

Acts 2:42a

The Word

Devoted: Week 1

Prayer Time For Ukraine

Prayer Points:

1. Ask God to bring peace and this war to an end.
2. Ask God to give wisdom to global leaders as they respond and engage in this critical time.
3. Pray for the people of Ukraine who are suffering in the midst of the attack. Pray for those who have lost loved ones, for those who have loved ones on the front lines, for those who are suffering.
4. Pray for the Ukrainian church, that God would give them boldness and courage, that He would strengthen their hearts and their faith. Ask God to ignite a fresh witness for the gospel to hearts in need of hope.

Introduction [Start Sermon Timer]

Alright, if you have your bibles Turn to Acts 2

As you're turning there real quick: **Building update: Move in Date March 27th**

Here's where I want us to start this morning... I want you to think about the word **devoted** for a second... I want you to ask yourself what are you **devoted** to?

- Your Career?
- Your friendships/relationships?
- You Spouse?
- Your Kids?
- Certain Goals that you have?
- What is it that you and others who know you would say that you're devoted to?

Now here's the follow up, **whatever it is that your devoted to, what does that your devotion to that look like??**

- Chances are what your devoted to gets the highest priority in your life...
- There's a great degree of commitment and persistence...
- You're consistent in things your devoted to...
- Whatever your devoted to controls your calendar and the rhythms of your life...
- It takes your time...
- You're willing to sacrifice...

Now, let me ask you this... How many of us when it comes to thinking through what we're devoted to would have **Jesus** in there- and it actually make sense...

What I mean by that is that you can't say that your **devoted** to it without it having the same or similar impact through the ways we just talked laid out...

Example: If I'm devoted to baseball...

- It gets high priority
- I lift weights
- I practice
- I forgo other things so that I can focus on this thing...
- I watch film on my swing, and I watch the game on TV
- I make sure I get sleep and I care about my recovery

This what it looks like to be devoted to baseball... Now if I don't do **any** of those things even if *I only do one or two* of those things, I can't say that I'm really devoted to baseball... It wouldn't make sense because of the lack of orientation of my life...

To be Devoted means: To preserve in some activity, to be continually committed, to be persistent, dedicated.

This morning we're kicking off *a new series called Devoted*- because here's what I think the reality is... I think for many of us, we **want** to be devoted to Jesus, but we don't really know what that looks like...

For others, you might **think** that you're devoted but you're not- and I think a large part of it is a lack of clarity on what devotion when it comes to Jesus looks like...

And then there's some of you that need to **reorient**- and reestablish your devotion....

We're going to spend the next couple of weeks unpacking **what devotion looks** like when it comes to our faith and how it practically plays out in our lives...

And there is no better place to look than **Acts 2**... We're going to be doing a deep dive in to **Acts 2:42-47** looking at what God's Word shows us devotion to Jesus looks like...

And I will just say this, I think what we're going to be looking at is especially important as we begin to emerge out of one long crazy season, and into another one... It's vital that together we commit to being devoted to Jesus...

We covered one big area of what it looks like to be devoted to Jesus in the previous series by looking at our call to **advance the message of Jesus to one more** but in this series, we want to probe deeper...

I think that as we go deeper what we will see is that it will continue to fuel our desire to go wider in the mission!

If you're here and you're not a Christian- you're probably here because at the very least, you're interested...

What I want you to see and understand is how the gospel is such good news that has changed us and realigned us and what we devoted to,

and that in our devotion to Jesus we experience an incredible source of life and power!

Ok, let's jump in... I'm going to read through the entire text and then we will unpack the first part this morning...

Acts 2:41-47

41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them. **42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. **44** Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Ok, so what we see very clearly is what the early church was devoted to... But here's where we have to start, we have to ask the question, **why**, why were they devoted to these things...

Because they had heard and received the gospel! *Their devotion comes as a result of a **gospel awakening**...*

So, let me start by giving you the thesis of this series:

The gospel compels our devotion

Just before what happens here the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost catches the attention of Jews from all over as they hear people worshiping God in their native language...

They're like what's going on are these people drunk?!? And then Peter stands up and preaches a killer sermon presenting the message of Jesus...

