

Draw Near and Stay Near

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[0 : 0 0] Hey, good morning, everyone. Those of you who don't know me, I'm Jesse, just one of the pastors here at the church. So glad that you're here with us and spending your time this Sunday morning. All you moms in the room again, I know it's been said lots before, but you are absolutely amazing.

And thank you for being just amazing women that have been so dedicated in your lives to carrying and loving these gifts that God has given you. And we've all benefited from having good moms. And so, yeah, your role is absolutely essential. So thank you for that.

Just want to say, those of you who can't be in the room today that might be listening to the sermon online, you might be out for deployment, you might be sick or, you know, on vacation, whatever, just want to let you know that you are absolutely missed. Wish you could be here in person. And we so look forward to you for you to being in the room with us, but also happy that you're able to follow along and stay at least somewhat connected by listening to the sermon online. So we are continuing in our Hebrew series. And if you have a Bible, we will be in chapter 10 of Hebrews. So you can turn there. If you don't have a Bible, don't worry about it. We're going to have verses up on the screen. And so good news, as you've known the past couple of weeks, we've gone through some major chunky sections of scripture, right? But this is a little bit different today, right? This is kind of a Goldilocks passage, not too short, not too long, just right. All right, Hebrews 10, 19 to 25. That's what we're looking at today. So let's read. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, 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. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day draw near. This is God's word. So up to this point, you know, we've been preaching a lot and looking at this amazing sermon by this pastor, and it's really focused in on who Jesus is and what he's done and what he accomplished for us. And now there's this pivot to like, okay, in light of all that Jesus is and all those things, what does that mean for me and you? How do we respond to that and live that out in our lives? Because that's what's important about living our lives. What we believe about God and what we believe who God is, is going to shape how we live. And that's what these verses get at. They're a very practical and simple approach to the

Christian life. So if you, this question of like, man, okay, I've been saved, so what does it mean to follow Jesus, right? This, these verses are a great insight into what that looks like. And you know, that's just not for like people looking into Christianity or people that just got saved. That's for us who've been following Jesus for a while because we tend to forget these things and drift and get pulled in so many different directions. So whether or not you're a follower of Jesus, this is going to be really helpful for us to understand and look and know. But what is, what these verses are saying is that a life lived for Jesus is characterized with him being at the center of your life, right? So think of it this way, like you can have, you can have the thing as the center and the rest of the aspects of your life kind of revolve around that one big thing, and that should be Jesus, not anything else. Everything else in our life should be revolving around Jesus being the center, meaning every aspect of our life should be filtered through him and what he's done for us and the implications of that. So let's get really practical. If you have Jesus at the center of your life, it means he's first in your calendar. He's first in your finances. He's first in your big life decisions like, where should I live? What job should I take?

What about my career? How do I raise my kids? What is our marriage going to be about? Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So all things, all of your life, all the different aspects of your life are filtered through the lens of Jesus's call for you to follow him. And I want you to think about this, okay? God saves Israel out of Egypt, right? This great picture of how he delivers his people in a mighty way, and he brings them out, and then they get to Mount Sinai, and then he gives them the law, like the book of Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy is all this law that God brings his people into and says, to be my people, you need to obey these and follow these, right? Now, if you take a big look at the law and don't get into the minute details, what you start to see and emerge is what God is doing here. He's discipling his people into a rhythm of life that revolves around worship to him. I think the daily prayers, the weekly Sabbath worship, their quarterly festivals of national worship where they would leave their towns and they would come together as a nation to one place to praise and remember God and remind themselves of what he had done to deliver them. He's like, man, those are meant to be like, those are meant to be at the center of your calendar.

[5 : 31] And what that reminds us of is that it's true for them, it's true for us. We need to make room in our lives to draw near to God frequently. That's what God was offering to Israel. That's what he was discipling into. He was calling them to observe these times of worship and to draw near to him in a religious way, in a frequent way, which means that those things went into their calendar at the start of the year, like, boom, we know what we're supposed to do this day. At that time, boom, boom, boom, boom. We are drawing near to God and nothing is going to get away in that. If there's a conflict, like the drawing near to God part isn't going to lose, that thing's going to lose.

