the course no matter the difficulties that came His way. If God was faithful to see Jesus through in that hour, surely He'll be faithful to see us through our difficult times as well.

### **Grabbing hold impacts our speaking.**

Grabbing hold and standing firm also involves our speaking. The Greek word for confession is *homologia*, referring to the confession of a witness in a courtroom. A witness would make a statement before both the judge and the courtroom audience. It was the person's confession of what they knew about the situation being tried.

Christ followers are therefore God's witnesses, according to Acts 1:8, and we are to make the confession that Jesus is the greatest of all time. We need to make this confession before the Judge, our Father in heaven, but we also need to declare it to those around us.

So let me ask, is your confession of hope—that Jesus is the greatest of all time—something you tell other people about? Will your coworkers know tomorrow that you were in a building today with hundreds of other people, singing about, praying to and listening to preaching about Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God and Savior of the world? Will they know you believe this to be true with all your heart and that you've dedicated your life to worshiping and obeying Him? Do your neighbors know this? Do your friends know this? Does the stranger in the checkout aisle at the grocery store know this?

Our confession needs to be made over and over again, which is implied in the Greek tense of this word. We are to continually be making this confession, that Jesus is Who He says He is and has done what He says He has done, and that we are going to live in response to this and tell the world about Him. Many of us who are Christians still want to keep these things quiet. As you're standing by the water cooler, someone asks, "What did you do yesterday?" "Ah, I petered around the house. I put the Christmas decorations away, now that the snow is gone." "Anything else?" "No, that was it." Or will you say, "I gathered with God's people to say not only to Him, but to a watching world, that Jesus is the greatest of all time"?

If that is your confession, are you grabbing hold of it and giving it out to other people? These are the house rules. God says, "I don't want you to just be in My family and not tell anyone about it." God wants all the other families in the world to know they're missing out if they're not part of His family. There's nothing greater than to be with our Father in heaven. We've been invited and we've been invested.

## **We are involved. Will we get plugged in?**

Finally, we are to be involved. The question is, are we plugged in? Look at verses 24-25, where we see the third "*let us...*"

<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The final thing we're supposed to do is to be engaged with one another. We're a family. I live in a family of five individuals: my wife Amanda, our three almost-teenaged boys and myself. Luke's almost 13. So each of us has our own schedule and our own needs. There's a lot happening in this chapter of our lives. Tomorrow two of my sons will start their morning around 6:00 a.m. with soccer practice, which starts tomorrow. I don't know how they're going to do soccer out there, but they're going to it. And they're still playing basketball; yes, there are basketball games. So they're going to go from 6:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night. It's a full day of activity, with school in the middle.

There are a lot of moving parts for those boys to be ready for tomorrow. So Mom and Dad have to make sure they have what they need. We need to make sure they eat at some point, that they go to bed at the right time tonight to be ready for this full day. We need to make sure their homework is done for their classes. We have to have practice clothes and uniforms for the game at night. We're interdependent.

Because we live involved lives, we need others in our lives. We can't live the spiritual life in God's family alone. The writer is pointing out some of the ways in which we need to be involved with our family.

### **Being plugged in means we examine each other.**

Number one, we need to be involved in examining one another. The word the writer uses is "consider." In the Greek, this word literally means to look intently at something, to give close attention to and be focused in on a particular thing. What does that look like in God's family? It means that we enter into times together when we're looking intently at one another.

Now, that just made some of you feel really awkward. But as you look at the people around you, you need to consider them. We read in Philippians 2:3 that we are to consider others as being better or more important than ourselves. This means we must take our eyes off ourselves and realize the person next to us is more important than we are. This person has needs. What are they? We know that body language gives off signals. Is that person's body language telling you he's discouraged? Does it tell you he's had a great week—or not? As we consider one another closely, we need to ask, "What can I do to serve them?"

Some of you came in with no thought beyond, "I'm here to watch." But that's not church. Church means we're coming here to be on the lookout. We're here, not to focus on our own interests, but to consider the interests of those sitting around us. What are their needs? What are their hurts? What words of encouragement can I give them? How can I serve them? How can I make their lives a little easier? How can I help them draw closer to God? We need to examine one another. Is your head up? Can you see the people around you? Are you so focused on your own issues and struggles that you can't look around at the issues and struggles of others? The Christian life involves examining one another in order to do something.

### **Being plugged in means we engage each other.**

Notice what it says in our text. We're to "stir up," or in another translations, we're to "spur on." In the Greek, this literally means to jab or agitate. Some of you are thinking, "This is my kind of church. I've come to agitate this morning." Some of our more introverted people are thinking, "Oh, I'm getting out of here as quickly as possible; I don't want to be jabbed or agitated." The idea here is that this agitation will take things off that are keeping you from your fullest potential.

Maybe you've grown lazy and you need someone to say, "Hey, there's life outside the Star Wars universe. Let's get out. Let's go." There's a little poking, a little jabbing. "You've got homework to do. The grass needs to be mowed; the driveway needs to be shoveled. Maybe engage with your friends. There's more to life than TV." It's very helpful to be pushed to something more effective.

