

Come Back to the Race

1. The One Who Drifted

Gary didn't leave church through rebellion — he _____ away slowly. A simple text — “We miss you, there's a _____ with your name on it” — brought him back. Hebrews was written to believers who were doing exactly what Gary did: _____ from the habits that kept them anchored.

2. Church Isn't Optional — It's Survival

Hebrews shows faith is a _____, not a sprint. Church is the _____ **station** and the friend running beside you. Gathering isn't a preference — it's _____ **gear** for tired believers tempted to quit.

3. Why We Drift

Drifting looks like an _____ **boat** slipping from its mooring (Hebrews 2:1). It's usually caused by _____, exhaustion, and small excuses that feel harmless. Hebrews warns that drifting is often a _____ **slide**, not a sudden fall (Hebrews 3:12–13; 6:11–12).

4. What We Gain Together

Hebrews 10:24–25 calls us to be _____ in encouraging one another. Community gives us:

- _____ when our world shrinks
- _____ when our legs wobble
- _____ when our feelings lie A podcast can inspire you — a church family can _____ you.

5. Bringing the Next Generation Along

Psalms 78 reminds us faith is _____. Gary's daughter said, “I thought maybe we just didn't _____ anymore.” Showing up teaches the next generation that the race _____.

Scripture References

Hebrews 10:19-25(NIV)

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near to God... Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 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 12:1(NIV)

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Hebrews 2:1(NIV)

“We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”

Hebrews 3:12-13(NIV)

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitful power.”

Hebrews 6:11-12(NIV)

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

Hebrews 10:24-25(MSG)

“Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.”

Hebrews 13:1-6(NIV)

“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”

Psalms 78:4, 6(NIV)

“We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord... so the next generation would know them... and they in turn would tell their children.”

Discussion Questions

What are some of the 'reasonable-sounding excuses' you've used or heard for missing church? Why do they feel so harmless in the moment?

Hebrews 2:1 describes drifting as a boat slipping from its mooring rather than a dramatic departure. Does this picture of gradual drift resonate with your own experience of faith or church attendance?

What does it look like practically to 'spur one another on toward love and good deeds' (Hebrews 10:24) in our current season of life?

Gary was brought back by a simple, no-pressure text. Is there someone in your life you could send a similar message to this week?

How has being physically present with other believers helped you see truth or find strength that you couldn't find on your own?

What patterns are you passing on to the next generation — whether children, grandchildren, or younger believers — through your own consistency (or inconsistency) in gathering with the church?

Key Takeaways

- **Church isn't a Sunday obligation — it's survival gear for a long, difficult race we were never meant to run alone.**
- **Drifting from church rarely happens through crisis or rebellion; it happens quietly, one comfortable excuse at a time.**
- **Sin's deceptive power makes small compromises seem harmless until much time has passed — awareness is our first defense.**
- **Community gives us what we cannot manufacture alone: perspective, strength, and reminders of truth.**
- **The invitation back to church requires no big gesture — just showing up again is enough.**
- **A simple, low-pressure reach-out ('I miss you, there's a seat with your name on it') can be the very thing that brings someone home.**

Additional Notes

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The Greek word behind 'drift away' in Hebrews 2:1 pictures a boat slipping from its mooring due to an untended rope and a slow current — not a dramatic departure.

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Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians facing real persecution who were tempted to return to their former religious system.

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The sermon references both the NIV and The Message (MSG) translations to highlight the practical, relational tone of Hebrews' appeal.

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Illustrations used throughout (gym memberships, church potlucks, kids' Sunday mornings) are meant to make ancient truths feel immediately relatable.

Answer Key

1. drifted seat drifting
2. marathon water survival
3. untied habit fatigue slow
4. inventive perspective strength truth carry
5. generational do church matters