

Draw Near

Hebrews 10:19-25

- “LITTLE STITIOUS”

The great theologian, Michael J. Scott, once stated, “I’m not superstitious, but I am a little stitious.” This may come as a shock to some of you, but I’m a big sports guy. And I love my Philadelphia Sports teams. And out of the passion that I have for my teams, I have a tendency to somehow trick myself into thinking that my actions and behaviors can have an impact on the way the game is going whenever I’m watching. Sometimes I will move to a different seating location in my house while watching a game to see if my team will play better. If the eagles lose while i’m wearing a certain shirt, I will never wear that shirt again on game day. (Yes, I am running out of wardrobe options for Sunday’s.) Now, in my mind, I rationally know, that nothing I can do can actually alter the outcomes of the game, but I can’t help but try anyway. And it’s comforting to know that I’m not the only one like this.

Rachel thinks says I’m crazy, but she has a little bit of this in her as well. She’s a Steelers fan, we somehow make it work. But she will take naps during the games if the Steelers are playing bad because she says they play better when she naps. But that may or may not be her just wanting to get her sunday nap in.

But I remember a while back, we had a new couple in the church that we were serving at, who were also Steelers fans, and in order to connect with them, we had them over to watch a game. Now, one of my coworkers at the time, his name was chandler, who is also, by roots, a Steelers fan came over to watch as well. But he only stayed for the first half. During that first half the Steelers were losing. During the second half which he was gone for, the Steelers came back and won. Therefore it was determined by the remaining Steelers fans in the room that Chandler is no longer allowed to watch the Steelers with us ever again. Now, I love Chandler, but I understand where they are coming from on a deep spiritual level.

- How often do we try, even if deep down we know better, we still try to manipulate or

control or alter the effects of things that are really beyond us and outside of our control

- How often, do we buy into the lie, that our approach to God is based upon our performance.
- We fall into thinking that we need to be good, go to church, pray, and read our bible, help the old lady across the street, and if we do all of these things then we can approach God and He'll hear us and do things the way we want
 - But if we have a few bad days or weeks or mess up in some way, then we have to work to get right before God will listen to us
 - And deep down we may know that that isn't the case...but we can't help but try.
- The writer of Hebrews was trying very hard to get his Hebrew readers to understand that there was actually a better way to approach God.
 - In fact in verse 20, he states it as a "New and Living way"
 - And this would be even harder for a lot of his Jewish readers to wrap their minds around

than us because what they had always been taught, what they had always practiced.

- By Old Testament law, the common, ordinary person could not approach God
- That was inconceivable. God was Holy, man was sinful, God could not be in the presence of sin, so you could not ever approach God or you would be struck dead immediately
- So you had to do everything you could to keep all of the rules, but you actually couldn't keep them all, so you had to go to a priest who would offer a sacrifice on your behalf in order for your sins to be temporarily atoned for, or overlooked, so that you could be in a decent standing with God until you messed up again and had to offer another sacrifice for you and your family and the cycle went on and on and on.
 - There was only a very select few that were allowed to actually enter into the presence of God or go before Him....and those were the High Priests.
- Now the writer is telling these people who have grown up in this system, that YOU

PERSONALLY can now Draw Near to God yourself!

- And the language that the writer is using, actually puts every single believer in the category of a priest.
 - When he talks about going through the curtain, being sprinkled clean, being washed pure...all of those were alluding to priestly customs of purification that they had to do before they could enter into the presence of God
 - But the writer says that we all who have accepted Jesus as our Lord and savior have access to the presence of God, because we have been sprinkled clean, and washed pure by the blood of Jesus
- And not only does the writer tell us we CAN Draw Near, but also HOW to Draw Near
- He says, ***“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 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.” -Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV)

- So first he tells us that we can:
 - **DRAW NEAR CONFIDENTLY**
 - Notice that the writer doesn't tell us to be confident. But he says that we HAVE confidence.
 - Jesus Himself, bore our guilt and our shame, and paid for it on the cross so that we can have confidence before God.
- When you think of a courtroom scene, the only time the guilty party has confidence whenever they are on trial, is if they are confident in their representation.
- They know that they are guilty, they know that they are wrong, they know the punishment that they deserve, but they also know that they have someone representing them that is smarter than them, more powerful than them, and has more sway with the judge than they do, so they stand confidently before the judge

because they are confident in their representation.

