

THIS SUNDAY'S MESSAGE:

PUTTING SPIRITUAL LIFE TOGETHER

DEVOTED



Series: Devoted

Message: Putting Spiritual Life Together

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September 13, 2020 – Church Online
Smythe Street Church

(Before Message: SSC Fall NextGen Video – approx. 1:52)

We're really excited about the fall

This afternoon at 1 PM, we have our first FamJam, a special service happening in-person and online for children to bring their families and learn about their theme for the month. If you are not registered or coming, just know that kids and their adults can watch it live today at 1 PM, or catch it through the week. Our Middle & High school programs kick off this week.

Check out our website, ssc.church for more.
The Fall may be different, but it will be great.

Congratulations, We Did It!

Whether you are with us online or in the building today, we did it! We have survived the first week of fall after Labour Day. The first week of back to school, first week of university (I have seen some of our students who began their mostly online university education).

I do have to say, even with the bumps, it felt good to be moving back towards a more 'normal' routine.

While it felt good, I know for many of us, for many of you there is also a desire not to go back to the normal we knew before the shutdowns interrupted our lives. I don't want the lessons of the past few months to go to waste.

Many of us felt like we were running on a treadmill and struggling to keep up. Stretched for time, stretched financially, stressed and pushing too hard, and often feeling like we have neglected the things or people in life that deserved more of our attention.

I don't want to go back to normal, or even a 'new normal', I know many of us would like to move into a 'better normal.'

This includes our life as a follower of Jesus, but the question is, "How can we develop as followers of Jesus? How can we put spiritual life together?"

Key Passage

Last week we began looking at a passage that talks about how some of the first believers put their spiritual life together.

As background, the Holy Spirit had fallen, Peter had preached using passages from the Hebrew Bible to help them understand what was happening, he wraps up saying...

Acts 2:36–47 (NIV84)

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

So what did they do?

Acts 2:42 (NIV84)

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

Devotion – being devoted, is focusing on something, to hold onto, to be in continually. When you are devoted to something, it holds your attention, and you hold onto it.

“They Devoted Themselves to the Apostles’ Teaching”

In the time we have today, I’m going to look at this first point. It is important to be devoted to caring for what we think and believe.

WE TRULY LIVE AT THE MERCY OF OUR IDEAS;
THIS IS NEVER MORE TRUE THAN WITH OUR IDEAS ABOUT GOD.
– DALLAS WILLARD

What we believe about God influences how we live, perhaps more than anything else.

Important to note they dedicated themselves to the Apostles’ Teaching, those who knew, lived and could accurately unpack Jesus. They interacted with the Apostles, asked questions, and together shared in something truly special as their lives became aligned with the Kingdom of God.

We covered that last week, feel free to go back if you want more details.

I thought I knew how I would wrap up today, I’d just look at the other three elements on the list and say, we need to be devoted to those things too and God will help us to grow up in him. Case closed, easy couple messages, let’s go forward in the fall, Amen!

As I sat with the passage this week, I realized that I don't think I've understood this passage properly. I had 2 big flaws in how I looked at Acts 2:42

Flaw 1: I read them with an individualistic lens

Acts 2:42 (NIV84)

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

Often I think about my 'personal devotion' and don't think of my 'communal life in Christ.' I think of how can I be more devoted to the Apostles' teaching (Scripture), how can I be more devoted to fellowship and others, how can I be more devoted to prayer.

While there is an element of truth in that I should desire, and I benefit from these things, I am deceived if I think my spiritual life, my walk with Jesus is mine alone. Pastor Verner last month (some of you may have been away) talked about this in the message series, 'Give Us This Day', it is worth a listen.

Jesus called the disciples at different times, but quickly they learned that they were following Jesus with a group of others.

While Jesus may call each of us individually, he calls us to life together.

We don't need another program to attend as much as we need other people to follow Jesus with.

Flaw 2: I read what they dedicated themselves to as different unrelated things

- Apostles' Teaching – (scripture, the teachings of and about Jesus)
- Fellowship & Breaking of Bread – the sharing of life together with the church as a whole. Shared meals, beyond being a part of the whole church
- Prayer – talking and listening to God

What I don't think I realized, is that they didn't dedicate themselves to four things that were separate from each other, these four things work together, and depend upon each other.

These elements were what I would call, Jesus' Way of Discipleship

When Jesus called his first disciples, this is what he used to raise them up and set them on the journey to become the people of his kingdom.

What did Jesus do with his disciples:

- **He taught them** (in parables, and explaining the parables he told the crowds).
- **Fellowship & Breaking of Bread:**

Mark 3:14 (NIV)

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

An essential part of growing in Christ comes from being with him and with each other. They walked together, slept on the road, ate meals, they walked with Christ and with each other.

- **Prayer**

Luke 11:1 (NIV84)

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he took them to the Mt. of Olives to pray (as they had gone there before it says).

The early believers did not dedicate themselves to a list of unrelated items, they dedicated themselves to one thing, to follow the way of discipleship, the way of becoming a follower that Jesus taught his first disciples. The Apostles raised up Jesus' followers the same way Jesus raised them up.

You cannot separate these elements from each other.

ILLUSTRATION: PASSIONATE FOR INGREDIENTS OR FOR BREAD

- **DO WE THINK OF DEVOTION TO APOSTLES' TEACHING, FELLOWSHIP, BREAKING BREAD AND PRAYER LIKE SEPARATE ITEMS, OR DO WE SEE HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE SOMETHING GREATER?**

Who are we called to follow Jesus with?

Will we devote ourselves to the Jesus way of discipleship?

This fall, if we want to put our spiritual lives together, we will need to devote ourselves to what the early church did.

- I may be able to help you find someone, but have you prayed asking God to show you who you should be with?
 - Classes (Good and Beautiful, Foundations), Circles, Studies, NextGen) – these exist to facilitate these connections, but a class, Sunday service will not be enough, you need vital connections
- Will we commit to the whole process, and not just the parts we like. Teaching (study), life together, prayer.
 - *Conviction as a parent: the home is the foundational and ideal place for discipleship, where life together can be mixed naturally with a love for Christ's teaching and prayer together.*

The aroma of the Church (like fresh bread) is amazingly appealing

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV84)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Prayer