

Acts 2:42-47

The beginning of the Church

Image Church // The Movement #2

Introduction

Well good morning Image Family, I hope you're doing well! If you're a **FTG** we're so glad that you're here this morning! We hope that you feel loved and welcomed... And that you got the **gift** we have for you!

Last week we kicked off the start a *new* series called **The Movement...** Where we're going to be looking at the start of Christianity and the birth of the church...

And last week we got a chance to see the context and **overall trajectory** of the book of **Acts**, and the implications it still has on us today...

If you remember, Jesus brought together His disciples, a group of **120** people, and He tells them- *I want you to stay here in Jerusalem until you receive Promise of the Father- which we know based on what Jesus had said before that the promise of the Father is the Holy Spirit...*

And then Jesus says- *when the Spirit comes on you, you will receive power and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth...*

And then right after that Jesus is taken up in a cloud... And all the disciples are all standing there with their mouths open like *did He just say what?!? Ends of the earth-huh?* To the point where **2 angles** had to come and say *Hey guys why are you still standing here looking up into heaven with your mouths open??*

So, the disciples head back to Jerusalem and they pray and wait for the Holy Spirit...

Not long after that the Spirit comes we see some incredible things happen where God displays His presence and power and that He has come to dwell with those who have trusted in Christ...

And then **Peter of all people**, preaches an awesome sermon in light of what had happened and **3000** people get **saved** and **baptized**...

So, immediately we see the impact of the power and work Holy Spirit.

People heard the gospel and were **captivated and compelled by it, trusting in the finished work of Jesus and declared their faith publicly by being baptized... 3000 of them!**

And that was just the start of what **Jesus** said would happen in **Acts 1:8**... When He said the Spirit would come and they would be witness for Him through the power of the Spirit **in** them!

So, right off of jump what we see is a **movement** begin to take shape... Not a **place** but a **people**, who've been brought together around the message of Jesus...

Showing us that **God's plan is to use Spirit-filled people to advance the message and ministry of the gospel to the world...**

I told you this last week, but you have to understand that God's plan then, is still God's plan now...

The same charge that was given to the disciples in **Acts 1:8**... Is the same charge has been given to those of you that are Christians... and **the same power that was given to them has been given to us** through the finished work of Jesus!

That means that ultimately Christianity *isn't* something that you affiliate with, it's a **movement that you're part of...**

Here's the thing about movements, ***movements move!***

What we're going to see today, is that it's out of this mission that the church is born...

I've heard it said before that: ***God doesn't have a mission for His church, He created the church for His mission!***

The purpose of the church is to ***be the vehicle by which the message and ministry of Jesus advances throughout the world...***

What we need to see in this is that God never intended for us to live out the ***mission*** and ***ministry*** of Jesus on our own... But that it's something that He has called us to do together... ***That's what makes it a movement!***

And so, we're going to watch the continued response of the people in the book of **Acts** and how the natural overflow of the gospel at work in them *through the power of the Holy Spirit* leads to the formation for the church...

Remember I told you that the word Church is the **English** translation from the word **Ekklesia** and it means: an assembly or gathering of people who are called to specific purpose...

And that's exactly what's about to happen... And as they gather, they're going to **devote themselves to 4 things...** And it's through their devotion to these things that God continues to advance the **message** and **ministry** of Jesus here in Jerusalem!

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to Acts 2...

- If you don't have a Bible we have one for you this morning...

What we we're gonna do this morning is hold up the **4 things** that they were devoted to in response to the gospel and the Spirit at work in them that leads to the start of the church...

And as we do that we need to recognize, that in the same way the gospel leads them to respond in these **4 ways**, that the gospel should also lead us to respond in the same way... And that these things should be what constitutes our church today.

Understanding that if these things are not present in our church, ***then we're missing what it means to be the church...***

So, this is huge for us... Alright, let's jump in and look at those for things...

Acts 2:42-47

42 They [the 3000 people that just got saved] They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Here's the thing to notice, they hadn't heard a sermon on these things, they weren't told to do these things... It was just the natural overflow of their response to the gospel and the work of the Spirit in their lives...

The same should be true for us... these things should be the natural overflow of our faith in Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in us... So, if you've really embraced the gospel then these will **4 things** were going to look at today should naturally be things that you're committed to living out...

And if you're **not** devoted to these things we're about to look at then what you need to understand is that **you have a gospel problem...**

And the answer's not writing these things down and trying to work on them... The answer's that you need to turn to the gospel... Because

you don't have a doing problem, you have a gospel problem... *We need to be clear on that...*

Alright here we go let's walk through these 4 things...