- In the same way, we are all definitely guilty, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but the writer tells us to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, that Jesus is our representation, He is much smarter and more powerful than we are, and He has much more sway with the Father than we ever will. And He took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved so that we could go free and Draw Near to the presence of God.
- The writer furthers this point in chapter 4, when he says: ***“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”- Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)***

- *You see Jesus became like us, in order to represent us.*

- If God never became a man, in the person of Jesus, He wouldn't be able to properly sympathize with or understand us when we Draw Near to Him.
- However, whenever we do, we can be confident that when we draw near to Him in our time of need He will understand us and be For us.
 - *When we are in pain, we can be confident that He understands our pain because Jesus experienced pain*
 - *When we are tempted, we can be confident that He understands that struggle, because Jesus was tempted*
 - *When experience fear and anxiety, we can be confident that He understands because even Jesus sweated drops of blood in the Garden*
- No matter what our time of need may look like, we can be confident that He hears us, He understands us, and will work out our time of need for our good and for His glory.

- This confidence that we talk about, isn't to be confused with arrogance. There is still a reverence that the Father deserves whenever we Draw Near to Him...He opposes the proud. Gives grace to the Humble

- Arrogance talks AT God, Confidence talks WITH God
- But this word **Confidence** comes from the Greek word ***parrēsia***: Which means **freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech. To be open, or frank. Without ambiguity or the use of figures and comparisons**
- Which is to say, you don't have to beat around the bush with God. You don't have to pray in KJV language. You can be open and honest and direct with God, because He knows you, He hears you, and sympathizes with you.

- I remember talking to a lady one time, who was telling me about how she was able to pray with her mom, who was going through a time of need. And this was a great moment because her mom has a different faith and had said in the past that she doesn't like listening to her

daughter pray because she prays as if she knows God.

- What a testimony.
 - What a powerful testimony from a woman of God that confidently draws near, so confident in her relationship with Him, that she confidently talks to Him, because she's confident that she knows Him
- Christianity is the only religion in the world that tells it's believers that they can be confident before God and actually know God
- Every other religious leader says that you can't know God, you need to go through someone else who gets to know Him but you don't get that privilege
- I remember being in a Hindu temple, one time back in college. We had a friend who's family was very involved in ministering to the Hindu community of Simpsonville, SC and there was a big time guru coming in town, and he asked if me and another of our friends would go with him.
- Now, we weren't going there to cause a scene, stir up trouble, or pick any theological

battles. We just wanted to be there to pray, get some insight into what these people were being taught, and just love on people in any way that we could.

- And I'll tell ya, the moment we drive into the parking lot, you could just feel the darkness. You could feel a spiritual heaviness.
- And as the guru began to speak, if you weren't paying close attention, you would think he was giving a standard Christian message.
- He talked about living a good life, a moral life, loving others, he even taught about 1 God.
- However, he was really teaching only half truths.
 - And at one point he was teaching that no human could ever claim to know God.
 - He even quoted Scripture! He said, "Even in the bible it says, 'My ways are higher than your ways, my thoughts are higher than your thoughts' how can you ever really know someone like that?"

- And my heart breaking because I saw so many people hungry and desperate to know God but they are told that they never will.
- They're just told to try to be as good as possible and maybe you'll get a little closer to Him in the next life
- But the message of Jesus is that God has come down so that you CAN know Him, so that you CAN have a relationship with Him, and no matter what you have done or where you have been you CAN DRAW NEAR.
 - And you can talk with God, confident that He hears you, Understands you, and Loves you.
- Not only are we to Draw Near Confidently, but we are also to
- **DRAW NEAR CONSISTENTLY**
 - The writer tells us to "***hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.***"- ***Hebrews 10:23 (ESV)***
 - I am a firm believer that consistency brings growth

- We will not be confident in our relationship with God if we are not consistently going after Him.
 - The writer said in chapter 2, ***“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”- Hebrews 2:1 (ESV)***
- This term, drift away, is a nautical term, that is used to show the picture of a boat not secured to the dock. And if left untethered, the boat would eventually drift away from the dock and crash
 - So the writer says to pay close attention to Him.
 - Pursue Him Consistently
 - It’s the same as any relationship, if there is not a consistent pursuit from both sides, the relationship will drift apart
 - But the more you spend time together and learn each other the more the relationship will grow.
 - You know, Rachel and I got married December of 2019. Right before COVID. So essentially our whole first year of marriage was the

quarantine. And to be honest, it was pretty awesome. Because, Rachel and I, were able to spend more time together than we ever would have during normal circumstances. With the shut down and the quarantine we it’s like we got the first 3 years of marriage into the first one because if things were normal we would only get a few hours at the end of the day during the week and then maybe some weekends.