Now, you might be surprised about what I'm going to say next, but it's true nevertheless. There is no different expectation for us in the covenant of grace, okay? We don't live under the old law, the old covenant anymore, but we do live under this covenant of grace through Jesus Christ, but there is no different expectation. Grace doesn't mean we draw near to God less often.

Actually, in every way, the covenant of grace gives us more incentive to draw near even more, right? Hebrews 10.22 gives us that exhortation, right? Draw near to God.

But look at what motivates us before we get to that point. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, 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. Man, this is saying like, man, the drawing near thing, it makes so much more sense why we should be running into that more and more because we look at what Jesus has done and what he has accomplished for us. And think about this, like the Bible is telling one story from beginning to end, and it starts out with Adam and Eve sinning and getting kicked out of the Garden of Eden, right? And the way they got kicked out is they had to head east. And so like, kind of, you heard that phrase, we live east of Eden. That's literally what it's talking about.

We are kicked out of the place where God's presence and blessing is. And that's why the entrance to the tabernacle and the temple, when God had it erected, the entrance to those places were always facing east because it was a reminder to all the worshipers, oh yeah, I'm connecting it back to this big story of Adam and Eve getting kicked out of the Garden. And so now the way back into the holy place where God is, is coming in through that gate, coming into that entrance. But we can't get in there. We're separated from that because of sin. That's what happens. And that's why our souls are so restless inside of us, and why we're prone to wonder, and we chase after so many things but are never satisfied. We're always looking for that way, that way back into the garden. Our soul knows that like, oh my gosh, I'm not where I should be. I'm not where I belong. How can I find that? And yet we don't really know the way back. And so we're restless. We keep wondering and looking for these alternative things. And like Bono's saying, I still haven't found what I'm looking for, despite all the things that I've tried, all the pleasures, all the experiences of life, what we end up saying at the end of that,

[8 : 47] I still haven't found what I'm looking for. My soul is not at rest, and our souls will always be restless because they're looking for that way back into the good garden of God's blessing.

Now, these verses are telling us that Jesus is the new and living way back in. That's what's happening. That's the place your soul is longing for. That's the place your soul wants to find and to remain. And until you rest in that truth, you won't find rest. Now, for those of us in the room who are Christians, how can we know these things? How can we believe them and yet neglect the privileged access we have to draw near to God? How can we do that? Well, if you're anything like me, it's really easy. It's really easy to drift and neglect those things. And let me tell you, I don't know if you're anything like me. It's not like one major thing that's keeping me from drawing near to God, that I just have to get that big obstacle out of the way. It's more like death by a thousand cuts.

It's the many small little decisions that I make, putting this thing or that thing before God. Suddenly, I find that, man, I'm so crowded out with my time. I just don't have time to get with God for prayer and reading the Bible. And here's the kicker. Like when that happens, I really believe that it's kind of out of my control, right? So say, sorry, God, I just had to stay up and watch those two extra episodes of Brooklyn Nine-Nine the other night. I'm just too tired to wake up and really spend time with you. Or sorry, Lord, my kids' extracurriculars and work and house chores. I just can't find any time for you. I'm sure you understand. See how easy it is to fill our calendar with good things that supplant the greater thing. See, these little G gods are often like very cleverly disguised because many of them are just good things that we turn into ultimate things. There are many good things that we turn into God things. And then by that, they should be God and then these things, but we do this. We switch them around. Gosh, that probably is going to sound really bad on the online sermon thing. I was thinking, all you guys listen to this online. Sorry for that high-pitched whistle.

And when we do that, when we're constantly replacing God at the top or God at the center with other things, what we're doing is we're pushing Him from the center of our lives into the margins of our lives.

But if we're going to make God a priority, if we're going to make a priority to draw near to Him, we have to start saying no to good things, some of these good things. Here's an example from my own life, okay? So when Asher was 11, we had him in rec soccer up until that point, and then there was these tryouts for this like next level kind of league, you know, travel ball. And so he went and had a tryout, did amazing, so much so that the coach ran, like sprinted towards us afterwards and grabbed me and Haley and said, hey, if your son signs up, he will be on the team, like, and he will probably be a starter.

[11 : 59] Like, he's really, really good. And so, you know, it's like, you know, put some pride in you as a dad. You're just like, oh, yeah, that's my son, boom. And the temptation is, it's like, oh, to be able to live vicariously through my son and be this amazing soccer star. And, you know, it's like visions of going into the Premier League and playing for Man United or Liverpool or something, you know? It's like all these little things start like feeding into your soul of like, oh, yeah, just imagine what could be.

