

Well good morning Image family and friends who are joining us! So glad that you are here.

Happy 4th of July and I hope that you have enjoyed your hopefully extended weekend and were able to spend some time with friends and family.

**My name is Bryson and I am the college pastor** here at Image Church and I am so excited to be able to open God’s word with you this morning and my prayer this morning is that the Holy Spirit would move inside each one of us

That for some we would walk away loving God more and **in awe of who He is** and all that He has done and for others that you would believe maybe for the first time.

**Knowing God** is a life long journey, a life long pursuit and not one of us will ever reach this place of having arrived. That reality won’t be realized on this side of heaven.

But until that day when Jesus returns, here and now we are to **Know God and make Him known**. I truly believe that what it means to follow Jesus is simple all the while realizing the difficulty of walking it out day to day.

This morning we are going to look at what I am sure is a familiar passage but what I want for us as a church is to understand that for believers **there is something deep and meaningful that we have been invited into**

It goes far beyond Church on Sunday. To follow Jesus is to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus.

It is to live lives of devotion, to live a radically different life where the pursuit of Knowing God and making Him known is what we have given our lives to

**And everything else is secondary.**

And I believe that as we look at the early church we will see that, we will want that and long for it.

**So turn with me to Acts 2 this morning, Acts 2:42-47**

One of the questions we always have to ask ourselves as we read God’s word or at least we should is, **is what I am reading prescriptive or descriptive.**

**Prescriptive means** is this a command or telling me how I should live or what I should do and **descriptive** is this simply history and what is being said simply describing what took place.<sup>1</sup>

I believe the answer here is both. What we are about to read is describing for us how the early church lived but also there are several things that we can take away from this passage on how we here in 2020 should live.

**Acts 2:42-47**

**42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**

They (the church) were devoted to...

- The apostles teaching = The Word of God
- fellowship = which is community
- And Prayer

We have to understand that what is happening here is a response. You see Jesus had just been crucified and they had witnessed him alive after the resurrection

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<sup>1</sup> [Matt Chandler 2017](#)

He gives them some instructions and that the great helper the Holy Spirit is coming. This is on the back end of Peter's sermon at PENTECOST in which the Holy Spirit comes **and 3,000 people come to faith.**

This is their response to all that has happened and all that Jesus has done.

**They devoted themselves to God's Word, to each other and to prayer.**

**43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.**

It tells us that awe came upon every one. This is really important and I don't want us to miss this. They were in awe of all that they had witnessed and then compelled by this they respond.

**Awe leads to a response!!!!**

Paul Tripp says "*The first thing that you need to understand is that God hardwired all human beings for awe. There is a quest inside of us to be amazed, to wonder, to have something that is so great and so awesome and so compelling that we want to live for it. That we are willing to make sacrifices for it. It will be the thing that will get us up in the morning.*"<sup>2</sup>

There are several things that God uses to bring about awe. One being His Word. We have His word living and active that as we read it, as we spend time in it, it stirs our affections for who God is and all that He has done!

We have the Holy Spirit at work in us, Jesus even said in John 16:7 that it is for our advantage that Jesus' goes away because he is sending a helper the Holy Spirit who is at work in every believer.

**We can ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate God's truth to see the beauty and majesty of God and how all of Scripture is pointing to Jesus!**

Then in 44-45 I believe this to be a bit more descriptive in telling us what they did but what is important for us to understand and walk away with is that we are called to live lives marked by generosity.

They were selling everything to meet the needs of others. This is radical generosity where they understood that all that they had was given to them by God and they were simply stewards!

Like we say often around Image Church, generosity is not something God wants from us, but something God wants for us.

**46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

Day by day they attended they temple and met in their homes over meals and they respond with joy and generous hearts

God gives them favor **WITH ALL PEOPLE** and the Lord added to their number **day by day** those who are being saved.

I just love this passage. I think that it gives us a clear picture and blueprint for us today how we should live, how we should respond to the good news of the gospel.

There is so much to learn and take away from this short passage, but I want to highlight a couple of things for us this morning.

**1. Gospel Community requires devotion**

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Tripp "Awe: Why it matters for everything we think, say and do" \*Found on [Desiring God](#)

When we look at the early church, the way in which they lived we see that Jesus has radically changed their lives and in response they live radically different lives.

