



grow groups



## Week 2: Encourage One Another Hebrews 10:19-25

### GOAL:

Grow in our understanding of spiritual encouragement and our willingness to give it to others

### CHECKLIST

- Prepare for the meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Connect on all logistics: serving project, schedule, leadership roles, etc.
- Facilitate a Scripture-based conversation on spiritual encouragement.
- Give instructions for this week's Practice Activity.
- Lead a time of prayer focused on growing in our encouragement of one another.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members.

### PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

*Lord Jesus, thank you so much that by your blood, we can have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place and live in the glorious presence of God. Thank you for dying on the cross to open up a "new and living way" for us to be with God. Please help our group to draw near to you and to hold unwaveringly to hope. I pray that this semester, you would teach us by the Holy Spirit to truly encourage each other...not relying on our own efforts, but gratefully trusting in your grace. Help me lead my group this week with authenticity, transparency, and love. In your name I pray, Amen.*

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*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 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. Hebrews 10:24-25*

## CONNECT, COORDINATE, AND PRAY (15 minutes)

**Relational Connection:** As people enter, spend time connecting relationally. This can be informal, or you can do something a little more structured, like using an icebreaker question or sharing “highs and lows.”

**Coordinate Details:** Go over any logistical plans that your group needs to discuss. This could be related to your Building for the Better serving project, a Super Bowl party or other social event, who’s bringing snacks to your group, who will lead in various areas, etc.

**Pray:** Before you begin your discussion of this week’s passage and sermon, open with a short time of prayer, making sure to pray about any needs within the group that are shared during the relational connection time. Note: there will be a longer time of prayer toward the end that involves everyone, so it will likely be best to ask one person to lead this prayer and keep it brief.

## DISCUSS (35-45 minutes)

- What was one thing from the Growth Guide readings and reflection questions this week that challenged you, encouraged you, or made you think?

**Leader’s Note:** This is not only a good way to get people talking about their spiritual lives, it’s also a great positive reinforcement of the value of spending regular time in Scripture and prayer. You don’t need to spend a ton of time here, but asking this regularly can give a good opportunity for people to share how the Lord is speaking to them.

- Read Hebrews 10:19-25. In this week’s sermon, what did John call the “Zoomed-In View of Encouragement?” Why do you think we naturally default to this view of encouragement? Have you ever experienced this kind of “encouragement” at church? How did it make you feel? What are the up sides? The down sides?

**Leader’s Note:** In John’s sermon, he said the Zoomed-In View of Encouragement is “You can do it! (so try harder)” The idea behind this kind of encouragement is that what we need most in our spiritual lives is to quit being spiritually lazy and work harder to live better lives. The problem with this is that it assumes we have the ability to become better on our own! Scripture tells us that apart from Christ, we have no hope. No matter how hard we try, we can’t be “good enough.” The only way to experience transformation is to recognize our utter and complete dependence on God and to let his grace transform us from the inside out.

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*Help the group wrestle with this view of encouragement, which is so prevalent, not only in our culture but also in church! It's so easy for conversations at church to turn into a list of things to do/not do and a series of guilt trips designed to get us to work harder. We've likely all experienced this kind of "encouragement" at church, either intentionally or unintentionally. Give the group time to explore how this made them feel. You might hear words like tired, discouraged, or guilty. It's important to realize that this kind of shame-based encouragement can be temporarily effective. That's one reason people use it! We want to "scare people straight." But in the long run, we can't sustain the effort needed to effect lasting change, because we just don't have it in us. Paul describes this tension beautifully in Romans 7:22-25:*

*"So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

*You might want to read this passage to your group as you discuss this topic. Paul is saying that even though he wants to do God's will, he's not strong enough by himself to pull it off. And just as it appears that he's about to lose hope, he tells us that God delivers us from this miserable situation through Jesus! And then Romans 8 goes on to tell us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and that the Spirit within us sets us free from this situation and through God's power helps us become more like Jesus.*

- In the sermon, what did John call the "Zoomed-Out View of Encouragement?" How does the fact that Jesus has invited us into God's Kingdom impact the way we encourage one another? What might this kind of encouragement look like at home, at work, and at church?

**Leader's Note:** *The Zoomed-Out view is "God has done it! (so join the party)." As we said in the last point, we don't have the strength within us to effect real, lasting change. So any view of encouragement that depends on our strength and effort is bound to ultimately fail. But this "zoomed-out" view changes everything! We're no longer trying to guilt people into doing something they are incapable of doing. Instead, we're inviting them to experience a gift that God stands ready to give.*

*This has a significant impact on the way we encourage each other. We don't continue to tell each other to just try harder. Instead, we focus on what God has done and the beautiful grace he is offering us, and we invite each other to draw close to God and to hold on tight to him. It still requires effort, but instead of an effort aimed toward making ourselves better, the effort is in coming to the One who actually can transform our lives.*

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*Help the group play out what that could look like in the various areas of their lives. For example, in parenting, this approach might focus less on making our kids feel guilty for “being bad” and focus more on the beautiful life that God has intended for us. And of course, it isn’t always easy for our kids (or us!) to see that, so as parents we encourage our kids to trust us and trust God’s Word that living the way God commands is truly best for us.*

