



Draw Near – A Spiritual Preparation for NC 2021 Weekend

By Linn Crowell

This time of year can be so overwhelming for me. Summer and school collide, and I feel completely out of control. Maybe you can relate to this. During the summer, it feels like I'm floating down a peaceful river with the thrill of a few rapids to keep things exciting. But in the fall, I feel like I'm on a raging river, being swept along by the current, bumping into rocks and swirling over steep drops. It's like any minute I could be swamped or plummet over a waterfall.

Summer is my favorite time of year, so I'm always grieving this time of year as it ends. In the fall, the days are shorter, yet they're packed with more activities for school and work, even as we try to fit in days at the pool or one more vacation. Every year my anxiety level rises as summer turns to fall. Now that I have aging parents, there always seems to be a looming health crisis, too, with trips to the ER and doctors.

I feel shaken, unable to keep up with my schedule, while telling myself to take a deep breath. It's all good. God's got this. But deep down, I still I feel like it's all up to me. And I'm not enough. Then I castigate myself for not trusting God and for feeling anxious.

And this fall, there's the added stress of a world that seems to be falling apart around us. Covid's resurgence, more extreme weather, horrible news from far-off places and, perhaps worst of all, spiritual disunity. Many of us have felt it in our churches and even in Women's Walk with Christ.

Now, in the midst of this superstorm of personal and public stress, we're getting ready for a Women's Walk weekend. For many of us, it's the first one in a couple of years. As I've tried to prepare for the Hickory weekend, I've found myself buffeted with feelings of inadequacy and questions. Maybe you can relate: How can I serve when I am so weary? How can I offer hope in Christ when my confidence has been shaken? How can healing and transformation happen when this world seems like an irredeemable place?

We're going to take a couple of moments in silence now and consider how we are feeling about the upcoming weekend. Remember the words you used at check-in. What other feelings do you have about staffing? What judgments or questions do you have that go along with your feelings? Why do you feel this way? Go ahead, take a moment to write these things down.



Maybe it's all smooth sailing for you right now and you feel grounded and ready to staff. Or maybe, like me, your life is like a raging river, and you're feeling inadequate and overwhelmed. Perhaps you're in the doldrums, a place where you're adrift, feeling directionless and unsure. Whatever we're feeling, Jesus offers us exactly what we need to navigate our way and equip us for the mission ahead. His Word remains true no matter the circumstances of our lives or the feelings they generate. Recently, He's been bringing me to Hebrews 10:19-25 and reminding me of what is true. As I read this, ask the Lord to show you what truth He has for you. What answers do you hear to the questions you have?

Hebrews 10

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. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 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.

What resonated with You? Write down the words or phrases that stood out to You. Why do you think God is pointing this truth out to You? How can it help prepare you to staff? Take another moment to note these things.

The whole point of the book of Hebrews is to remind us that Jesus is more than enough. He is more than enough for whatever we are facing. He is so much better than whatever we're longing for. He is more than summer pleasures and the best vacation. He is more than a stress-free job or harmonious church. He is more than good health and beautiful weather. Jesus is more than enough because none of those things last. Everything in this world is aging, crumbling, disintegrating, falling under the weight of sin's curse.

Jesus is more than enough because only Jesus can save us from sin and its curse. He is the One whose blood sacrifice opens a new and living way for us to live in God's presence. Because of Jesus, we can have the confidence to approach God directly. We can draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance because we are no longer guilty. We have been washed with the pure water of Christ's righteousness. This is what's most true about us.



Jesus is more than enough because only He can redeem, only He can heal, only He can transform. This is such good news when we feel like we're not enough! As the writer of Hebrews tells us in 6:19 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." When I feel like I am not enough, Jesus is more than enough and He is holding on to me.

As we prepare to staff, let us hold on to this firm anchor for our souls. Jesus is faithful. Jesus is our only hope. Christ has given us His Spirit to hold us fast as He works through us to rescue and redeem. So let us draw near to Jesus. There is nothing holding us back but our own fear and distraction.

In these days leading up to the weekend, give your anxiety to Him. When You are tempted to escape or numb yourself, draw near to God instead. Confess your sin to Him with full assurance that You are sprinkled clean. Call on His Spirit to equip you and prepare you for healing and transformation. Pray through Your mission statement and speak it daily, proclaiming the truth about who You are in Christ. Whatever you're feeling, draw near to God as the weekend approaches because Jesus is more than enough.

We can also draw near to God because of how God feels about us. Remember, you are welcomed into God's presence. Pour out your feelings to Him and listen to what He says about you. His feelings about You are what's true and He is thrilled that You said yes to staffing this weekend!