Let me start like this, I want to define the expression of the phrase "**devoting themselves**" ... It's the idea of being **persistent** or **persevering** in something.

- This doesn't mean that they did these things without flaw, and that it just came easy for them... That's not what it means to be **persistent**...
- But that they were faithful to be diligent in these things in response to the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit!

1. The Apostles teaching

They devoted themselves to **God's Word**...

- God breathed His word through the Apostles... **2 Timothy 3:16** gives us evidence of that... *All Scripture is God breathed...*

So, the question is, **are you devoted to the Word of God?** See, for many of you, there's issues in your life that you want to see change... You have issues or problems that you're facing... Or there's something that you're suffering through... Or you're looking for hope in the midst of uncertainty...

The question is, **where do you turn?** See for many of you, you want to hear God speak and your missing what God has already spoken...

Your missing **Hebrews 4:12** – *The Word of God is living and active sharper than any double edged sword... and it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart...*

And because you don't understand the power in the Word of God, you don't do what **Psalms 119:11** says– *I have hidden your Words in my heart that I might not sin against you...*

- So you struggle with the same thing over and over because you don't have God's Word Hidden in your heart...

And then we you do sin you don't have **Psalms 86:5** to hold onto...*For you, Lord, are kind and ready to forgive, abounding in faithful love to all who call on you.*

Or when you going through a hard time you don't hear the hope in **Psalms 121**...

Or when you're in suffering you don't have **Psalms 61** to hold onto...

1 *God, hear my cry;*

pay attention to my prayer.

2 *I call to you from the ends of the earth when my heart is without strength.*

Lead me to a rock that is high above me,

3 *for you have been a refuge for me, a strong tower in the face of the enemy.*

4 *I will dwell in your tent forever and take refuge under the shelter of your wings.*

There is power in the Word of God and for some of you need to stop waiting for the Lord to speak and you need to listen to what He's already said!

What about when you're confronted with questions about Christianity or doctrine and what you believe... How do you answer people??? Do you answer them with **your** words or **God's Word**???

Here's the principal I always try and live by- when someone asks me a question- and I get them a lot... What I don't want to give them is Mike McKee... Because what they don't need is a perspective of opinion, what they need is the Word of God...

The same is true when it comes to sharing your faith... for some of you, you don't know what to say... Use God's Word...

- Lean into the Romans road... **Romans 3:23, Romans, 6:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9...**
- Walk through an outline of **Ephesians 2:1-10...**

Others of you want to know God... or you want to know the will of God... the way to know God, and the way to know His will for your life is to sit with His Word!

Are you devoted to the Word of God? You devote yourself to this on an individual level, **and** a communal level... We see communal here...

- So there's your time in the Word... Our time in the Word here together... and then there's time in the Word with other smaller groups of people within the church...
 - We call those **Community Groups**- we study the Bible... And we teach you how to study the Bible...

Devotion to the Word of God is something that happened on a regular basis for them here in Acts, and it's something that should happen on a regular basis for us...

- That's why these different environments are so key- not only do we see them modeled for us in Scripture, but we want to constantly be immersed in the Word of God in various ways in order to keep our hearts oriented around who God is!
- We need others to help us in that as we walk through Scripture together...

Now, real quick, let me talk about the individual side of this... I know how we can tend to think about this... **Legalistic... I know I need to do it, but don't want to check the box- so I don't do it...**

Let me give you another perspective... One that's from Jesus...

Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4** *"It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

I want to challenge you to stop thinking about your time in the Word as a box that you check, and instead view it as a source of life...

Think about God's Word like you think about food... you need it to live... That means that there are times when you throw down... Study hard... And there are other times when you snack... And there are other times where you eat a quick bite...

- The point is that you're constantly filling yourself with the Word of God recognizing that it is a source of life- that you have to have it!

Are you devoted to the Word of God? Some of you need a place to start...

- Read the book or John...
- Read through Psalms...
- Use the reading plan on our phone App.
- Get in a community group to be around the Word and to give you countability...
- Be consistent at our gatherings- you're not checking a box- your reorienting your heart around who God is!

Let's look at the second thing that they were devoted to...

