

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday June 6, 2021. "Does church still matter? Devotion to each other. Can NCC thrive as a community again...again? Why church matters and what our values are."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're roughly halfway through 2021 and fully committed to gathering in person. A growing group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's and youth areas have been fully open also and are seeing a good response. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Sunday.

Okay...we need to be upfront about this series. We just finished a four week series in May about living a life of thriving and flourishing. We took the promise from Jesus found in the gospel of John where Jesus said he came to bring abundant life, and looked at some of the specifics of what it takes to live this life. It was all personal and for our individual growth, and to experience more joy in life. Now we're taking this same principle and applying it to the big "C" church, (what Christians call church in general), and then NCC specifically. This series will sound a little insidery, and that would be true. NCC is at a crossroads, and we're trying to determine if church still matters, is relevant, in a world that has been walking away from church for many decades now. But, there will be some really great specific relationship teaching coming out of this series also.

We strongly believe church is not some static institution or organization, (even though the drift is often in that direction), but rather a community/family built around meaningful relationships. So, even though this series will be about the church in general, it will also be about the specific things within relationships that are necessary for them to be strong and meaningful. So, you will hear our heart in what we believe the church should be about, but also get some very practical, useful wisdom, from scripture, about what it takes to make relationships better.

So, some opening questions.

Does church still matter? Why or why not?

Is church important to you? Why or why not?

What do you receive from church that makes it important?

The scripture is considered a classic one for any new church start, and was the foundational understanding of what church should look like when NCC was birthed almost 30 years ago. Read **Acts 2:42-47.**

What jumped out to you about how this passage described the early church?

What spoke to you about what you long for from church?

Where are some places the church seems to be missing it?

Our first emphasis in this series is the idea of being devoted to one another.

So , what does being devoted mean, and look like to you?

I'm just going to give you raw notes about some ways to understand the idea of devoted, and let you just swim in them a bit to see how you would design your own understanding of what devoted means both in relationships and involvement in a church.

-Faithful, constant, loyal, devout. Commitment with fervor. Implies more than just loyalty. There is an intense inner passion, drive, around this loyalty that gives devoted more power.

-To live in a chosen way for something, to actively promote it. Devoted is to be personally consecrated. This means there is a sacred vow and dedication to something you value above everything else. It's making sacrifices for things you decide are important. You are willing to adjust your life towards what you are devoted to.

-Is 'full on' committed willful love. You are intentionally choosing to be devoted which means saying "no" to some things. It cannot be just a feeling, subject to your mood or how what you're devoted to is at any moment. Being devoted is a 'no matter what' commitment, a vow, that holds you in place when there may not be the feeling.

-Attending to, at your service. To act earnestly, seriously towards. Constantly diligent. A parent watching a sick child, a spouse/friend anticipating and acting on perceived needs of the other.

What jumped out to you about these understandings of being devoted?

What would you add to these understandings of being devoted?

III Challenge.

A foundational beginning for asking; **does the church still matter?** is rooted in a seen and felt practice of being devoted to each other. Both inside and outside the church. And we have the privilege and responsibility to define what being devoted in all of our relationships and commitments would look like for us.

What would being devoted to others and to a church look like for you?

If being devoted, in that level of relationship with others and involved in a church, is important how would you understand it lived out?

What practices can you incorporate into your life that will both show and grow your devoted?

And if being devoted is important, we can agree it is, what ways could you grow being devoted to others and to whatever spiritual community you commit to?

We are convinced that the church holds the answers to the problems and issues in the world. The church is still relevant and important. We may not have always done it well, but through honesty and transparency we can grow better at fulfilling this dream. We hope you will join us.