



# Stir Up One Another to Good Works

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August 25, 2013

AM & PM Assemblies



## Introduction:

One of the most shocking things I've learned over the past several years is what God longed to accomplish by saving us. If you had asked me several years ago, I would have told you God saved us so we could go to heaven. That, however, is not true. Do not misunderstand. The saved will be with God in heaven for eternity. But that is not the purpose for which God saved us. Would you like to know that purpose? According to **Titus 2:14**, Jesus Christ "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (ESV). Jesus didn't sacrifice Himself to get us to heaven. He gave Himself on our behalf so we could be bought back from our lawlessness and be transformed into a people who are zealous for good works. Doesn't this change our focus? Doesn't that change the answer to the questions we often ask? We often ask, "What must I do today to go to heaven?" But this changes the question to, "What must I do today to be zealous for good works?" This year, our focus has been on **Ephesians 2:10** and being God's workmanship. Have you noticed the purpose for which God is working on us? "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (ESV). As part of this focus, we are devoting the month of September to a Fall Focus entitled "Zealous for Good Deeds." It is going to be a month of good deeds. Every sermon is going to focus on this idea of the good works God created beforehand for us to walk in. Additionally, each person is going to receive a deck of cards to read through daily with devotional messages about good deeds. Our hope is this intense focus will stir up each of us to love and good deeds.

Are you aware that this is, in fact, one of the reasons God has put us together in congregations? God didn't establish congregations to set up some kind of arbitrary rules to see if we could measure up. This isn't about making sure we go to church enough or seeing if we can get the pattern right. **Hebrews 10:24** explains that we are together in congregations so we might "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (ESV). Let's spend some time today getting ready for our month of good deeds by examining this passage.

## Discussion:

### I. Our goal is love and good deeds.

- A. According to **I Timothy 1:5**, the goal of our instruction is love. We are to love God (**James 2:5**). We are to love each other (**I John 4:7**). We are even to love our enemies (**Matthew 5:44**). We are to love. As we gain this love, we become more like our Father in heaven.
- B. However, our goal is not love in some mystical, ethereal way. It is not merely an emotion or feeling of love. Our love must be acted out through the good deeds we perform. Already we have seen how important good deeds are. According to **Ephesians 2:10**, God saved us to walk in good deeds. In **Titus 2:7**, Paul exhorted Titus to be an example of good works. In **2:14**, he said Jesus died to redeem us from lawless deeds and make us zealous for good ones. In **3:8**, he claimed believers should be careful to engage in good deeds. In **3:14**, he said "our people must also learn to engage in good deeds." The reason He gave us the Scriptures, according to **II Timothy 3:16-17** is to equip us for every good work. We are only useful to God when we are equipped for every good work according to **II Timothy 2:21**.
- C. We can't emphasize this enough. The goal of our Christianity is not to get us to heaven. The goal is for us to do good. When we preach sermons, the goal is to increase love and good works in us. When we interact with each other, the goal is to increase love and good works. Keep that in mind. Why are you in relationship with other people here? Is it just because you like some of the same things? Is it just to be entertained? Is it just to recreate? It's okay to get together and have fun (can anyone say Ultimate Frisbee?), but we need to have a goal for all of this. That goal is helping each other increase in love and good deeds.

### II. We must stir up one another to love and good deeds.

- A. A natural problem with good deeds is burn out. The path of good deeds is narrow and difficult. Many times we love those who will not return our love. Often we cannot see the results of our good deeds for a long time. No wonder Paul exhorted us to "not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (**Galatians 6:9**, ESV).

- B. **Hebrews 10:24** is the key to overcoming this weariness. Gratefully, God has not set us down here as individuals who must go it alone and simply always be self-starters and self-motivators. Rather, He has put us together. We are to stir up one another. That is, we rouse and incite each other to action. “Stir up” is the word used by the English Standard Version translators and the New King James Version. Isn’t that interesting? What do you normally think of when someone talks about “stirring up” something. Usually we mean that they are causing some trouble. But we are supposed to stir up love and good deeds. Some of the other translations are also interesting.
1. The King James Version says to “provoke” one another to love and good works. Most of the time, when we speak of provoking someone we mean we have made them angry. Here we are to provoke one another to love and good deeds.
  2. The New International Version says to “spur on” one another. That may not be often used in a negative context. However, have you thought about what it means to be spurred on? We spur on a horse by jabbing it in the flank with a sharp metal object.
  3. The New American Standard says to “stimulate” one another. That may be the least provocative term. But even still there is the picture of an electrical prod used to stimulate a muscle.
- C. The Greek term translated here is also interesting. The only other time the root word is used in scripture is **Acts 15:39** in which Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement. The word used in **Hebrews 10:24** is translated “sharp disagreement” in **Acts 15:39**.
- D. In **Hebrews 10:24**, we see a picture of Christians actively making sure other Christians are growing in love and good deeds. We see a picture of Christians getting actively involved in each other’s lives, challenging one another, stirring things up in each other’s lives, jabbing one another in the flank with sharp objects to push them down the path of righteousness. It is almost as if the Hebrew writer says we ought to be getting in each other’s faces and saying, “Look here, I am not going to let you be a loser Christian. Buck up, get off your backside and start loving and growing in good deeds.”
- E. Here’s what this says. Continuing on in good works means I’m probably going to get hurt sometimes. For me to continue on doing right, somebody is going to have to poke me and prod me. Someone is going to have to jab me. Someone is going to have to kick me in the flank so that I’ll quit munching on the grass on the side of the road and instead get busy serving the Lord in my life. Let me say what that means about this month that is coming up. It is not going to be easy. I’m going to be preaching to me as much as to anyone else. And I already know that it is going to be like getting kicked in the backside. Sometimes we just want to be coddled. However, the Hebrew writer didn’t tell us to coddle each other into love and good works. He told us to stir up, spur on, provoke, and stimulate. That is what is going to happen this next month. And I need it as much as anyone.