We see how they respond,

**They are devoted to God's Word... are we?**

**They are devoted to one another... are we?**

**They are devoted to Prayer... are we?**

**They were in AWE of what Jesus had done and a movement of the Holy Spirit... are we?**

One Pastor says, "What we are most devoted to is what we give our lives to and will be what defines us" how we spend our time, how we spend our money<sup>3</sup>

**What are we giving our lives to?** The early church went all in on a man named Jesus. Many would give everything for the sake of the gospel.

They went all in, they devoted themselves to God's Word, to each other and to prayer and the Holy Spirit moved in and through them and many believed.

Being devoted to something means that you have oriented your life to revolve around it.

The question we must constantly ask ourselves, **is pursuit of Jesus my life's mission or is my "faith" simply just a part of my life.**

"Awe overwhelms the mind to get to the heart."<sup>4</sup> Are we in awe of Jesus and what he has done for us, and has that led to unwavering devotion?

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<sup>3</sup> [Matt Chandler "Acts 2:42-47"](#)

<sup>4</sup> Marshall Segal ["Captured. Committed. Contagious"](#)

## **2. Gospel Identity compels us to live lives marked by sacrifice.**

We see in Acts 2 the believers living radically different lives, lives I would say are characterized by sacrifice.

- They had all things in common. If I got it and you need it, it's yours!
- They sold excess to give to those who had need.
- Daily they went to the temple together and shared meals with one another.
- They were devoted

They completely reoriented their lives, willing to do without, their priorities changed... have we? **Or have we compartmentalized Jesus to fit neatly as a part of our lives?**

*They lived radical lives, but that is what happens when you are devoted to something is you give everything for it!*

I am a huge **fan of crossfit** - now I don't do crossfit because that's insane and I'm not a crazy person. But I admire athletes who compete in crossfit and I watch.

What they put their bodies through, the mental focus and discipline they have is admirable. In order to make it to the games and to finish in the top 10...

You have to have devoted your entire life to crossfit - working out multiple times a day, the food you eat, how much sleep, they are obsessed.

They sacrifice for what they are devoted to... and at the end of the day it's just extreme fitness...

For believers, we are pursuing the Savior of the World, Jesus who came and lived the perfect life and who died the death meant for us and because of him we have been made children of God. We have an identity in Christ like no one else.

## Has our devotion led to radically different lives marked by sacrifice?

We have to constantly evaluate, because as Pastor Mike shared a few weeks ago, distractions are constantly pulling us away and keeping our eyes from Jesus.

But what should a life like this actually look like?

- A. **Devotion to God's Word** - we understand that this is God revealed to us and we are in it. We spend time in, we meditate on it, we are soaking it in.

We come to church to Hear the preaching of God's word expectant of the Holy Spirit to move

**We prioritize community groups** because we get another chance to be in God's word with other believers, again expecting God to show up and move!

**It will be a sacrifice** - waking up early before work or before the kids wake up - I am constantly playing a game of roll the dice to try and get up before my daughter, she does what she wants...

Maybe it's before bed and you turn the TV off and spend time before the Lord each night! We all make sacrifices for the things we want.

- B. **Devoted to one another** - this means not limiting to (Sunday Gathering, Community Group) but beyond it. Don't get me wrong, The Sunday Gathering and Community Group are vital and should be prioritized, **Both are of utmost importance**

**But even beyond**, That we are in each others life so much that we genuinely know one another, constantly sitting around the dinner table, kids birthdays, ball games, holidays, vacations etc.

where we are fully known and fully loved - creating such a community where John 13:35 is true of us - that they will know we are His disciples by our love for another.

One author writes, ***"If our Christian community is committed, but not compelling to anyone, we should be asking serious questions about what we're committed to."***<sup>5</sup>

Are we committed to one another...?

Are we willing that even on long, hard weeks to make sure we are committed to each other and prioritize gathering with our community groups?

It takes planning and for thought when you have kids but our kids need to see modeled for them what it looks like for believers to prioritize being apart of the body of Christ

- C. **Prayer** - that prayer is something we gather together to prioritize and not tacked on, on the back end.

We have to understand that apart from Prayer, apart from a move of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. I believe that the word "labor" should describe our praying together - that we labor in prayer together.

Pleading with God to move - that we want to see a move of God in our neighborhoods, praying for courage and boldness to share the gospel like we see the early church do time and time again and God answers their prayers

Following Jesus and pursuing these things will not always be easy, but devotion leads us to sacrifice because we know we need it and because we know Jesus is better!