2. Fellowship

Which if you study the Word of God you will see this in abundance... *We're seeing it today as we study God's Word...*

Now, if you're anything like me you grew up at a church where you actually had a **fellowship hall...** *Accept it wasn't a hall it was a room... And there would be occasional meals in there that were pot-luck...*

- *And you tried to discern by the power of the Holy Spirit what you should eat that was made by people you have never met...*
- *Then you sit around a table with people you don't really know have some surface level talk and then go home... Welp, we fellowshiped today...*

But that's not what fellowship is... The world **Fellowship** here means *sharing in activities or privileges with others in an intimate group...IOW doing life together...*

- Presses way beyond what we're doing here...

This word is often used to describe a marriage and the life together that happens there...

- *Singles, you can't use this as a defense to get intimate when you're not married... We had some college students get excited on that so I had to debunk it...*

But the point here, is that there is an *opened up their lives and shared* it with other believers... **The good, the bad, and the ugly...**

Jeremy McClain: *God paid too big of a price for us to not fellowship with the other people he died for.*

Somehow, we've been blinded into thinking that somehow we can navigate Christianity on our own, and yet when we look at the Bible we never see that!

In **Acts 2** we see that the gospel changed their lives and it brought them together in life-on-life relationships.... The question you have to ask is **are you in life-on-life relationships?** If not then you have to ask *has the gospel really transformed your life?* Because this was a natural overflow for them here in **Acts 2**....

And these life-on-life relationships that are modeled for us here should serve a very specific purpose... To spur you on to believe the gospel, and to challenge you apply the gospel to your life.

- **Hebrew 3:12** and **Hebrews 10:23**

And it's not optional, it's not a suggestion... According to **Acts 2** you can't be a disciple of Jesus and be disconnected from the church...

- You can't love Jesus and hate his bride...

At the end of the day, we have to understand **growing in Christ is a group project!** And it happens around the message of the gospel and the people of God...

And listen, that means that *we can be open about our mess because we're all a mess...*

See, the thing about the cross, at the foot of the cross the ground is level... We are all sinners in desperate need of the work of Jesus to save us and to change us...

When we come together with that understanding it is freeing, making it ok to be open and vulnerable... Because our works don't define us, Jesus does...

Here's the other thing we see in this fellowship, that's going to be fleshed out even more clearly in **verse 44 and 45** that we'll see in a minuet... But they were sharing with one another...

Here's the crazy thing... We're really quick to teach out kids to share, we talk about it with them, we discipline them when they don't do it...

- But somehow there is a disconnect that happens when we become adults... It's like sharing isn't for us any more... Just for the kids...

But what we need in the early church is that they **held all things in common, and they even sacrificed to meet the needs of others...**

So not only did they share what they had, they sold what they had to share the proceeds with people that had needs!

One guy said it like this: *"They weren't "going into attics" looking for things to share they were going into "closets and treasure chests."* (quote by Jeremy McClain)

And in case it's not clear enough here, **1 John 3:17** says: **If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him?**

Being the church means that you share in the needs of others... That you love, serve and help others with compassion as you respond to the gospel and the love and service that God has given you through Christ.

We have to understand that being part of **the church** is so much more than just coming to a gathering on the weekend...

But for us to do that we have to get back to the heart of what fellowship is: *sharing in activities or privileges with others in an intimate group...**LOW** doing life together...*

And we have to start seeing the church for what it is... A family understanding that **the gospel transforms us on an individual level but it also transforms us on a communal level as well.**

Here's the 3rd thing that they're devoted to, and it ties in really well with what we just covered in fellowship

3. Breaking bread

They ate together... You're like **really?!?** *That's one of the things that they were devoted to??*

Yes! And the thing we have to see are the implications that come from sharing a meal together...

Dietrich Bonhoeffer a German Pastor and theologian says:

The table fellowship of Christians implies obligation. It is our daily bread that we eat, not my own. We share our bread. Thus, we are firmly bound to one another not only in the Spirit but in our whole physical being. The one bread that is given to our fellowship links us together in a firm covenant. Now none dares go hungry as long as

*another has bread, and he who breaks this fellowship of the physical life also breaks the fellowship of the Spirit.*¹

The table gives way to communal living, the kind of communal living we see here in **Acts**, bringing us together in a way that opens us up to build and strengthens our relationships with other believers...

It leads us from being *like family* to **being a family**... Families eat together... they come together around a meal and they talk about life... *Or if you have a toddler you're playing the **eat your food game** and trying to keep everything on the highchair... You feel me?!?*

But it means embracing that together... It means experiencing the craziness that can happen at the table, but also experiencing the good stuff that happens at the table too, like conversations about the day and about the week and things that were good and bad...