When God looks at at you, He is confident in you. Yes, He is confident in you as you prepare to staff because Jesus has brought You by His blood into the Most Holy Place. Your sins are forgiven, and you have unlimited access to the throne room of the Most High God! Ask the Lord to give you the confidence He feels about His relationship with you.

When God looks at you, He sees a sincere heart. Yes, you have a sincere heart before the Lord because it has been washed clean. No more guilty conscience! You are washed with the pure water of Christ's righteousness. Ask the Lord to banish your shame and reveal the sincere heart He sees in you, washed clean and righteous in Christ.

When God looks at you, He sees a fully assured woman. You have the full assurance that faith brings, not because you never doubt, but because Your faith is in Jesus. He who promised is faithful. Ask the Lord for full assurance that you are a woman walking with Christ, co-creating a world of healing and transformation.



Precious sister, draw near to God. He holds out His nail-scarred hands and beckons you to trust Him and ask for what you need. Call on His Spirit to fill you and to work through you. Healing and transformation await. Come to Hickory confident, with a sincere heart, as a fully assured woman because that is who you are in Jesus.

But there's one more thing, God wants to show us from this passage to get ready to staff. Not only can we draw near to God, but we can draw near to one other. Heb. 10: 24, 25: "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."

So this weekend we can draw near to each other. By spurring one another to show love, to do good, to offer encouragement. They are all interrelated, aren't they? Good deeds and encouragement are how we put love into action.

One of the beautiful gifts of Women's Walk is the opportunity to develop a mission statement. Our mission puts love into action by using the gifts we've been given by God. These weekends are like love in action on steroids!! We are here to use our gifts to bring the healing and transformation we've all experienced to even more women.

So let's consider how we can spur one another on more to show love and do good between now and Sunday afternoon. What spurs me on to love is when I feel loved. When someone takes an interest in me, acts kindly, brings me a meal, doesn't just use me as a sounding board for their own story, but wants to know my story. That makes me feel loved, not just by them, but by God.

God made us to show each other the love He feels for us. Love is patient, love is kind, love doesn't boast, love isn't self-seeking. Think about this as you interact with your sisters and missionaries this weekend. We are here to show each other how much God loves us.

We can act in love, seeking what is best for others, when we are anchored by the fact that we are greatly loved by God. When I live out of the reality of God's love for me, I'm freed to see the needs in others. I'm open to how God wants to use me to meet them. Because we are greatly loved by the God of the universe, we can enter into the pain of others and be God's instrument of healing. Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross in our place, we can confidently sacrifice our comfort and convenience to love someone else. The mystery of love is that it always involves suffering, but leads to great joy.

We are all sacrificing a lot to be here, aren't we? We suffer along with the missionaries. But we do it for the joy set before us, just like our beautiful Savior. Hebrews 12:2. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before



Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

To help anchor us for the work ahead, we're going to take a few minutes to ground ourselves in God's love. When we are secure in how much we're loved, we can act in love. Get comfortable and close your eyes. Remember a time when you felt God's great love for you. Think about a time when someone showed you love. It could be someone in your family, a sister in Christ, even a complete stranger. Or there might not have been another person present. You might have been alone with God. Go back to that place where you felt greatly loved.

Where are you?

What are you doing? What's happening?

Engage your senses and remember what you experienced. What did you taste or smell? Was there anything that you touched or touched you? see or hear?

Is there sacrifice involved?

What else do you notice around you?

How did you experience God? What feelings do you have in this moment?

Revel in these feelings of God's love for you.

Take some time now to write down how You experienced God's love in this memory. Especially note how it made you feel.

My son wrote a haiku last week about Jesus coming to earth that ended with, “God embraced me as He grieved His Son.” The fact that Jesus came to earth to die in our place is proof of His great love. That is how you know God feels so much love for you! And because you are so greatly loved, you can put love into action this weekend.

This weekend is where what God feels about us becomes part of the story of redemption and changes the data of another woman's life. Now there's another way to look at data, judgments and feelings! God gave me this crazy thought: when God, Jesus and the Spirit have their circle, what happens here this weekend becomes the data, judgments and feelings they celebrate! “Look at the love they show,” the Father says with pride. “Did you see how they sacrificed and cared for that woman in her anger?” Jesus exults. The Spirit chimes in, “Yes, and did you notice how much they encouraged one another?”

So draw near to God because Jesus is more than enough and God feels so much confidence in You. Draw near to each other, overflowing with the love we have received from God. I can't wait to see what God's going to celebrate about this weekend!