

Spur One Another to Love and Good Deeds

Hebrews 10:19-25

Thesis: The Lord wants us to learn skills to provoke, stir, and spur one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).

Text: *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24 NIV).*

Here is what I believe the Lord is saying in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic.

1. **The Lord wants us to learn skills to provoke, stir, and spur one another to love and good deeds** (Hebrews 10:24). (By the way, that is a part of what we have been talking about in our last 3 messages.)
 - a. *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24 NIV).*
 - b. We get to join Jesus on his mission to demonstrate love tangibly and to do good (Acts 10:38). *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him (Acts 10:38 NIV).*
 - c. We get to express creativity in how to provoke one another to love and good deeds in the midst of physical distancing and physical separation. ***Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out (Hebrews 10:24 MSG).***
 - d. "Every crisis is an open door. Every need is an open door," according to Rick Warren in an interview with Ed Stetzer about how the church can respond in the mist of COVID-19 (Twitter post 3'28'20).
 - e. **Action: What are some ways that you can express the love of God to your family, friends, neighbors, and community in the midst of staying home and working safe?**
 - f. **Here is a list of ideas to get you started. What would you add?**
 - i. Continue to give generously to support your [local church](#), because your church is needed in your community.
 - ii. Check in with friends and neighbors and ask how you can help.
 - iii. Donate funds to your church's [benevolence](#) ministry. Be sure to give over and above your tithes.
 - iv. Offer to pick up or provide food for those who are quarantined.
 - v. Assist with food distribution in your area.

- vi. Check in with [CrossWalk Center](#) and with Kathy Vosburg, and see how you can help with Houston's hopeful reentry hub.
 - vii. Connect with different shelters in Greater Houston and see how you can help, like purchasing food, running errands, etc.
 - viii. Contact [Care Net Pregnancy Center in NW Houston](#) and see what they need, like diapers and such.
 - ix. Donate food or funds to [Cypress Assistance Ministries](#), [Cy-Fair Helping Hands](#), [Cy-Hope](#), [Houston Food Bank](#), or other food pantries or assistance ministries in your area.
 - x. Go to [Houston Responds](#) to see a list of ways to help and volunteer in the midst of COVID-19.
 - xi. Some people have gone to their neighbors or to people over 60 and left a card with them. On that card, it says:
 1. Hello! If you need help, I can help.
 2. My name is:
 3. I live at:
 4. My phone number is:
 5. If you need something, maybe I can help with the following:
 - a. Picking up groceries.
 - b. Getting urgent supplies.
 - c. Talking on the phone.
 - d. Praying with you on the phone.
 - e. Helping with something else: _____
 - f. Just call or text me and I will see what I can do (for free).
 - g. Coronavirus is contagious so I will take every precaution to ensure I am only spreading kindness. I will see to avoid physical contact, wash my hands, and leave any items on your doorstep.
 - xii. Here is an [article](#) with even more ideas.
 - g. **Prayer:** **May the Lord give you creativity and wisdom as you partner with Jesus in your spheres of influence.**
2. **Everything that can be shaken is being shaken, and the Lord is at work redemptively in the midst of the shaking** (Hebrews 12:25-29).
- a. *See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created*

things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:25-29 NIV).

- b. Everything that can be shaken is being shaken, so that we can detach from and let go of what is temporary and lay hold of that which is eternal, that which is unshakeable (Hebrews 12:25-29).
- c. This shaking is an act of love and grace. We cannot receive an unshakable kingdom if we are holding on to that which will not remain.
- d. Also, I need to say some things for the sake of clarity.
 - i. Hebrews 12:25-29 says that the Lord will shake the heavens and the earth to remove what can be shaken. One day, God will shake everything.
 - ii. I am not saying that Coronavirus is from the Lord. As a matter of fact, I am treating it as an enemy; I do not believe Coronavirus is from God. And, I do believe that God can take what is going on and use it redemptively in our lives.
 - iii. I believe that Coronavirus is a part of what Jesus describes in Matthew 24 as we neared the end of the age:
 1. *"You will hear of wars nearby and revolutions on every side, with more rumors of wars to come. Don't panic or give in to your fears, for the breaking apart of the world's systems is destined to happen. But it won't yet be the end; it will still be unfolding. 7 Nations will go to war against each other and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be terrible earthquakes—seismic events of epic proportion, horrible epidemics and famines in place after place. 8 This is how the first contractions and birth pains of the new age will begin!" (Matthew 24:6-8 PT).*
 2. This pandemic is a part of the beginning of the beginning of the shakings this world will experience.
 - iv. For a follower of Jesus, I believe that the Lord can take anything and everything that comes our way and use it to work something good in our lives, for those who are called according to his promise, which is to be conformed to Christlikeness. And that is true for this shaking in our world which is resulting from this pandemic.
 1. In Romans 8:28-29, God promises that he is at work for good in our lives.
 2. *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according*

to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:28-29 NIV).

