



Devoted 242

They **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts **2:42**

WEEK 1 - DEVOTED

They **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42.

Opening Question

What is something you are devoted to in your life outside of your spouse, family, work, or church? How does this devotion effect your life?

Read Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Scripture Question

This passage is the first description of what the church looks like for the believers in Jerusalem. What catches your attention? Why?

Discussion Questions

What do you find similar and different between the church today as we practice it and the way the church is described in this passage?

Why do you think the differences occur?

In what ways should there be differences between the first church in Jerusalem and our churches today?

Digging Deeper

Devoted - Gk. προσκαρτερέω (proskartereō)

This verb is only used 10x in the NT. It literally means “to endure towards something,” but by the 1st century AD it is commonly used to describe being committed to something or to be an adherent of another person. Notice especially how the word is used throughout the rest of Acts and the NT: Read Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; 8:13 (“followed” NIV); 10:7 (“attendants” NIV); Romans 12:12; 13:6; Colossians 4:2.

Scripture Question:

What does devotion (proskartereo) look like for the early church? How is it similar or different to our concepts of devotion today?

Discussion Questions

What are some of the ways you are devoted to God’s church?
What are some of the ways you would like to be more devoted to his church? What hinders your devotion to church?

In what ways throughout Scripture do you see God devoted or committed to his church?

The passage says, “the Lord added daily to their number.” In what ways do you see churches try to manufacture church growth?
How does this differ from what you see in Acts 2:42-47?
How do these four practices cultivate a church culture that allows for healthy growth from the Lord?

PRAYER

Thank God for his devotion to his church.

Ask God to expose all the things you are committed to in your life that are hindering you from an abundant, healthy life with him and his church.

Ask God to teach you how to be devoted to his church in a healthy way.

Ask God to add daily to our number those who are being saved.

WEEK 2 - APOSTLES TEACHING

They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42.

Opening Question

Who was one of your favorite teachers in life? Why did you like them?

Read Acts 2:42-43

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

Scripture Question

What is the relationship between the apostle's teaching and the wonders and signs?

What did the apostles' ministry produce among the church, and why is this so important for the early church's growth?

Read Acts 1:1-11

What does this passage teach us about what the apostles would have been teaching in the early church?

What catches your attention in this passage and why?

Discussion Questions

The early church did not have the New Testament, as it hadn't been written yet. Instead, they listened directly to the first-hand teaching of the apostles. This teaching would eventually be written down and recorded as the NT. Although we do not have the apostles with us today we do have the record of their teachings in the gospels, letters, sermons, and prophecies that make up the New Testament.

What role does and should the apostles' teaching play in our churches today?

Digging Deeper

Apostle - Gk. ἀπόστολος (apostolos)

The word apostle is a transliteration of the Greek word apostolos. It is a common word used over 80x in the NT. It simply means “a messenger” or “one who is sent.” It is used in this sense in the NT, but also is used in a more specific way to group the twelve chosen by Jesus to be the messengers of the church. Rather than a formal position, this appears to be a chosen role as others in the NT are also referred to as apostles, such as Paul, Barnabas, and Junia. The authority of an apostle did not come from the nature of the position, but rather from the one who sent the messenger or apostle.

Scripture Question:

How does a better understanding of the word apostle help with understanding the role of an apostle in the NT? Why is the specific teaching of Jesus’ apostles so important for the life of the church?

Paul refers to himself as an Apostle of Christ (1 Cor 9:1-2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; and 2 Tim 1:1). How is his apostleship different than the other apostles? Why is Paul's apostleship important for our understanding of scripture?

Discussion Questions

What are some ways that scripture (the apostles teaching) can be abused or neglected in the church?

Why is routine, weekly engagement with the church body in reading and interpreting scripture together so important for our discipleship to Jesus?

PRAYER

Thank God for the reliability and truth of the apostle’s teaching.

Ask God to give our church the heart to trust Scripture as a core element of our life together.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 as a prayer.

WEEK 3 – FELLOWSHIP

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42.

Opening Question

Throughout your life, what social groups or clubs have you belonged to?

Read Acts 2:42, 44-46

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

Scripture Question

What does fellowship look like in the early church according to these passages?

What was so unusual or different about fellowship in the early church compared to the rest of the world at that time?

Read 1 John 1:1-7

What does this passage teach us about fellowship?

What is the relationship between fellowship with God and fellowship amongst the church according to this passage?

Discussion Questions

I find that often in church, fellowship is regarded as a nonspiritual activity and not as important as the other three core practices. Have you found that to be true in your church experience as well?

Why is fellowship a core theological practice for building a healthy culture in a church?

What role does and should fellowship play in our churches today?

Digging Deeper

Fellowship - Gk. κοινωνία (koinōnia)

Many Christians know the Greek word koinonia as meaning fellowship. It is commonly used to describe life together. The word describes the act of participating or sharing. Though it is used to describe fellowship as we commonly think about it, it is also often used to describe generosity or participating in giving. That's why in Acts 2:44-46, generosity is one of the core elements of the church's life together. In fact, Paul uses the word koinonia to describe the generosity and giving of the early church in 2 Cor. 8:4 and 9:13.