That's what families do, and it's what the church family should do as we share in normal day-to-day life events together...

In addition to that it allows us to practice **hospitality**... I think one of the problems, and one of the reasons we don't eat together enough is because we don't understand the principle of hospitality and how much it's pointed to in Scripture...

Rosaria Butterfield a writer, speaker, homemaker, and former tenured professor of English at Syracuse University... Has a work called ***The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World...***²

And in it she looks to the New Testament showing a model of radical hospitality. And one of the key ingredients of the model she prescribes is "creating margin."

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (New York: Harper One, 1954), 68.

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/gospel-comes-house-key/>

She says that to do this you have to **living beneath your means**, (living under what you may be capable of) not just financially, but also time-wise.

She says that if we remain constantly busy or financially strained we're unable to practice radical hospitality in a biblical way...

Do you manage your **time** and **money** in a way to be able to practice Biblical hospitality where your opening up your home and your resources for others??

For some of you, you need to create margin not by adding something new in your calendar but intersecting people with the things that you already have!

- Intersection not addition...
 - You have to eat, why not do it with someone?
 - Invite people to your kids' events and then eat together after! That's life together...

Do you understand that one of the greatest ways that you can show your family and your kids what the church is, is by getting them around the people that make up the church?

Let me give you a place to start:

- Hospitality line in your budget
 - Go to **FPU** to create margin for hospitality
- Commit to eating with people who are part of Image (preferably your CG) consistently for a month and see if you're not refreshed...

Let's look at the 4th thing they were dedicated to...

4. Prayer

What we see here is a community that prays together... This is something that Like is going to emphasize throughout the book of Acts...

Here's the interesting thing about prayer... when Jesus demonstrates how to pray... He speaks in communal language:

- **Our** Father who art in heaven... *then He says...* Give **us** this day **our** daily bread, and forgive **us our** debts, as **we** forgive our debtors... and lead **us** not into temptation...

The church here in **Acts** was living that out together... They were a church that sought God's direction, and that were totally dependent on God... And they didn't function off of feelings or intuition... They were actively submitting themselves to God's direction through prayer together...

Is the same true for you? Is the same true for our church?

What we're going to see in Acts, is that before any major move of God, there's prayer...

Lack of prayer is evidence of lack of dependence... prayer is the declaration that we can't but that God can...

We have to be a church that's devoted to prayer... I am going to give you an easy place to jump in on that here at the end in just a little bit...

So those are the 4 things that they were devoted to, together... But what's incredible is what comes from their devotion... See, **verse 42** is a summery and introduction to **verse 43-47** so let's keep reading to see what happens...

Look at verse 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.

So real quick, you need to see this, these signs and wonders are big because it validates the apostles, remember they're presenting a message that hasn't been heard before...

They're presenting the completed gospel- Life, death, resurrection of Jesus... They didn't have the book of **Acts**, they **are** the book of **Acts**!

But listen, these signs and wonders also affirms the **new community** that's forming...

God's affirming this new way of living that's happening- this new devotion, in a very tangible way, and it's here in Scripture *with emphasis*, for the purpose of showing and demonstrating what the church should be devoted to...

What we have to understand is that what was true for them at the start, is still the same thing that should be true for **us** today...

Here's the thing... Everybody wants to talk about **relevance** when it comes to teaching the Bible...

But what happens is, **relevance often comes at the expense of truth**... And parts of the bible like this, get over looked, or watered down because it seems dated and unrealistic, and because it pushes against social norms, and it seems really inconvenient if we actually lived this out...

And so, you get helpful insights instead of Biblical application...

Listen, what's laid out here in **Acts 2:42-47** isn't a suggestion, it's not a good recommendation, it's not some guidelines and guardrails to use **if it fits your context**... These things are a natural overflow of the gospel- and they are essential elements that are to be present in the church...

And look at how it plays out here in verse 44...

44 Now all the **believers** were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house.

The disciples are identified as **believers** for the first time... And notice this, they only had 2 activities...

They went to the **temple**: so they gathered in large crowds... And then they gathered in smaller groups in **homes** together studying the Bible and doing life together.... **Sound like a familiar model?**

We want to same to be true of us, we gather here and then we gather during the week... And as we do that we begin to see shared lives together...

Keep reading second part of verse 46: Watch this: They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

There's 3 specific outcomes of their devotion that we see here:

A. Joyful and sincere hearts praising God

For us that means God is the # 1 audience when we gather here...

I don't like that song... well it wasn't for you...

- We're trying to help you sing and declare the glory of God.