- v. I believe that a part of the redemptive work of the Lord in this season is to use this crisis to show us what we believe in, what we are holding onto, and where we put our faith.
 - 1. Our God is a consuming fire; he is the God of passionate love (Hebrews 12:29).
 - 2. In his love, he wants to examine what we really believe, connecting our beliefs to who God is and to what God says and does (Hebrews 12:22-24).
 - 3. In his love, he wants to show us what we have been holding onto.
 - a. If it won't last, then, we need to let go of it and take of that for which we were taken hold of.
 - b. *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12 NIV).*
- e. **Prayer:** I pray that that we will come through this season of trial and trouble:
 - i. Growing in our faith and trust in the Lord, rather than turning away God (Matthew 24:10).
 - ii. Using the gift of discernment and having the mind of Christ, rather than being deceived (Matthew 24:11).
 - iii. Growing in our capacity to love God and others, rather than having our hearts grow cold and lose the ability to love (Matthew 24:12).
 - iv. Standing firm in partnership and relationship with the Lord, rather than quitting on God, others, or ourselves (Matthew 24:13).
 - v. Proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel of the kingdom of God effectively to people and nations, rather than going to the sidelines or giving up because it is hard or demands creativity and change (Matthew 24:14).

How do we show up as our best selves in the midst of shaking?

Here are four practical actions and prayers.

1. **Grow in awareness.**

- a. We need to be aware of what the Lord has done, is doing, and is going to do.
- b. *Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken... (Hebrews 12:28).*
- c. God wants us to lay hold of and to experience his unshakable kingdom.
- d. We need to learn to pay attention to the Lord and to be aware of what the Lord is doing in us, through us, and around us.
- e. **Action:** One way to grow in awareness is to be curious. Here is a way to be curious. Say this to yourself before you have any conversation, interaction, or ministry: "I wonder what the Lord is up to and what he wants to do in this person or situation."
- f. **Prayer:** May we grow in the grace of awareness.

2. **Express thanks.**

- a. We need to be thankful, even in the midst of the shaking.
- b. *Let us be thankful... (Hebrews 12:28).*
- c. We can find things for which we are thankful, even in the most difficult and challenging circumstances.
 - i. We can be thankful for what God has done and what he is going to do.
 - ii. We can be thankful that God is still at work.
 - iii. We can be thankful that God is moving everything forward toward its fulfillment in Christ.
 - iv. We can be thankful that the Lord is with us and that he is speaking even in the midst of the storms and shakings of life.
- d. **Action:** Make a list of what you are thankful for and pray that list back to the Lord.
- e. **Prayer:** May we grow in the spiritual practice of learning to give thanks in all things.

3. **Worship.**

- a. We are invited to worship God with godly respect (fear, reverence) and wonder.
- b. *Worship God acceptably with reverence and awe (Hebrews 10:28).*
- c. The culmination of everything the writer has been saying throughout the book of Hebrews is not to shrink back in fear; rather, we are invited to worship God.
- d. We come to God with respect and wonder, with reverence and awe.
- e. Our God is a consuming fire. He is a God of fiery, jealous, zealous love.
- f. As Eugene Peterson says: *Do you see what we've got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God. For God is not an indifferent bystander. 29 He's actively cleaning house, torching all*

that needs to burn, and he won't quit until it's all cleansed. God himself is Fire! (Hebrews 12:28-29 MSG).

- g. **Action:** Take time each day to focus on God, to turn your heart to the Lord, and to surrender to the Spirit of Christ, especially in this season of dealing with the Coronavirus.
 - h. **Prayer:** May we grow in our capacity to worship our living God in individual and corporate ways and expressions.
4. **Walk in the light with others.**
- a. **Everyone I know is experiencing at least one of the following three things: anxiety (feeling threatened), anger, or grief (loss).**
 - i. We all have chronic anxiety, that background noise that produces angst in our soul. It is perceived threat.
 - ii. Today, we are facing acute anxiety in the form of a pandemic. It is a real threat. So, our whole world is full of anxiety and people everywhere are anxious.
 - iii. **What happens when we are anxious?**
 - 1. When we are anxious, **we don't think clearly.**
 - 2. When we are anxious, we **become reactive** rather than **choosing to be thoughtful and reflective.**
 - 3. **When we are anxious, we react out of our anxiety:**
 - a. Conflicting: arguing more, being irritable, being short tempered, being mad at God or the world.
 - b. Over or under functioning.
 - c. Triangling: going to others rather than going to someone and working out our differences or working on our issues.
 - d. Distancing from others or even cutting off others.
 - 4. When we are anxious, **we make meaning and project on people,** rather than having compassion, seeking to understand, and giving people the benefit of the doubt. We assume the worst rather than believing the best.
 - 5. When we are anxious, **we judge and blame;** someone has to be blamed for what I am going through or what I am experiencing. Rather, we need to ask ourselves: What is our role in this system that is causing or helping to keep these responses in place?
 - b. **One of the most transforming practices we have learned is to walk in the light with God and others** (1 John 1:7; James 5:16).
 - i. Remember: What you don't say owns you.
 - ii. Understand: What we don't talk about, we act out.