- But we had months and months of all day, every day together. In which we really got to learn each other. Learn how to talk to each other, how to work through things, how to get on each others nerves, how to be bored together. And all of it, I believe, (Rachel may tell you different) actually helped strengthened our relationship.
 - And I thought we were unique in that, because I had heard so many rumors and statistics about how the divorce rates in the US have skyrocketed during COVID but then when I actually went to get those statistics I actually found the opposite.
- I came across an article that said this: *“Most married people in America report their unions*

have gotten stronger, not weaker, in the wake of covid-19. The [American Family Survey] found that 58 percent of married men and women (18 to 55) said the pandemic has made them appreciate their spouse more, while 51 percent said their commitment to marriage had deepened. Only 8 percent said that the pandemic had weakened their commitment to one another. The AFS also found the married people who reported that their marriage is in trouble fell from 40 percent to 29 percent in 2020. In spite of breathless media reports of a surge, divorce filings appear to be down in 2020.”

- I read this and I thought, no wonder, in the Bible, God’s people weren’t supposed to work or do anything except be together during the first year of marriage.
 - He wanted to teach them about the importance of consistency in a relationship.
 - The continual pursuit of two people being so intentional with each other and wanting to be the best they could be for the other person
- Now God has always been and always will be consistent with you. He pursued you first, He

never changes, and His Love for you never changes

- But often times we still seem to drift away from Him
- We feel like He’s not around anymore, that we’re far from Him
- But the truth of the matter is, you may feel far from Him but He’s not far from you
 - Acts 17:27 says He is not far from any of us!
- And almost every single time I counsel someone who feels are from Him or that their relationship with God is off I’ll ask 2 questions.
 - *What’s your prayer life look like?*
 - *What are you currently reading in His Word?*
- I can’t think of a time when I didn’t get the answer...“Well I’m not...”
- How can we expect to have a consistent relationship with Him if we aren’t consistently pursuing Him back??

- But the good news is that we can confidently and consistently draw near to Him because He is consistent.
- We can hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, BECAUSE He who promised is faithful
- Our Hope is based on His faithfulness
- Your performance doesn't determine your position with God. Jesus' does. Jesus' performance, His obedience, and His sacrifice paved the way for you to enter the presence of God
 - He didn't bleed to death on a cross so we could continue to try and work our way there or neglect Him
- So we need to be grateful and take advantage of our opportunity to enter the Holy Place of the Presence and Draw Near to Him as much as we can.
 - Paul tells us to pray without ceasing...I want to know what that's really like.
- We draw near to God confidently, consistently...and finally

- DRAW NEAR TOGETHER

- ***“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 drawing near.” -Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)***
 - God not only wants us to be consistent with Him, but also consistent with each other.
 - He tells us to “consider” how we can stir one another up to love and good works
 - Which is to say, love and good works aren't just going to happen
 - Good intentions aren't enough
- This demands concentrated thought
- Why? Because this doesn't come natural to us. We are naturally sinful and selfish individuals.
- MINE
- And we don't naturally outgrow that! It takes work to look out not only for your needs, but also the needs of others

- It takes consideration to count others as more significant than yourself
- It takes diligence to forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us
 - This takes extreme intentionality on our part to be aware and alert of the needs of each other and the world around us
 - And it has to be a team effort
- We're told to not neglect to meet together
- That word "meet" or "assembling" as other translations say, means "The Complete Gathering." So in this specific passage, the writer is not talking about just home groups, and coffee shop bible studies. He is talking about large scale corporate worship.
 - Now home groups, bible studies, and having coffee together are all very important!
 - "Where two or three are gathered, there I will be also..." I get that, it's true, and I'm not trying to downplay or overlook the small intentional gatherings
 - That's why Community groups are a vital component of our DNA
- Because we as an American church have done such a poor job of making it seem like the entirety of the Christian life is based around a Sunday morning service.
 - And it's not. The Christian life is an every day thing,
- However, the writer is still saying that we shouldn't neglect the large gathering!
- He says "Let's not forsake the assembling together, as is the habit of some..."
- So that means that there have been some Christians that have fallen into the habit of forsaking the assembling together ever since the early church.
 - Now, that's actually encouraging to me, because I have fallen into that Habit myself a time or two. Especially in college.
- And we can probably all think about times in our lives or of some Christians close to us that are doing that now. However, my fear is that, "some" will continue to turn into "some more."
- Many will say, "I love Jesus, but I don't care for the church." Or "Yes, I'm all about the message

of Jesus, but I just don't like to be around Christians."

- It doesn't work that way. The church is the bride of Christ. You can't say you want to have a relationship with me, but say you never want to be around my wife. That's not gonna work.
- Furthermore, Christians are God's children.
 - So, you can't tell me you wanna hang out with me but just trash on my kid the entire time. I will get very angry with you. I can make fun of my kid, you can't...
- John goes as far as to say, ***"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother (fellow believer), he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."*** -1 John 4:20-21 (ESV)
- So Christians are supposed to be a family that assembles together for the goal of worshipping our Father.