### III. We must consider how to stir up one another to love and good deeds.

- A. Before we just get in others’ faces, we need to *consider* how to stir up one another. Fulfilling this passage will not take place on the spur of the moment. We need to give consideration to one another. That is, we must pay careful attention to the spiritual needs of those around us. Based on that careful consideration, we determine what is most needed to help our brethren.
- B. The Hebrew writer provides one avenue through which we can stir up one another. In **Hebrews 10:25**, he says we need to maintain the habit of assembling together. However, that is only one way. How else can we stimulate one another to love and good deeds?
- C. While we could brainstorm many specifics, we will note the threefold approach given in **Titus 2:14-15** to spur others on to be zealous for good works in Jesus Christ. He said Titus should “speak and exhort and reprove.”
  1. “Declare”—Sometimes, to stir up one another, we need to simply open our Bibles and teach one another what is found within them. How often do you bring up and talk about spiritual things when you are with your brothers and sisters? Do you share what you are reading and studying?
  2. “Rebuke”—Sometimes, to stir up one another, we need to reprove and rebuke one another, exposing error and challenging each other to repent. When we take this approach we are to do so gently, looking to ourselves to be sure we do not also sin (**Galatians 6:1**).
  3. “Exhort”—Sometimes, to stir up one another we need to encourage one another. This is perhaps the most overlooked approach to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. We need to catch one another doing things right.

4. It takes consideration to apply these different approaches to stirring up. We see passages that demonstrate the need to consider how we stir up others. For instance **I Thessalonians 5:14** says to “admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak” but note it says to “be patient with them all” (ESV). **Jude 22-23** says, “And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh” (ESV).
- D. Finally, as Paul encouraged in **Titus 2:7**, we can stir up one another to love and good deeds by being an example of them. Why not carry someone along as you are doing a good deed. Are you visiting the sick, conducting a study, making a meal...include someone in the good deed and stir them up to go on with their own good deeds as well.

#### IV. We must stir up one another to love and good deeds.

- A. Please notice that the Hebrew writer did not say, “Let the elders consider how to stir up to love and good deeds.” He did not say, “Let the deacons consider how to provoke...” He did not say, “Let the Bible class teachers consider how to stimulate you...” He did not say, “Let the preacher consider how to spur on...” He said, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” Let us not approach this month as the program to stir us up. Rather, let us consider it as a springboard to motivate us to continue on stirring one another up.
- B. We are equally responsible for stirring up one another. This is your job. This is my job. Not because we are elders, deacons, preachers, or Bible class teachers, but because we are Christians. According to **Ephesians 4:12**, God did not give some to be elders or evangelists in order to do the work of ministry for saints. He gave elders and evangelists to equip saints for the work of ministry to build up the body.
- C. We must approach this responsibility practically. For the most part we cannot have this kind of relationship with every member of this congregation. How could one Christian possibly know what more than a hundred other Christians need to grow? To accomplish this, we all must purposefully and intentionally get involved in stimulating relationships. You will never be able to provoke everyone else. Further, you will rarely be stirred up by everyone else. However, you should be spurring someone and someone should be spurring you on. The questions we must ask are: Who is stimulating you to love and good deeds? Whom are you stimulating?
- D. One final thought on the one another nature of this responsibility. We might all find it easy to try to stimulate others. However, we must learn to accept stimulation, provocation, spurring on, and stirring up from others first. Before looking around to see who you can spur on to love and good deeds, look for people to stir you up. This is the hard part, the rub that brings us up short. We rarely want others pushing or challenging us. But this is integral to the verse. We must allow it. Why not ask someone this week to hold you accountable through our month of good deeds? Why not start this whole thing off by asking someone else to get out their prod and start working on you when you need it? Remember David’s perspective in **Psalms 141:5**. Find someone to be the righteous person who will smite you. Don’t take the easy way out, develop the relationship that allows you to receive that prodding and provoking.

#### **Conclusion:**

Can I stir you up right now? Please do not go home and let this lesson slip into mental oblivion. Be committed to our Fall Focus. Plan to be here for every lesson. Be ready to be challenged, provoked, spurred on, stimulated, stirred up. Commit to reading the cards daily. Commit to working through them together with family and/or friends. Find someone who will hold you to it and spur you on when you get burned out before the month is over. But most of all, start considering how to stir up and how to be stirred up. Don’t be satisfied and complacent. Let’s be ready to grow even when it hurts.