- c. Especially in this season of physical distancing and staying home, we need to come up with intentional strategies for having transformation conversations with others.
- d. I recognize that it is hard for some of us to connect with others, especially when we feel isolated or quarantined.
 - i. Some of us think that we don't want to bother other people with our needs or concerns, because they are busy or they have enough to deal with already.
 - ii. Some of us say that we don't have anyone to call or anyone who would listen.
 - iii. Some of us are afraid of being corrected, fixed, or judged by others if they knew who we really were.
- e. **Action:**
 - i. I want to encourage you to make a list of 10 people whom you can trust and who love you.
 - 1. Don't list people who are "fix it" or directive kind of people. You won't feel safe with them.
 - 2. Think about people whom you can trust and who you know will pray for you and not try to fix you or tell you what to do.
 - 3. Basically, in making a list of 10 people, I am seeking to get you in action. And, I want to take away the excuses that no one cares or that no one wants to talk with you.
 - 4. If you can't think of 10 people, then contact your small group leader or one of your pastors and let them work with you on creating your list. We want to empower you to walk in the light with others and to experience transformation.
 - ii. Now, contact the people on your list and ask their permission for you to call them. Let them know that you will call them when you need to walk in the light, when you need prayer, when you need to say what is so for you, or when you need to say what you think, feel, and believe.
 - iii. Then, seek to have 3 to 5 conversations a week with people where you walk in the light. I recommend putting those conversations on your calendar to help you follow through like an appointment.
 - iv. When you contact a person on your list, pick one or two of the following things to share:
 - 1. Talk about what you are learning.
 - 2. Share what challenge(s) you are facing.
 - 3. Express what you are celebrating.

4. Talk about what you are feeling or thinking.
5. Share what the Lord is putting his finger on in your life, even if you don't know what it means or what to do about it.
- f. We have learned the importance of walking in the light and having transformation conversations with others on a regular basis. Now, we need to continue connecting with others intentionally all the more in this time of physical distancing.
- g. **Prayer:** May each of us make time to walk intentionally in the light with others even in the midst of physical distancing or isolation.

Summary

1. The Lord wants us to learn skills to provoke, stir, and spur one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).
2. Everything that can be shaken is being shaken, and the Lord is at work redemptively in the midst of the shaking (Hebrews 12:25-29).
3. There are some skills or spiritual practices that can help us to show up as our best selves in the midst of shaking (like growing in awareness, expressing thanks, worshipping, and walking in the light).
4. I believe that the Lord is speaking to you and that you will get in action with what the Lord is saying.

20 Questions to Help with COVID-19 Anxiety

MARCH 25, 2020 By [Tim McGee](#)

As we get deeper into [all of this](#), I can feel my own anxiety increasing and if what I'm seeing in my news feed is any indication, so is yours.

[My anxiety is making me](#) want to fix things, fix you. I want to help people see why I'm right and they are wrong and that if they'd just adopt my perspective we'd all be better off for it. But letting my anxiety lead the ways I show up by conflicting and [over-functioning](#) isn't me showing up as who I want to be.

So this post is an attempt to lean into my desire to positive change without falling into my desire to forcibly fix you.

Whether you are anxious about the virus, a loved one, your job, the economy, the government not doing enough, the government doing too much, being alone, too much time with family, all of the above, or something else altogether, I recommend taking a minute to breathe and reflect on these [20 questions](#). I've found them to be a helpful tool in getting back to a thinking place, where I can be more thoughtful and less reactive.

[20 Questions to Help with COVID-19 Anxiety](#) by Dr. Kathleen Smith.

Dr. Kathleen Smith is a therapist and author of the book *Everything Isn't Terrible: Conquer Your Insecurities, Interrupt Your Anxiety, and Finally Calm Down*.