But then we asked him, okay, what does that mean practically for us? And then he explained the cost, the time cost that it was going to mean for us. It was going to be constant practices. It was going to mean journeys out to tournaments all the time, to faraway places. And so when we heard about this, me and Hales looked at each other and said, well, this is an easy no. Because we'd committed as parents, that our family life would be built around Jesus as the center, not anything else. And in that moment, it got tested. In that moment, I had the option to make Asher's soccer dreams come true. But at what cost to him and us? We'd have to miss a lot of community groups. We'd have to miss a lot of Sunday gatherings. Not to mention, we'd just be more tired and stretched thin and kind of as a family going this place and that place probably away from each other all the time, which would mean our personal time of drawing near to God through prayer and Bible reading would take a back seat. And I had to weigh all this up, right? I'm Asher's dad. I'm his primary discipler right now. And so I had to decide,

I'm going to have to answer to God for my decisions I make and discipling him. What would I be discipling him toward in this moment? Would it be God first and soccer second and third? Or is it going to be soccer first and God second or third in his life?

Now, I know I say this a lot, but it's nevertheless a true statement. Everything you and I do is doing something to us. Every decision we make, every commitment we make is doing something to us.

And the commitments we make, we have to reckon with them. Is this keeping God at the center or not? And not just for our lives, for our kids' lives as well. So instead of filling Asher's time with secondary things, even though they may have been good things, it's not like he was going out and smoking weed and doing all that stuff. It's like, man, it's a sport, like a big deal. There's a lot of great stuff to being involved with sports, but it's still a secondary thing. And I'm called to lead him into a life where he has time to draw near to God by himself and together with us as his family and also with the church, to not neglect that. And it's not only for me to lead him into doing that for his own life. I'm called as a dad to show him that same lifestyle in the way I choose to live my life as well and the way I lead my life. Because he's going to learn most from how I live.

[15 : 07] Discipleship is imitation. Like, discipleship is learning in the brain, but discipleship, a lot is picked up in what is seen. There's this famous phrase, like it's, you know, discipleship is something that is caught more than taught. And so we need to be looking at other people to imitate.

And what are we giving as examples for people to imitate? Here's the thing, guys. When we fill our life with so much busyness that we don't draw near to God, what we end up doing, and I'm sure we don't mean to do this, but nevertheless, it is true. What we end up doing is we devalue and minimize the significance of what Jesus did for us. I want us to stop and think about that for a second here.

You and I get to draw near to a holy God because of what Jesus did, because he died for us. And he is our great high priest who never stops interceding for us. And because of that, we get to draw near into holy places that we shouldn't be allowed to get into. We should not be allowed to stand before God because of our sin, but Jesus made a way. We get back into Eden whenever we want because of him. So why would we not center our lives around that? Well, the reason we don't do that is because we stop believing the truth of the gospel, or it stops becoming the most important thing that we do believe in, which is why we have to be grounded and growing in the gospel. And the very next thing after the command to draw near to God that this pastor gives us is to hold fast our confession. Hebrews 10.23 says this, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. So the essence here of holding fast our confession is learning and growing. Like we're meant to hold fast and grab onto, cling to this confession that we have.

Christians are students. Christians are disciples. Disciples are students. And our textbook is the Bible, which is why making Bible time is so important. We should be doing that in our lives.

That's where we see and learn about this hope that we're talking about, the hope of our confession. This is the gospel that we're talking about. And that word hold fast, it's a beautiful word and it means a lot of good things. It means to actually possess, to take in something to possess, to put on like in robe and to have your mind filled up with something. It means all of those things.

[17 : 41] And so we're meant to be saturated in the gospel. We're meant to be filled up with it, cloaked in it. All right? But we're not just to possess it. We're also to profess it, right? It says it's a confession of hope. We're meant to speak these things out. They're supposed to be in our hearts in such a way that we declare them. A friend of mine, he wrote a catechism for his church that's called the truths that make our hearts sing. I love that. Okay? That's what the gospel is to us as it fills us.