Scripture Question:

Why is generosity and the sharing of our monetary abundance such an important part of fellowship for the early church? How is generosity innately connected to fellowship?

Do you find the concepts of generosity and fellowship closely tied together in contemporary church life? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions

What are some ways that fellowship and generosity can be abused or neglected in the church?

Why is routine, weekly engagement with the church body in fellowship so important for our discipleship to Jesus?

Why is authentic Christian community so important for evangelism in our world today?

PRAYER

Thank God for his fellowship with us. Thank him for his generosity to us.

Ask God to deepen our fellowship and generosity as a church.

Ask God to use our fellowship to bring in the lonely and teach them the good news of eternal life with God.

WEEK 4 - BREAKING BREAD

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and to prayer. Acts 2:42.

Opening Question

Describe a great meal with friends or family that you remember well. What made it so special?

Read Acts 2:42, 46b

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... 46b They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

Scripture Question

Though breaking bread can refer to the simple act of eating together, it is also the language Luke (the author of Acts) uses to describe eating the Lord's Supper throughout both Luke and Acts. What usage do you think Luke intends in this passage? Can it be both?

Read Luke 22:14-33

Why do you think Jesus chose the Lord's supper as one of the core practices of his church?

Discussion Questions

Why is practicing the Lord's Supper such a vital practice for the culture of a church? What happens when we participate together in the Lord's Supper?

How does this practice differ from so many other religious activities?

I think many churches treat the practice of breaking bread with either too much piety or with too little attention. Do you find this to be true? What role then should communion play in the life of our church?

Digging Deeper

Glad and Sincere Hearts - Gk. ἀγαλλιάσει και ἀφελότητι καρδίας (agalliasei kai apheloteti kardias)

I love this little phrase that Luke uses to describe their breaking bread together. The word “agalliasei” literally means to jump for joy. It is the word used by Elizabeth to describe what the baby in her womb does when Mary comes to visit (Luke 1:44). The second phrase, “apheloteti kardias,” means simplicity of heart. This is the only place in the NT where “apheloteti” is used. It literally means “without a stone” and brings to mind a smooth walking path where no one would stumble. So the church ate together with abundant joy and without any cause for stumbling.

Scripture Question:

How would you describe the way that the early church took communion in comparison to the way we take of it today?

Discussion Questions

Why do you think we struggle to be joyful when we practice breaking bread together? What are some practical ways we can bring more joy into taking of the Lord’s Supper?

Why is routine, weekly engagement with the church body in breaking bread so important for our discipleship to Jesus?

How does the routine practice of breaking bread together help share the good news to unbelievers?

PRAYER

Thank God for his table and our invitation to sit at it.

Take communion together in your home with joyful and sincere hearts. Take some time celebrating table life with Jesus.

Ask God to use our breaking of bread to bring in the lonely and teach them the good news of eternal life with God.

WEEK 5 - PRAYER

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**. Acts 2:42.

Opening Question

Who is the person you are going to call for help in an emergency? Why are you calling them?

Read Acts 2:42, 47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Scripture Question

It is no surprise that one of the four core practices of the early church was prayer. How do you see prayer and praise go together in this passage? In what ways is God already seen as answering the church's prayers in these verses?

Read Acts 4:23-31

What catches your attention about the prayer of the early church in this passage?

Discussion Questions

What are your expectations for prayer when the church gathers together on a Sunday?

I think many churches treat the practice of prayer as a way to open service or transition during service between songs. Do you find this to be true? What role then should prayer play in the life of our church?

What is your prayer life like right now?

Digging Deeper

Prayer

Prayer is both communal and individual. Throughout Scripture, we see individuals come to God intimately in prayer, but more often, we see the whole community of God's people coming together to pray. In my church experience, I have met many wonderful Christ followers who are personally devoted to prayer, but I have been a part of few churches where the community really prays together. Yet, notice what happens when the church all prays together in Acts 4:31, "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

Scripture Question:

Think through Scripture, where do you remember the community of God, whether in the OT or NT, praying together? What is the impact of those prayers?

Discussion Questions

How do we practically engage in more prayer as a church community? How would you plan a whole church service around prayer? What would that look like?

How does the routine practice of praying together help share the good news with unbelievers? What relationship is there between God's church praying and him adding daily to their numbers?

PRAYER

One of my favorite ways to pray is either outside in or inside out. This is an approach where you start with the inner parts of yourself and move slowly outward towards family, then neighbors, work, government, etc. Outside in is the opposite of that. Take ten to fifteen minutes to practice this approach to prayer.

These four practices were core to the early church.

APOSTLES TEACHING

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. Acts 2:43

FELLOWSHIP

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. Acts 2:44-46a

BREAKING BREAD

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. Acts 2:46b

PRAYER

Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47