We as Christians can sometimes grow stodgy in our walk with God. We need others to freshen us up. As many of you know, I'm bi-vocational. I have another job besides pastoring this church. I also serve as a caterer and our specialty is outdoor grilling. As we grill, it sometimes involves long periods of time, maybe hours on end. As we're grilling on charcoal, our charcoal can get dusty. Where does that dust come from? The fire has burned the coals, so they're shrouded with dust. Once that dust gets on the coal, the coal isn't as fresh or as powerful as it could be. So from time to time, my cooks will use a rake to agitate the coals. That causes the dust to fall down to the base of the grill, which allows the coals to get red hot once again.

When we consider how to stir one another up, we're shaking the dust off our lives, our spirituality, so we're red hot again. When we gather together, we're looking out for whom we can minister to. Our job is to shake them up a little bit so they'll be hotter when they enter a new week in the world. Listen. Talking about the Bears' quarterback controversy isn't going to stir people up toward love and good works. Talking about the weather isn't going to do that either. It's going to mean being involved with one another. This is why our small groups are so important, gathering together and stirring one another up, so we'll leave hotter than when we came in. It will take some agitating and some jabbing.

Verse 25 tells us there were some Hebrews who were neglecting to get together. They weren't showing up to church. Talk about a bold statement. Granted, he wrote this in a letter, so he didn't have to experience people getting mad because he was being legalistic about them attending church. But he specifically tells them to not neglect meeting together *"as is the habit of some."* "Jimmy's not here today. Is he talking about Jimmy? Renee's not here. Is he talking about Renee? Tim hasn't been here for a long time. He surely is talking about Tim." What was keeping these people from being at church?

Fast forward a few verses to verses 32-34:

<sup>32</sup> But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, <sup>33</sup> sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. <sup>34</sup> 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.

Why weren't they going to church? Because travel ball was going on. Why weren't they at church? Because it just felt really good to sleep in. Why weren't they at church? Because they wanted to get a good start on a beautiful sunny day in Chicago—some of the best four days we've had this year, right? We have all kinds of excuses. But their excuses were different. When they went to church, they endured great struggles and sufferings. When they went to church, they were exposed to reproach and affliction. When they went to church, the next day at work they were mocked and ridiculed because they had been there. When they went to church, they were thrown in prison. When they went to church, others robbed their houses and plundered them. That's why they weren't at church—and here's the crazy thing. The writer still rebukes them! What would he have said about travel ball? What would he have said about sleeping in? What would he have said about making sure your landscaping was done? I pity us. If the writer of Hebrews was this hard on the people back then, I pity us for what he would say to us today.

Why is going to church so important? Is it so we can cross it off some list? No. We go to church because Jesus is the greatest of all time. If we believe this to be true, then surely gathering with God's people will be a huge priority. He doesn't say you have to have perfect attendance. Rather, he says, "Don't neglect. Don't abandon." That's where we as sensible people have to figure this out. "Am I abandoning or neglecting a clear command of Scripture?" Only you can answer that.

I heard recently about a pastor who went off on his people who were not at church because of COVID. Listen, that's between you and God. I'm preaching to the choir here, because you're here. But I want you to ask, "What is more important than gathering with God's people, if we say Jesus is the greatest of all time?"

Our next thought is, "Okay, Lord, I want to sleep in." Just so you know, personal revelation, I think this every Sunday. I want to sleep in. "Amanda, will they really miss me if I don't come? Surely someone can fill in for me." She says, "No, you didn't get anyone to fill in. You've got to go to church." I don't always want to come to church, but I have to ask the question, "Is what I'm doing more of a priority than gathering with God's people? Am I missing out on an opportunity to spur someone on to love and good deeds?" You may think, "I don't need this. I can plug in online and watch Pastor Tim. I'm glad we have that technology, but it makes you a spectator, not someone who is serving others. So let's balance this. Let's ask, "Is there someone who needs me to be there?" Maybe you could use a couple hours of sleep. Well, get some sleep in the afternoon. But during church someone may need to hear from you. Someone may need to be encouraged in their walk and you're the person God has called to be part of that. Brothers and sisters, we must engage.

### **Being plugged in means we encourage each other.**

Right away, it would be very easy to take this passage and beat people down with it. I don't want to do that. Here's what it says: we are to encourage one another. That word "encourage" in the Greek is such a tender and caring word. It's a word that says, "You're important to me." It's a word that says, "We are living life together." Do families sometimes have to tell one another some hard

truths? Yes. I've had to be on the receiving end of hard truths from my family, and I've been on the giving end as well. Neither are fun.

Because of this, we need to speak in an encouraging way. As we falter, we encourage one another. When we sin or struggle, we encourage one another. We do this in order to point to something. At some point in the future, our current gathering will be seen as practice for a different day. We have been invited, involved and invested in preparation for that day when Jesus Christ will come back for us. On that day, there will be no more sorrow or shame or sickness. That will be the day when God gathers His family for the greatest family reunion in all of eternity. But until we get there, we gather together here. Until we get there, we spur one another on here. Until we get there, we keep encouraging one another here. Until we get there, we bear one another's burdens here. We do these things because Jesus is great. Because He's great, and because He's invited us in, we are going to be there with bells on, amen? We're going to be involved.

So how involved are you? How plugged in are you? God has invited us, not to create a burden, but to be a blessing. I pray that you, as sensible people, will use your minds to say, "Lord, what do I need to take hold of? What needs to change?" Between you and the Lord, do that business so you might honor Him and serve one another to the best of your abilities.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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