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<sup>5</sup> Marshall Segal ["Captured. Committed. Contagious"](#)

## Conclusion

Church, I don't believe these things to simply be good ideas, I believe that **it is the call of what it means to be the church.**

First and foremost is our life's pursuit of **Knowing God, living out of our identities in Christ.**

To be the church means an unwavering devotion to His Word, to each other and to prayer.

We have access to the God of the Universe, the one who spoke everything into existence, **who sent his son Jesus to save us from our sin,**

who went to the cross for us and took upon himself the wrath of God so that we might be saved. We have access to Him through his Word and Prayer... **are we devoted to these things?**

God has given us other believers to do this life with, we have been invited into something deep and meaningful or that at least could be... **are we devoted to one another?**

We can find ourselves available for potlucks but schedules are full when it comes to studying God's word and praying together and regularly sharing our dinner tables.

We will give our lives to something... will it be true of us that 100 years from now, will people look back on the early years of Image Church and say...

They were devoted to God's Word, to each other and prayer AND God moved in them and through them.

## Time of Prayer

This morning I want us to do something a little different... I want to give space for us to pray.

I truly believe that **apart from prayer we can do nothing...** all our efforts will be in vain

I don't think we just wake up one morning with a devotion to God's Word, community and Prayer. **But we can pray for it!**

As believers I know we understand our need for God's word. So for the next minute I want us wherever you are to Pray.

and I understand you may have little ones running around and praying right now with them can be a huge task, but please press in and press through.

**Also, I encourage you to write these down and to come back to them this week in your time with God as well.**

But for the next minute let us pray and ask God to give each of us a desire to know His Word. That we would truly believe that we desperately need it to live.

### Prayer Point 1: Lord Give us a desire to be in your Word

Next, I want us to take just a minute to pray and ask God that we would be devoted to one another... that we would go beyond the formal "meetings" and invest our lives into one another

We need each other... let us pray and ask God to give us a love for one another and that we would be devoted to community.

### Prayer Point 2: Lord would we be devoted to one another and prioritize community

Lastly, Image family we have to understand the power of prayer. We have to believe as the early church did that the Holy Spirit is moving and at work all around us.

Would we pray boldly before the throne of God, begging and pleading for God to move in our midst. That we would see a move of God unlike anything we have ever seen.

So take a minute asking God to move in your own life, your community, our church and our city. And maybe if you're like me, confessing where you have unbelief when it comes to prayer.<sup>6</sup>

**Prayer Point 3: God would you move in my life, in my community, my church and my city.**

Would it be true of us, that we are unwavering in our devotion to The Word, to each other and to Prayer and would we live radically different lives marked by sacrifice.

**Let's Pray...<sup>7</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> Thoughts and some wording taken from Vance Pittman [“When God Moves... His People Get Desperate”](#)

<sup>7</sup> Exalting Jesus in Acts

Notes:

Acts 2:42-47 - Matt Chandler 2017

Both Prescriptive and descriptive

They DEVOTED themselves to these things

- what we are most devoted to is what we give our lives to and will be what defines us
  - how we spend money and time
  - going all in at work to the neglect of your family
- devoted to the Word of God

*I want to close with this quote. I used this quote in the Exodus series, but it was one of those quotes that marked me. It has followed me around. This is Aristides, who was tasked by Caesar Hadrian to get to the bottom of this fast-growing cult in the first century called the Way (us Christians). Here was basically his report back to the caesar:*

*“They love one another, and he who has gives to him who has not without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him into their own homes and rejoice over him as a very brother. And if there is among them any that are poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food. Such, O king, is their manner of life. And verily, this is a new people, and there is something divine in the midst of them.”*

Paul Tripp says “The first thing that you need to understand is that God hardwired all human beings for awe. There is a quest inside of us to be amazed, to wonder, to have something that is so great and so awesome and so compelling that we want to live for it. That we are willing to make sacrifices for it. It will be the thing that will get us up in the morning. That is all of humanity.”

### 3. Gospel Community requires devotion

“Awe overwhelms the mind to get to the heart.” Marshall Segal [“Captured. Committed. Contagious”](#)

“If our Christian community is committed, but not compelling to anyone, we should be asking serious questions about what we’re committed to.”

We have access to the God of the Universe, the one who spoke everything into existence, who sent his son Jesus to save us from our sin, who went to the cross for us and took upon himself the wrath of God so that we might be saved. We have access to Him through his Word and Prayer... are we devoted to these things?

God has given us other believers to do this life with, we have been invited into something deep and meaningful or that at least could be... are we devoted to one another?

We can find ourselves available for potlucks but schedules full when it comes to studying God’s word and praying together!