



Series: Devoted
Message: Devoted

Pastor Chad E. Billington

September 6, 2020 – Church Online
Smythe Street Church

(Before Message: SSC Fall Announcement Video – approx. 2:40)

Good Morning, We're excited about Our Fall Here at SSC Church

I love the work that Edward, one of our summer students did with that video. Verner's laugh at the front end captures some of the excitement we have for the fall at our church.

Things will be different: in keeping with public health guidance, our events in the church building will be socially distanced, and we are going to be making more things available online. Be sure to check out our Fall Announcements, and if you have kids our NextGen announcements video (next Sunday at 1PM we will have a service where families can come with their children here in the auditorium and online). Be sure to visit online for all the latest details, or give us a call.

It is the first Sunday of September...

When the crisp fall air

In a normal September, we mourn the passing of our brief summer months, but we also look forward to the comfort of

If you are anything like me

At the same time, while I want to get back to a normal, 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.

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.

Are we growing as disciples of Jesus?

We feel a desire, not just in our routines, but in our spiritual life that we want it to be vital and real.

Yes we don't just want to be fans of Jesus, we want to be true followers?

SOMEONE SAID: GREAT IDEA, BUT WHAT IS THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION, THE TANGIBLE WAY TO DO THAT. DON'T LEAVE IT A 'PIE IN THE SKY' IDEA.

This bothered me a bit, partially because I know that it we can sometimes leave things in abstract, but made me consider what would be the best way to look at how we can honestly look at focusing on our faith.

The Birth of the Church

Background on Pentecost

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.

As a believer, I find this passage inspiring. It tells the story of the kind of life I want to live, the kind of community I want to be part of, the kind of church that all believers aspire to be. It stirs my heart.

But it need not just be a picture in our heads of an ideal, there is practical help in this passage.

THE SPIRIT MOVES US FROM AGREEMENT TO ALIGNMENT.

The good news is not just that we agree that we could use God's help and forgiveness. That we tell God, "yeah you're right" When Jesus (and Peter in this chapter) proclaimed the gospel, it begins with, 'Repent' Repent – change, turn around. Change your mind, turn your life from where you were going to follow the way of God's kingdom that has come now in Jesus Christ.

So what did they do?

Acts 2:42-47 (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.

DEVOTION FIGHTS DISTRACTIONS. DEVOTION DETERMINES DIRECTION.

This is true in all areas of life.

- Basketball playoffs – Kyle Lowry has practices so many passes, so that when there was 0.5 seconds left on the clock in game 3 of the Raptors vs. Celtics series, he could see the man that was open and get them the 3 point shot to get them back in the series.
- Relationships – friendships, marriages, parenting – those who give those relationships attention, focus, intention, grow and inspire others.

DEVOTION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICES POSITION US TO RECEIVE WHAT GOD HAS FOR US.

“They Devoted Themselves to the Apostles’ Teaching”

In the time we have today, I’m going to look at this first point.

The stories we tell ourselves form our identity.

- I’ve not been the best at journaling, but I have been trying to work at it more in recent years (with limited success). Read in my journal, just from this summer and remembered my struggles, prayers, hopes and events that I would have forgotten.
- Photo albums – old photos I inherited this year of myself, tell me the story of who I am. Album I did this year of 2011 (I’m only 9 years behind). Nate was so excited to see baby pictures, and a chance to tell the stories.

Christians make a big deal about their teaching. What is it that we 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.

- Angry and disappointed – we want to quite
- God who doesn’t care – We run free
- A God who doesn’t exist – we look for purpose in ourselves.
- A God who only speaks through the men – women give up their dreams of significance.

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.

2 John 7, 9 (NIV84)

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.... Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the

teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Will You Devote Yourself to Having the Truth of Jesus Reshape Your Thinking?

This is why we do classes, why we have circle groups, Bible studies. It is good to read scripture on your own, but how are you wrestling out what the truth of Jesus means in your life with others (you can see that in the passage too).

In the Good and Beautiful God, we focus on how Jesus reveals who God is. Foundations we try to look at the basics of what it means to walk with God. We don't do these things to keep busy, we are pursuing these things and more because we know that the Truth of God can set you free. A devotion to the truth about Jesus will change your life.

What Would It Look Like If Our Understanding of God was changed?

- More grace
- More integrity
- More faith

How are you going to?

- Courses
- Circles
- Personal study

Verner's 3 points:

- Pray for church daily
- Stay Connected to church family
- Keep a Sunday Spiritual routine

Prayer