- Both corporately and personally
 - Christians are supposed to be there for each other, to bear each other's burdens, to rejoice with us when things are good, and hurt with us when things are bad.
 - But unfortunately, we have a tendency to be selfish and short sighted human beings that take the opportunity for spiritual community for granted.
 - But we cannot underestimate the value of spending time around like-minded believers
- *"Close and regular fellowship with other believers is not just a nice idea, but an absolute necessity for the encouragement of the Christian life."*
- You know those times whenever you're having a hard time really sensing the presence of God in your personal life. And then you come to church and you experience His presence in a new way.
 - That's not because of the lights, or the music, the coffee, the t-shirts, or the pipe and drape

- You are experiencing the encouragement that comes from Cooperate worship. The faith and worship of the believers around you are beginning to stir up the faith and worship in you as well
 - And we need it much more than just on Sunday mornings.
- Because Life is hard, and life is heavy. And sometimes the best way to keep from drifting from God is to be around other people who are drawing near to Him, and it will encourage you in such a way that will help you set your eyes back on Him.
- The writer puts an emphasis on us encouraging each other...
- Because, if we as Christians, truly believe the Gospel, if we truly believe that we had absolutely nothing to bring to the table, but God still gave His Son so that He could give us everything and make something of us that we could never make of ourselves, if we truly believe that, then we should be the most encouraging people on the planet!
 - Because if we truly appreciate the way that God has built us up, then we would be actively be doing the same thing for each other.
- We should create a culture where we are all intentionally looking for ways to encourage each other.
 - And that culture that we foster among our Christian community, should carry out into our every day lives.
- Christians should be the most encouraging people to be around at school and the workplace.
- Dream with me! How much more would people be drawn to find out what Jesus is all about if we were the most encouraging people that people come across??
 - If we get this, Not only will you be encouraging others and building others up, but you'll also be encouraging yourself in the process.
 - And we can't afford to be those that wait to be ENCOURAGING to others until we are first encouraged by someone else.

- ***“If you wait for someone to encourage or motivate you, you will never be encouraged or motivated.” -John C Maxwell***
- If we constantly are waiting around for someone to encourage or affirm us, we will continue to drown in insecurity and will be so frustrated in life because we will be focusing more on the times we’re not encouraged than the times we are encouraged
 - And in turn, we will victimize ourselves, and feel sorry for ourselves all of the time and drag everyone else down around us.
 - But what you want other people to be for you, you first have to be for other people
- SO IF YOU WANT TO BE ENCOURAGED, BE ENCOURAGING
 - Be someone who lifts people up, be someone who puts others first, be someone that points out the good in people
 - Instead of having the mindset, *“Who is going to encourage me?”* We should have the mindset, *“Who am I going to encourage.”*
 - *Its SO Much more freeing*
- You’re not always going to feel it, you are going to have those days when the last thing in the world you want to do is encourage someone
- You’ll have times when you are much more frustrated by people than encouraged by them
- But we should still learn how to put those feelings and frustrations aside and genuinely look for something to encourage people with
 - Especially the ones that frustrate us
- And I’m not meaning passive-aggressively, where you say one thing but its actually a slight and everyone knows it.
 - I mean genuinely making yourself look past the frustration and finding a way to build that person up even if every feeling you have wants to tear that person down.
- Now, society will tell you that’s being fake. Because we’ve turned feelings into truth and a sense of identity, which they’re not.
 - So society would tell you it’s fake, but Jesus would tell you it’s “Dying to yourself.”

- It's loving each other as Jesus loved us.
- I can guarantee you that Jesus has dealt with a lot of frustration with me but still loved me and built me up anyway.
- The writer says this is so important, to encourage each other, and to stir one another up, because the DAY is drawing near!
- What is the Day? It's the same day that the angels told the 120 about on the mountain when Jesus disappeared into the clouds.
- He's coming back the same way that He left.
- We are to live with a sense of urgency, knowing that He could come back at any moment, so we are to make the most of the time that we have here...loving and meeting the needs of this world in order that they might see Christ as we do and enter into His Kingdom with us whenever that day comes.
- Dr. Jonathan Ahearn, a professor at Gardner Webb University, and one of the elders from our sending church, shared a quote with me from a study on evangelism that he had been reading and it states: "As believers we must

realize that this world is like a house on fire and everyone in it is destined to burn forever unless they escape. The escape – the only way out of this deadly fire, is to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."

