

Life Together - Be A Spur // September 18, 2022
Terry Foester

Pastor

Pastor Nate and I are tag teaming a four-week September series called Life Together, a series about practicing Christian community. Each of the weeks we are also leading this conversation downstairs in our Christian Ed classes to discuss how to apply these messages in our lives.

The key question in this series is what makes Christian community distinct from a fraternity, country club, neighborhood or the YMCA? The answer is Jesus, our older brother who through the gospel story, brings peace with God the father, and takes strangers and makes a family.

The goal: To practice Life Together in a way that leans courageously into Jesus-centered community!

Today we are asking the Question: Are we Encouraging One Another?

When I was a boy I loved cowboy boots. *Let me explain...when I was a boy, my dad was a truck driver...and a few times a year I would put on my little cowboy boots, get in his truck and travel out west to Kansas for a week. It became a pilgrimage in my life, and helped my love country music. One of the pairs of boots I had, had spurs.*

Picture: Spurs

The boot, with the spur attached enables a horse and it s rider to go! The purpose of a spur on a boot, is direction.

But if too much pressure it used, or the rider drives the horse in anger...the spur becomes something that also does harm.

Today's scripture, the writer of Hebrews equates our life together to a spur. It's a confronting comparison!

Hebrews helps us plot the right pattern of our lives together...and it starts by drawing near to God, in the most holy place, through the work of Jesus - we now have access and the ability to draw near to God.

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 10:19-22

19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, **20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain**, that is, his body, **21** and since we have a great priest

over the house of God, **22 let us draw near** to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Exposition

(1) **Draw Near, there's a New & Living Way!**

Our Life Together begins with us drawing near to God.

“Let Us Draw Near” means we have something to do.

Allegorically - Jesus's body becomes a curtain that traditionally separates the most holy place from the rest of the world. The temple had an inner most holy place. It represented how God's holy presence dwelt among the people of God in the wilderness.

Image Slide: The Torn Curtain by Nathan Rhoades

Jesus's body is the curtain torn in two, from top to bottom. Jesus opened a “new & living way” through the curtain, that is, his body.

James 4:8 - the nature of the character of God is to respond to our approach.

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

(2) **Spur someone into Love & Action**

The word spur: stir up, incite, irritation, inciting event, provoke, to be sharp, with contention. It's a strong word. It's like a spur.

But the result of this spur is to push into love. How does a spur cause love? This is the great tension and mystery of this text. And we must hold on to what was just said...

Our capacity to Spur someone into encouragement comes from an overflow of our time with Jesus.

If we don't spend time regularly drawing near to the Lord, then we will not be an encouraging congregation.

Too often we stir one another up in the wrong direction. *We kick each other with spurs, to stir one another up to get more angry about something in our culture, or the way the world is goin. This leads us to become more judgmental and less humble in how we think about the world. As a church, if we dig our spurs into one another, in-sighting more cultural division - we simply become more isolated and irrelevant to the world.*

Illustration: Why do we hurt the ones we love?

The wounds of a friend leave a more significant mark than those from a stranger. They cut to our heart, our identity. They feel devastating and disorienting. The discouragement that follows is overwhelming. To restore a relationship with a friend or brother takes a long time, often years. And sometimes we run out of time.

Imagine riding a horse, with spurs on your boots. The spur is a tool meant to signal direction, or signal urgency. To initiate movement.

When it comes to the idea of guiding a friend or a child, or a spouse or a co-worker - it's difficult to apply the right amount of pressure that results in the right kind of change.

In our most loving relationships - when we attempt to offer guidance, or encouragement - many times it has the opposite effect.

We set out to encourage someone...they walk away discouraged. They walk away with the exact opposite perspective!

To encourage someone, literally is to build courage in that person. To build them up!

To discourage someone, literally is to rip the courage from that person. To tear them down, and remove any courageous impulse they have.

When it comes to a horse and its rider...the spur on a boot becomes a directional tool that easily does harm if too much pressure is applied.

Our relationships with those we love is like walking around with spurs on your boots all the time. The potential for harm is in any discussion, in an encounter.

A drive through Chic Fillet drive through...turns into a heated and discouraging conversation...and now you don't even want to eat your waffle fries, even though there is chic fillet sauce.

Why do we hurt the ones we love the most?

The spur wounds we create leave scars. The spur tells a different story than we intend...

It's because we don't live out of the loving overflow from time behind the curtain.

The tenderness found only from the Lord can teach us how to wear spurs with one another. With the Lord, we can learn how to apply the right pressure in any relationship, to leave a mark without leaving a bruise.

Which is a truer message for the world? If we try to hang on to the approximation of healthy relationships...but we're really faking it the whole time? Or, if we live in the type of closeness that brings about loving change.

Obviously this is not easy. Nearly impossible

We must learn to love one another in truly tender ways, this tenderness is not weakness. It builds up, it instills courage.

"There are those rare Christians whose very presence is an incitement to you to want to be a better Christian." AW Tozer, Experiencing the Presence of God

Application:

Think for a moment about your own life. Be honest for a moment...how has your life spurred others? In what directions?

1 - Do you Draw Near?

- *Have you ever walked through the curtain?*
- *Maybe you need to walk through the curtain for the first time...to experience the frayed edges stained with his blood...to pass through...into that holy place of change.*
- *This is also a place of renewal that we must frequent often.*

- If we don't spend time on the other side of the torn curtain — we'll never make a difference out there. The impact of our life is not through direct **effort**, but through the **empowerment** of the presence of Christ in us.
- **There's nothing keeping you from the presence of God...nothing!** There are many things keeping you from living out a lot of your dreams...but what is keeping you from the most holy place of change? The curtain has been torn in two. So what is keeping you from that place?

2- Are you the right kind of Spur?

Practically:

Travel Deeply With the Lord

& Travel Deeply With a Few Others

- Place a *higher* value on knowing fewer people well, and travel deeply with them. This happens in small groups. Small groups, visited Youth Small Groups
- Ask the right Questions // How are you doing spiritually?

Conclusion:

What if we don't live this way?

If we don't walk through that curtain, we'll never know the Lord.

Trying to fabricate good behavior is exhausting for everyone.

If we keep hurting each other by bring the an unhealthy spur...we'll continue to be a divided people.