*It might be a good exercise to give the group a few scenarios and ask them what “zoomed-out” encouragement might look like in that situation. For example:*

- Talking with a teenager who’s spending too much time on their phone and gets angry and resentful every time you try to talk about it.*
  - A Christian co-worker who regularly badmouths her boss to you behind her back.*
  - A friend hasn’t been to worship or Grow Group in several weeks.*
- In the sermon, John mentioned that all of the pronouns in the passage are plural. What is the difference in “You draw near” versus “Let us draw near?” (verse 22) How might “let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess” be different from “you hold unswervingly to the hope you profess?” (verse 23)*

***Leader’s Note:*** *The difference between these options may feel subtle, but it’s important! If the command was “you draw near,” our faith would be limited to just the vertical – ‘God and me.’ But since the command is “let us draw near,” we also experience faith in the horizontal plane – ‘you and me.’ When we take the collective approach, it means that we will prioritize the practical ways in which we draw near to God together. We will worship together with others, talk about Scripture together, pray together, serve together, encourage each other, and more. If we view our faith only in the singular, we will only do these things by ourselves and miss out on a huge part of God’s plan for us as we live our lives in isolation.*

*The difference in the individual and collective views of “holding unswervingly to hope” is significant as well. If we take this to be directed only toward us individually, there are bound to be times when we just can’t carry it out. Despite our best efforts to hold on tight, our fingers are going to slip sometimes. But when we take this as a collective command, we can rely on the strength of others when our strength is failing. And when they’re having trouble holding on tight, we can hold on with them and for them.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 is a great description of this: “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.” It’s my (John) prayer that NO ONE in our church would fall and find that they have no one to pick them up!*

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**Divide into groups of 2-4 people for this next question:**

- What is one area where need of spiritual encouragement these days? What do you think would be the most effective way for someone to encourage you?

*Leader's Note: This is a good opportunity for us to do what Larry encouraged at the Grow Group Kickoff last week and "raise the hood" a little bit! I know that breaking up into smaller groups has challenges, but your group members will be much more likely to share openly with a couple of other people (same gender if possible) than they would in front of the whole group. Asking them to think about the most effective way to encourage them will also spark good thinking about how they can most effectively encourage others.*

**Come back together for this last question, and make sure to save 5-10 minutes for this part of the conversation:**

- If we as a Grow Group were fully living out this "Zoomed-Out" way of encouraging each other, what would it look like? How could we take one step in that direction?

*Leader's Note: We're planning on asking this question every week during this "One Another" series. We certainly hope that the Lord uses these conversations to have an impact on our individual lives, but one of the main things we're praying for is that God would bring transformation to our Grow Groups! We long to see our groups grow in the way we love, encourage, serve, pray for, and forgive each other! And so, each week, we want each group to spend some time talking about what that would look like and specific steps they could experiment with in order to see it happen.*

*We truly believe that God can use this season to help us move forward in passionately following Jesus TOGETHER. It may take a little prompting, and it may feel a little awkward at first, but it will be worth it! Thank you for letting the Spirit use you to bless your group!!!*

## **PRACTICE (5 minutes)**

Each week in the One Another series, we will ask each attendee to participate in a "Practice Activity" where we will experiment with actually doing what we talked about in the weekly discussion. Here's how this week's practice will work:

- 1) To prepare, bring a few pens and enough small pieces of paper for each person to have one.
- 2) Have each person write their name and phone # or email address on the paper, then fold it and pass it in.
- 3) Mix up the papers and pass them back out, ensuring no one gets their own name.
- 4) After each person has the name and contact information for someone else in the group, give them these instructions:

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*In today's discussion, we talked about encouraging each other. In this week's activity, we're going to put this into practice. We'll use Hebrews 10:24 (Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds) as a guide. Here's how it will work:*

*Over the next few days, find a time to spend a few minutes praying for the person on your paper and "considering" or thinking about a specific way you could encourage them in their walk with Jesus, keeping in mind everything we talked about today. This could be a text, a phone call, a lunch, or whatever the Spirit leads you to!*

*Then, sometime during the second part of the week, do it! Send the text or the email, make the call, or whatever else God put on your heart. We'll talk about the experience next week.*

As the leader, it will help if you can send a text to the group in the middle of the week reminding them about the practice activity. If you're like me, it's easy to forget to do this! I suggest putting a reminder on your calendar a few days from now to help you remember.

## PRAYER (5-10 minutes)

It would be a bummer if we spent the whole session talking about how trying harder on our own isn't the path to spiritual transformation and then left without asking God to help us! The time we spend praying about this topic may be the most impactful thing we can do, so make sure to leave sufficient time for this prayer.

Our suggestion for this week is to focus on three specific prayer topics. A great way to do this would be for you (or someone else you ask to lead this section) to introduce each section briefly, then open it up for a time of "popcorn-style" prayer, then move on to the next section, closing your time together with a spoken prayer at the end.

Here are the prayer topics:

*Praise God for his goodness and thank him that he has given us a group of people where we can encourage each other.*

*Pray that God would help our group to be intentional about encouraging each other in the way we discussed today.*

*Pray that God would help us "raise the hood" and be willing to be more authentic and transparent with each other.*

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