And the text tells us in **verse 37** that the people gathered asked Peter *what should we do?!?* And Peter says in **verse 38** *Repent and be baptized, each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

And 3000 people get saved... And it's these 3000 people that devoted themselves to the things the text lays out here... And these things would become **marks** of the church...

Here's the thing, they hadn't heard a sermon on these things they were devoted to, they weren't told to do these things... It was just the natural overflow of their response to the gospel and the work of the Spirit in their lives...

What we see here is a **new community** that's formed around the message of Jesus... This was and is God's intent for the church... And the way that this community distinguishes itself, is through its unique devotion...

*In the same way this should be true of us here at Image Church... This is a model for us!

But listen for **our devotion to be in line with their devotion, to be faithful to the model that God's given us- we have to behold who they behold!** JESUS!

It's the person and work of Jesus that brings together this new community and reorients them and how they live and what they are devoted to, we want the same to be true for us!

As we dive into the things that they were devoted to, **when you see a disconnect-** you need to understand that it's a **gospel issue**...

The gospel is a powerful thing that brings transformation and reorientation... It brings new, life, a new objective, new family...
*If the gospel isn't at the center of our lives, then we will not be **devoted** to the implications of the gospel that we see here...

- The starting line is that you were dead but through the finished work of Jesus you've been made alive, and this changes everything...

For some of you, you might that you've never really surrendered to Jesus... Others of you need to reorient in light of your salvation!

And let me just say this before we look at the next thing... The **shock and awe** of the gospel wears off quick for us... That's not a good thing... it is a sad reality that shows how weak we are...

But the beauty of the **devotion** that we see here is that it helps us keep our eyes oriented on who God is and what He's done for us through Jesus... **And the implications it has for our lives!**

So, these places of devotion are not burdens they are blessings!

Ok, so the first thing that **they were devoted to the apostles teaching**... God breathed His Word through the Apostles... Who by the way affirmed and thought from the OT... So, you could summarize it like this **they were Devoted to the Word of God**...

This same thing should be true of us... We should respond to the gospel by being **devoted to the Word**...

Now, let's dive in and unpack this... Here's the first thing that I want you to see as it relates to devotion to the Word.

1. Devotion to the Word is communal

What we see is something more than devotion on just an individual level... This was a devotion that happened together in the presence of one another!

Example: we see this in fitness all the time there's a communal commitment... Not just people working out at home- they're part of a workout community that is doing it together... exx. Crossfit, Social media workout groups...

The same was true for the early church... There's power in committing to something and doing it alongside other people...

Here's the reality: there's actually no scripture that calls us to an individual *daily quiet time*, but there's tons of Scripture that call us to consistent communal time in the Word...

Hebrews 3:12 Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage each other daily, while it is still called **today**, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. **14** For we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, **25** not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

2 environments that this devotion would give way to in the NT:

A. In homes

We see this very clearly in the text... They were in homes together regularly around the Word...

The way that we do that here is through Community Groups...

- Sermon based discussion- but the text drives the sermon, so the text also drives the discussion you use the sermon as an existing framework to dive deeper personally into the Word...
- 1 night's not the end-all-be-all: can do additional bible study...

This is the space where we commit to the Word in homes together like we see here...

Are you part of one?

- Better question are you devoted to one?!?

I'm not talking about touch and go- are you devoted... You're busy... I know *news flash we all are!*

You make time for the things that are important...

- If these people needed it then you better believe that we do!
- BTW Jesus had it too...

Then what we would see this clearly led to in the NT Churches was a second environment:

B. Corporate gathering

Paul writes letters to churches specifically addressing their corporate gathering... Like specific details- he instructs them to sing, take communion etc...

Paul writes to Timothy telling him to teach, teaching is also a gift and a role- this happens as the church gathers corporately! So that people could learn the Word and to rightly understand the implications of it.

The corporate gathering of the church is vital- it is the huddle where the Word is taught and sung and where the ordinances are practiced...

- The church is a living organism that is supposed live and move- our coordination under the leadership of the Word comes largely in part through the corporate gathering...

Communal devotion to the Word means that you make the weekend gathering a priority... And this is a huge gap in our culture today... Most people come on average 1 time a month...

