

Some people think of “niceness” at church as the sweet icing on the real cake of doctrinal seriousness. But where the gospel truly rules, the doctrines of grace build a culture of grace. The church is “orthodox” through and through. It has integrity and consistency. What it preaches about radical grace it expresses in its communal life. Because this is what God has been cooking up all along: a community that believes in, lives on, and embodies the gospel. The body of Christ is what it eats!

Read and discuss Acts 2:42-47

1. Gospel Doctrine — They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching

- Imagine yourself as a new convert the week after Pentecost. You’re caught up in a new kind of life that involves “church” and Bible study every day. Why do you devote yourself to this?
- What do you think you would be most eager to learn?
- The history of revival—of fresh outpourings of God’s Spirit—reveals that people often wept when they heard the Bible read, or sat for hours in the rain to hear the Bible taught. Have you ever experienced anything even remotely like this? Share stories.
- Read Jude 1:20-21 and 1 Timothy 4:16. What do these tell you about the purpose and importance of gospel doctrine?

2. Gospel Culture — They devoted themselves to the fellowship

- If you had to define gospel culture in 3 words what would they be?
- Read 1 Peter 1:22, Hebrews 10:24-25, and Romans 15:4-7. What is one practical way you can express each of these “one anothers,” these gospel culture values?
- Ray Ortlund sums up gospel culture as Gospel + Safety + Time. What do you like best about this quote?

“Gospel: good news for bad people through the finished work of Christ on the cross and the endless power of the Holy Spirit. Multiple exposures. Constant immersion. Wave upon wave of grace and truth, according to the Bible.

“Safety: a non-accusing environment. No embarrassing anyone. No cornering anyone. No shaming. But respect and sympathy and listening and understanding, so people can exhale and open up and unburden their souls.

“Time: no pressure. Not even self-imposed pressure. No deadlines on growth. Urgency, but not hurry, because no one changes quickly. A lot of “space” for complicated people to rethink their lives at a deep level. God is patient.”