- Jonathan went on to say, "And HERE'S THE PROBLEM. There are Christians who recognize we are in a fire and know how to get out of the burning house, yet they choose to step over and around the sleeping bodies of those who do not know there is a fire."
- And this mindset, I think, is so prevalent among the church today, largely due to the comfortable cultural Christianity we have created
 - Christians, now-a-days, especially in America, spend more time creating rivalries with other churches and arguing over secondary doctrines, then we do focusing on the spiritual battle and mission at hand.
 - We worry about nit-picking a service, more than the state of somebody's soul
- I remember one time I was reading a verse, that I had heard and read a thousand times.

- And it always pumped me up. It comes from the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus was being told about all of the speculations of the people saying who they thought Jesus was
- And Jesus asks His disciples, well who do you say that I am?
- And Peter replies, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!”
- And Jesus replies, **“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” -Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**
 - And I, like so many others would read that, and think “Yea! That’s right! The church of Jesus is being built up! And no matter what attacks the enemy throws our way! They won’t prevail! The church is going to stand strong! We’re more than conquerors!
 - But I remember that day, while I was thinking all of these things, it was like a light bulb went off
 - It was like a Holy Spirit gut punch
 - And I thought, “Wait a minute....gates are built for defense...”
- I had been seeing church in this way:
 - We build up our gates, that will withstand the attacks of the enemy and will keep all of the evil and ungodly influences of this world out!
 - But all we’re doing is putting ourselves in a prison
- That was not the design that Jesus had for His church!
- He says, we are the ones that are supposed to be on the attack and the gates of hell won’t prevail against us
- So He designed His church to be an assembling of the people of God who come together, so we can be spiritually reenergized, and spiritually refocus, by stirring each other up, and encourage each other
 - So we can be better equipped to face the spiritual battles of this life
 - Because I am telling you, there are gates of hell that are built up in your schools and your work places
 - There are gates of hell that have been built up all around this community

- But we go out in the Name, and the Light, and the Love of Jesus and there is nothing the enemies of hell can do to withstand the children of God who live on mission.
- Because we're not fighting FOR victory, we're fighting FROM victory
- And we go in the Name of the One who has made the enemy His footstool
- But we will not understand the mission, walk in power, or see the victories if we do not confidently and consistently Draw Near to His presence both personally and together.
- And if you're not sure where to start when it comes to consistently Drawing Near to God: let me give you 4 practical steps where you can start:
 - Now these are pretty general and they should be because I'm very weary about putting formulas on things like your relationship with God.
 - So this is just a starting point for you as you develop your own routine with God in your own personal relationship with Him.
- **Set an Appointment**
- Why? Because you are much more likely to honor your meeting time with God if you schedule it.
- If you think that's impersonal I would disagree
- The most personal time I ever spend with any of you is whenever we schedule out a time to share a meal or coffee together.
- We don't just spend that time together on a whim, we have to schedule it.
- So schedule it and keep that appointment, then first thing you do is:
- **Be Still and Worship**
- Very simply, play a worship song. Is there a song that we have been singing together at church that has been speaking to your heart, play it.
- Mediate on the music and the words.
- This is not mystical or emotionalism in any way. Because music is used all throughout the scripture to help usher in the presence of God

- The difference between now and those times in the Old Testament is that now we are on the other side of the cross and because of His Spirit within us, we are always in the direct presence of God
- But the music can still help give us a deeper awareness of His presence that we are currently in.
- After the song, you can leave some background music going if you wish but next:

- **Pray and Read**

- Open the Bible, ask God to give you insight to what you are about to read.
- I've heard it said that praying before reading your bible is like putting on your spiritual reading glasses.
- And if you want to know where you should start or what you should read, I'll tell you. Anywhere from Genesis to Revelation.
- The Bible is a Living Word. So whenever we pray through scripture, we could read the same thing over and over again and The Holy

Spirit can still reveal some Truths to us through it that we haven't thought about yet.

- Finally.

- **Listen and Write**

- Have a journal, piece of paper, or even a notes app on your phone ready. Think deeply about the passage you read, and write down what you think God is teaching you through that Word.
- Let the Written Word spark the Inner Word, that leads you to apply the truths of scripture to your life.
- Also you could finish out your time by writing out a short prayer to God.
- Be consistent with these things and see how your confidence in drawing near to the Father develops

- **QR CODE**

- If you are struggling because you feel like you've been sinning too much, or just neglecting God too much, and you need to get better at a few things before you start pursuing and drawing near to Him again

- I'm telling you...that's as ludicrous as me changing seats to make the eagles play better.
- Just draw near to Him, He's waiting for it