That's 12 times a year... Couple that with similar CG participation and you're talking about engaging around the Word with other believers as something that happens 24-30 times a year! And that's out of 365 days!

That's not devotion... Again, remember, **To be Devoted means: To preserve in some activity, to be continually committed, to be persistent, dedicated.**

I Need you to understand this isn't about simply "attending" this is about your spiritual health- do you understand how much you need communal devotion to the Word?!?!

When you elect to not make CG or the corporate gathering a priority what you're saying functionally is that you got this... That is a scary place to be, and it breaks down the core of Christianity the CHURCH!

For many of you, you wonder why you lack any kind of spiritual fervor in your life... You're missing out on the power of communal devotion to the Word!

- You need to be along side others in your devotion you need to know you're not alone...
- You need to hear others agree on the Word...
- You need to hear questions and see the emotions the bible brings out as it stirs hearts...
- You need to sing the bible with other people...
- You need to experience the motivation that comes with communal devotion...

We have to be communally devoted to the Word... And if you're not you need to know that you have a gospel gap here...

You need to see that you're letting other things dictate your life more than Christ...

Here's my challenge: be consistent for 1 month in both of these spaces and watch what god does in and through it!

Now, let's look at the other side of this... Let's talk about individual devotion to the Word as well... Just because we see a huge lean toward communal devotion doesn't mean than we throw our individual devotion...

You **should** have individual time in the Word...

In fact, you will be able to engage better when it comes to communal devotion if your devoted on a personal level!

But I want to give you the right framework for it- I want to hold up for you a biblical framework...

Here's the third thing I want you to see...

2. Devotion to the Word is a personal dependance

We tend to think about this idea of time in the Word through a legalistic lens...

- If I don't do it I'm living in sin...
- I know how we can tend to think about this...
- **Legalistic... I know I need to do it, but don't want to check the box- so I don't do it...**

Our framework:

Psalm 119:11, 105

- Hidden God's word in my heart... Your word is a lamp to my feet...

Jesus gets up early to pray and spend time with the Father...

- Mark 1:35
- Luke 4:42

Jesus also withdrew during the day spending time with the Father:

- Matthew 14:13
- Luke 5:16

Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4** *"It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

Paul in **Phil 2:16** hold firm to the word of life...

So, here's how I want you to think about your personal time in the Word... Stop thinking about your time in the Word as a box that you check, and instead view it as a source of life...

Think about God's Word like you think about food... you need it to live...

- That means that there are times when you throw down... Study hard... And there are other times when you snack... And there are other times where you eat a quick bite...

There's freedom in our feasting...

- Some people like a reading plan other don't- sometimes it helps sometimes it doesn't...
 - I would argue that having some sort of plan is good- it shows priority and help you be sustainable in your commitment...
- When you do your time in the Word is up to you... Mornings are good because it sets your mind in the right direction... This is what Jesus did...
 - But this is not a mandate...
- Some people feast better at night or at lunch...
- It can be that you stop for moments throughout the day where you read a psalm...

The goal is orientation and retention... Centering yourself on God and the implications of the gospel in your life...

- Here's a helpful way to evaluate this:
 - Stop at some point during the day and reflect back on what you read... If you haven't read yet- read...

Think quality over quantity... Quantity without quality is not helpful... Think lifegiving over long time...

- If I spend 5 min and meditate all day, you spend an hour and can't remember it's not as fruitful...

Listen life gets crazy and your called to navigate that crazy life- your called to work and to love and lead your families, parent your kids, e present for friends and the church... Some seasons are harder and more chaotic than others...

- This means that your time in the Word may look different and that's ok!

This is the beauty of the freedom you have...

Your time in the Word should not be a burden that's dangled over your head, but a source of life that you know that you need... And the more you taste the more you will see you can't live without it...

The goal is to be continually committed to and persistent in the Word, to be dedicated to it on a consistent basis... **So that you can fill yourself with its life source that you desperately need...** Knowing there is freedom in how you feast, but not forgetting that you have to eat!

Now we don't want to ever be satisfied in where we are we always want to press in... We don't want to be complacent... We want to look for more ways to fill ourselves... But again, as you taste and see it will draw you in and you will feel hungry without it...