The good news of Jesus and who he is and who God is and all that he's done for us. It fills us and it fills our hearts with this song of joy that wants to burst out and declare it. That's what it's meant to do. And that's going to happen the more you fill yourself with the gospel. The more you take time to get in it and possess it and hold fast to it, that's what we're meant to be doing. All right?

And even as we gather together on a Sunday, it's not me just giving you the gospel in this moment. It's actually as we come together and we sing these amazing songs about who he is and what he did for us and all that we have hope in. What we're doing is we're singing these truths and those truths get into our hearts. But it's not just us singing to God in a vacuum. We're in this kind of like, you know, cone of silence. We're singing this together. We're singing this over each other.

We're declaring it to each other. Like when we sing, it's a confession of our love to God and our worship to him, but it's a confession to each other as well at the same time. And that's why when we come together, it's a beautiful thing. We're filling each other up with the gospel, which is an amazing thing. And the call to follow Jesus is a call to hold fast to the gospel, to be filled with it and to proclaim it. And that's despite what is going on around us, despite the cost of persecution and suffering for our faith. We are called to stand firm. We are called to be a light to the generation that we live in, to the world that we live in. That is what we get to do. And we're also called to pass on this rich tradition of our faith, these beautiful truths that make our heart sing. We're called to pass that on to the next generation behind us, right? That's the beautiful thing. The church exists as we have these disciples and it's been going on for 2,000 years.

One generation passes on this truth to the next generation. And here we stand, guys. And you know what? After you and I pass on from this earth, the next generation is going to carry it on and on and on and on until Jesus returns. But we do that. We can only do that by holding fast to the gospel, being grounded in it and growing in it, which means we have to know what to hold fast to.

[20 : 31] We have to know what it is we're meant to be holding fast to. And I want to ask us this today. What is the hope that you're holding fast to? What is the hope in your life that you are holding fast to? Because the answer to that question gets back to what's at the center of your life.

If your hope is creating a perfect, happy life, right? Trying to turn earth into heaven or trying to make this life so much like heaven that we don't really want heaven anymore. Well, then the center of your life is going to be pleasure or politics or career or money or kids or a spouse or a boyfriend or a girlfriend or some kind of possession, some kind of talk. I mean, the list can go on and on and on.

But if the hope of the gospel is at the center, then heaven is our ultimate hope and destination. And you understand when you get the gospel, you understand that this life will never be heaven.

It can never be heaven. It can never replace heaven. And so the things of this earth are held properly. And I'm not saying the things of this earth are evil and, you know, the material things we could see, they're just like, they're worthless and everything else. I'm just saying they're temporary.

They're not going to last forever. I mean, God's given us some good things to enjoy in this life. And we should enjoy them, but we can't make them ultimate. We can't put our hope on those things.

[21 : 56] Our hope is in our heavenward calling. That's what it is. And so when we get that, we hold the things of this earth right. We hold them with open hands because they're passing away. Now, I do have to say that there are some things we experience here on earth that are going to be eternal. And one of those things is the people of God, the church. It's going to continue on into eternity. We gather together because that's what heaven looks like. A grand gathering of God's people throughout generations, across generations of all time, believers of all time. And whenever we come together, guys, whenever we do this, we're getting a foretaste of what heaven is like. And that is the reason.

That's reason enough. Reason enough to not neglect what it warns us to in verse 25, don't neglect gathering together. But then the reason for our gathering is much more than just being a sanctified country club. It's not just, oh, let me show up. Verse 24 says, and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of son, but encouraging one another. And all the more as you see the day drawing near. And these verses are showing us what it means to be part of the church.

It's not a passive thing. It's saying here, play your part to strengthen and encourage the church. That's what we're called to do as Christians. We have a role to play. And you know what? The simplest thing is, it means you got to show up. If you're able to show up, you got to show up. Doing that is like half the battle. Research tells us that church attendance is actually trending downward. The fastest growing group of people that say they attend church are called one by fours and two by fours, which means they attend church once a month or twice a month. But for them, that's what it means to belong to a church and to attend a church. But church is an in the flesh reality. Jesus didn't die for us to watch services on TV or the internet. Now, I realize, let me be gracious here, I realize that COVID changed the game for us for a long time. There was a season where it was quite unsafe for us to gather for many reasons. And so many of us didn't, and that's okay. All I'm saying here is don't let that season become a lifestyle. As soon as it's safe, man, let's get back together again. Let's show up. Let's do this. Because stirring each other up and encouraging each other is possible side by side, not screen to screen. And I guarantee you on any given Sunday, there are many in this room that need to be encouraged and challenged, which means when you gather, you and I need to come ready for God to use us, right? Our Sunday gatherings aren't just about watching the band do their thing and whoever's preaching the sermon. Yeah, those people, they come ready, right? They come ready, filled up to be used by God to minister to the church. But everyone coming should come with that same expectation when we gather together, which if that's going to happen, it requires us to draw near to God regularly during the week because God can pour you out only when you're filled up with Him.

And that's what drawing near to Him is all about. And all this means is that we have to change the way we think about coming to church. Yes, it's coming to worship, right? But we can easily miss out on what worship is. A lot of us have this very singular thing of worship as this singing or this kind of reverential posture towards Jesus or God, right? And that's true. Worship is that. But you know what's funny? In the Hebrew language, worship was this word that had two meanings, like two sides of a coin.

[26 : 03] And one was to bow low in reverence and awe of someone, recognizing that they're greater than you. The second side of that meaning was to serve. So you have both of those things. And somewhere along the way, we've separated service from worship. But God never intended it to be that way. He said, if you're going to worship me, yeah, you need to take a humble posture, but you also need to serve.

That's what worship looks like. So showing up week in and week out to church and not serving is missing out on what worship is. God saved us to serve Him and to serve others. Romans 12 gets out this when it talks about spiritual worship. Romans chapter 12, it opens up with like, here's your spiritual worship presenting your body as a living sacrifice. But then it gets into some practical ways we do that.

It says this in verse 5, So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. Let us use them.

If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving. The one who teaches in His teaching, the one who exhorts in His exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness. Okay, get an idea of what's going on here.

In another place it says this, What then, brothers, when you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Why? Let all things be done for building up.

[27 : 43] See, the idea here, the idea that a lot of what Scripture is talking about in our gathering and owning our gatherings is that we come as active participants to serve and strengthen the church.

I mean, think of it this way. Every time we gather, God wants to bless His people. Every time we get together, God is like, man, I love this. I'm going to just pour out my blessing on these guys, right? Which is giving us a greater revelation of who He is, His truth, all those things. That's His blessing to us, His encouragement to us. But the way He blesses His church is through His people.

You and I are these like conduits of His grace and His ministry to each other. That's how it works. That's how it happens. It's a beautiful thing. Let me explain it this way. It's like God gives His people, each one of us individually, He gives us a special gift, a unique gift, right?

And that's something that He gives isn't just for you. It's actually for His church. And that's what God the Holy Spirit is on about. He is building the church. He is encouraging and strengthening it by gifting its members. But what often happens is that we are either, we don't know that is a thing, or we do know that, but we don't want to use it. We want to hide it, right? Under our little bushel basket, so to speak. But man, it's saying here, man, you got to let it out. You got to let that gift shine. So during the week, as I draw near to God in prayer and Bible time, yes, that is for my own edification, but it's also for your sake, right? There's things God will speak to me about and do in my heart, but sometimes those me things become a we thing. And I will be talking to someone or sharing from the stage or something, and boom, suddenly God brings that verse in memory or in mind. And I'm like, you know what? This verse is really going to help this person out in this situation they just confessed to me, right? And so my drawing near to God during the week makes me ready for any possible encounter I may have later on. Like we spend time with God, yes, it's for our own edification, but I'm thinking of you guys as well. And you should be doing the same thing. What motivates us is, yes, this precious relationship and privilege we have to draw near to God, but it's this other privilege we have with each other as well to encourage and strengthen each other.

And here's the thing, like we always think of maturity as the guys that know the most. I want to say that's not true. In God's economy, maturity isn't measured that way. It's actually how much you live for the sake of others. That is what is growing in maturity. And it's this way because as you draw near to God, as you learn his heart more and more, you discover that he has this amazing love for people, this amazing compassion, this amazing desire to build and encourage and strengthen others all the time. That's what he wants to do. And this love, this love of God that's in his heart, it is sacrificial.

[30 : 58] It sacrifices. It serves. It gives. It is so others focused, which is what separates the church from any other social group you could belong to, right? God cobbles together, not gobbles, cobbles. God cobbles together people from all over the place who seem to actually have very little in common, right?