Let me show you a little bit what I am talking about...

- **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is living and effective...*
- **2 Timothy 3:16** *All Scripture is God breathed and useful...*

The Word shows you gospel gaps in your life...

The Word is alive and active in you when you read it...

The Word helps you get to know God, who He is and what He promises for you and who He has made you to be...

For many of you, you struggle with the same thing over and over again... And you're missing **Psalms 119:11** says- *I have hidden your Words in my heart that I might not sin against you...*

For some of you, you have questions and want to grow or need a word of life, and you have it, but you just don't go to it!

For others of you, you want to hear God speak and your missing what God has already spoken...

Like when you going through a hard time you don't hear the **hope** in **Psalms 121**...

- **John 16:33** I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.
- **Hebrews 13:5** Never will I leave you or forsake you
- **Psalm 23**: The Lord is my Shepherd, I have what I need... Even when I go through the darkest valley I feel no danger, for you are with me!

When you have nothing left:

- **Psalm 3:3** But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.
- **Matthew 11:28-30**: "Come till give you rest. **29** Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- **2 Corinthians 12:9**: My grace is surfactant for you, my power is made perfect in weakness

When you feel guilt and shame:

- **Psalms 86:5**: For you, Lord, are kind and ready to forgive, abounding in faithful love to all who call on you.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ is a new creation the old is gone the new has come...
- **Romans 8:1** Therefore there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus...

Or when you're in suffering

- **Psalms 61**:
1 God, hear my cry;

pay attention to my prayer.

2 I call to you from the ends of the earth when my heart is without strength.

Lead me to a rock that is high above me,

3 for you have been a refuge for me, a strong tower in the face of the enemy.

4 I will dwell in your tent forever and take refuge under the shelter of your wings.

- **Psalm 34**: God is near to the brokenhearted

Family there's power in the Word of God and for some of you need to stop waiting for the Lord to speak and you need to listen to what He's already said!

So many issues that I've dealt with... Lack of time in the Word... I see so many people "are chair quarterback the Christian life" disconnected from the Word but always wanting to critique and question things...

You spend intentional time in the Word with an open heart it God will work through it..

So, to be devoted to the Word means that your centered around it with other through communal devotion and that you feast on it as a personal dependence...

Now as we devote ourselves in these ways, I want to get practical so that we can be aligned in our devotion...

When you open the Bible how do we read it rightly as we seek to be devoted to it individually and corporately?

One of the tope things googled over the past few years is: **How to read the Bible?**

O: Observation

- Context: who is the author writing to, what's going on in this section
 - Culturally, who were they writing to, what was the purpose?
 - There are different Genres:
 - Examples: Narrative, Epistle
- Why this matters...
- Repeated words or phrases...

I: Interpretation

- In light of your observations what is the point of this text, what does it mean? What is God communicating through the author in this text?

A: Application

- What truth am I walking away with?
 - Could be really simple...

Key point: *Jesus is always the hero and God always gets the glory*

Conclusion [VAMP]

I want each of you to really evaluate your devotion to the Word...

Christian- gospel issue... *Flesh out*

If you're here and your not a Christian... You have access to the very Words of God that has so much for you...

- Would you see and believe...

Here's How I want to close:

This devotion leads to ***one more*** person being added to their number... We want the same to be true for us...

Our devotion to the Word shows us that we need to be about one more...Who is your one more that you need to be praying for? We have a ***One More board...***

Out-Take:

Here's what I am getting at, ***devotion starts as a desire but then it becomes a discipline... But as you practice it, it can and will also give way to desire...***

****Here's the reason why this is so important,*** some of you are too dependent on your ***feelings*** and others of you are too ***legalistic*** in your practice...

- **Feelings**- I don't feel like being devoted to the things we see the church devoted to...
 - Well quite possibly if you took a step to practice devotion then you would see the benefit and it would change your desire...
- **Legalistic**- If I do these things then God is happy with me... Works based approach that is oppressive...

At the end of the day, you have to keep the main thing the main thing- the goal is Jesus... Our devotion to the things of Jesus help us stay oriented to around Jesus and help us know what it looks like to follow Jesus...