We have different hobbies and interests. We look different. We're different in age and gender and wealth and ethnicity. And yet we still love each other. We still show up. We still make time to spend time with each other.

We share our lives. We help each other out. We spend money on one another to support one another. We mourn with each other when it's time to mourn. We rejoice when it's time for rejoicing. We celebrate when it's time to celebrate, all those things. And what brings us and holds us together is Jesus.

That's who it is. It's Jesus. And it can't be anything else. It's him. It's his gospel, his mission. That's our common ground. That's what brings this motley crew of people together. And that's what's so beautiful about the church. It's not that we all look the same and act the same and all ride motorcycles.

Man, we are so different and so varied. And yet we gather together because of this common ground that we have in Jesus. And it's not cheap relationships. It's deep relationships. And when we don't make Jesus our common ground, if we make anything else the center of that, community is going to fall apart. I've seen it happen over and over again because community built on anything else is built on self-serving interests of an individual. And as soon as your interest stops being what holds the community together or starts being ignored, why stay?

[32 : 52] But the church is something more beautiful. God's calling us into something in response to who he is and what Jesus has done for us. We're meant to be a community that draws near to God.

We're meant to be a community that is grounded and growing in the gospel, holding fast to our confession. And we're meant to be a community that doesn't forsake coming together, to stir one another up, to encourage one another, and to build each other up in the faith. So right now we have an opportunity to respond. And I just want to say, hey, if you're here and you aren't a Christian, one, we want to say so glad that you are here. And I really hope this was helpful for you. Kind of looking into like, what does it look like to follow Jesus? This was some real practical, a real practical look into what that is. But before you could start doing these things, your first step is to believe and make Jesus your Lord and Savior. That's what he's holding out to you today. You have to be convinced and believe and have faith that he died for you, that you can't draw near to God. You can't come into that holy place except for the fact that he died for your sins, his blood shed for you, that his body, his broken body on the cross is the new way into a relationship with God. And so I want to encourage you today. The Bible doesn't make it hard. It says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, that he's King over all, he's ruling and reigning, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. That's what it takes. And I want to encourage you, if you're here, and that's, God's inviting you to do that. I encourage you to do that. Today is the day of salvation.

Out of here. Now, for those of us in the room who are Christians, here are some questions that I want us to think about, to talk over at lunch or dinner with friends and family, and even this week at community group. And I just want to go over them. They'll be up on the screen as well. You can write them down if you want to, but we're going to read them, and then we're going to take some time to reflect on them. So I want to ask us this. What are some practical changes that will make time for you to draw near to God? What are some practical changes you can make that will make time for you to draw near to God? What are some things that you need to cut out? Maybe they're good things, but things you need to say no to so that you can spend time with the most important relationship in your life.

What are some hard adjustments that need to be made for why you gather on Sunday? Are you coming just to receive, or have you thought about worship being also an opportunity to serve?

Your service is an act of worship. And then finally, man, commit to God and one other person to come next Sunday and the Sunday after that with an expectation that God can use you. At every gathering, it could be in community group, it could be on Sundays, but just being ready and have this expectation that like, you know what, Lord? Use me.

[36 : 06] Use me. So right now, let's take a brief 30 seconds, and I want us to reflect and meditate on these questions.

And as God leads you and challenges you, man, just take note of that, what he's calling you into, how he's calling you to surrender or give something up, or what change he's calling you to make.

And so let's do that right now. Just, we're going to bow our heads, close our eyes, pray, silent 30 seconds right now. Amen. So, Father, a very simple prayer.

What you have done in our hearts today, what you have called us to, help us to become that. Amen. So finally, we're going to respond with communion. And for those of us who are Christians, we do this because it reminds us why we get to draw near to God. And in fact, this meal is a moment where we do draw near to God. We're seeing right here with the bread and the juice that Jesus is the new and living way that he said he is. We're affirming that. And we're saying again, yes, we believe.

His blood is our confidence to come to God. His body is the new curtain we pass through to go into the holy places, into the very presence of God. And right now, by faith, we know that Jesus is drawing near to us in this moment. And as we take this, he's here right now with us. He's here right now in this wonderful, intimate meal, sharing himself with us. And so let us draw near together with faith as we eat and drink his body and blood. Let's eat and drink together.