I don't like that message... well, I'm sorry- but, here's the thing, I'm kinda like the **mailman** I didn't write it, I just deliver the mail...

But what I want you to see is that or goal is to glorify God and we want to do it in a way that if your **new** to the whole thing it's understandable...

We want to praise God for who He is and what He has done through Christ... And we want to live out the implication of that together throughout the week!

Next thing we see:

B. Favor with all people

What we see is that a vibrant community extends itself in two directions: toward **God** and toward **neighbor**.³

But here's the thing... this favor extended to the city around them-who were not Christians...

- You know what that means... this **wasn't** a sealed off community or private club that's isolated from the world living in a bubble!
- They had a good reputation with outsiders, meaning they hung out with outsiders... Non-Christians knew them and they knew non-Christians... There were relationships there...

Crazy what a gospel centered community can do, and the impact it can have like that... It gets the attention of the whole city!

And then here's my favorite result that blows me away every time...

C. God added to their number

The devoted themselves to the **4 things** that we talked about and as they did that God added to their number **daily!!!**

Do you see this?!?! Do you see how this is a **movement** around a message?!?!

What you see is a **radical new community** that's formed around the message of Jesus... A movement of people living counter to the culture around them!

And God using **this community** and the way that they're living as the means to advance the message and ministry of Jesus!!

Would the same be true of us!!! What could God do if we were faithful to live these things out here in ATL?!?!

And I know what you're thinking... **How exactly can we live these things out here in our context?** How do we work this into our lives? Who do I devote myself to these things with?

And we're not a big church but there's no way that I can do this with everyone...

Well, in hopes of following the model that God's laid out for us, we have groups that meet in homes on a weekly basis called **COMMUNITY GROUPS...**

- All of our community Groups are location based so that these things are realistic...
 - Goal is no one drives more than 10 min to get to group... We want to launch as many as we can to make this possible...
- Community Groups are not another small event, they are the place where we live life together and study Gods world and press into the implications it has on our lives...
- We have rhythms that our groups use to help us do that... And the goal is that in an intentional, but organic way that life would happen together in these groups!

Conclusion ***VAMP*******

Here's the thing... We are one **big dysfunctional family**... you don't have to get your stuff right to be able to be part of it... Pick up your baggage, we all have it and bring it on in...

Now I know that some of you are here today and you're like, do you understand what it would look like for me to actually live out these things?? No one does this... Do you know what a sacrifice it would take to be devoted to these things???

You mean like the sacrifice that Jesus calls you to when He said if you want to follow Him you have to come and die??

³ Bock, D. L. (2007). [Acts](#) (p. 154). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

See, Christianity isn't a call to comfort or convince, it's the call to be part of a movement in response to the work of Jesus...

And when you understand what Jesus has done for you in his life, death, and resurrection it changes the way that you view sacrifice...

There are some of you today that need to trust in Jesus for the first time... You need to see that you have the chance to become part of something... You get the chance to be part of a family God's family!

- You need to stop wondering on your own and you need to surrender to the Savior that bled for your soul...
 - Jesus did everything necessary to complete you and restore your relationship with God...

Others of you **need to apply the gospel to your life when it comes to these areas of devotion that we talked about...**

- You have a gospel problem this morning and you need to redirect your eyes to Jesus and allow Him to shape your life... And stop letting the world shape and mold you life and your priorities...

Some of you have forgotten what God intended the church to be and there are some areas in your life where you need to repent...

Others of you need to begin to actually be devoted to: **The Word of God, Fellowship, Breaking Bread and Prayer...**

You know about them but you're not devoted to them... You rarely attend **Community Groups**, some of you are not even in a **Community Group**, You're inconsistent when it comes to our gathering here... You're not involved here, **and it's time for you to get back in the game, and be the church!**

- Let the gospel be the thing that motivates you to that!

And lastly, **we need to all be reminded that we're part of a movement!**

Bookmark

Here's how I want to end this morning... When you came in you had a Bookmark on your seat...

We want to devote ourselves to prayer, we want to pray and ask God to do great things in and through the life of Image Church...

Throughout the year we're going to have rhythms where we do this together... You should always be doing this on your own, but there are times when we want to come together and pray for the same things...

And so as we head into this Easter season, as we head into the move to **2 services** we want to be in prayer together... We want to ask God to move in our city...

To give us favor with all people and for God to add to our number those who are getting saved...

That people would come to our gathering and that it would lead to them becoming part of our family!

Who is your one...

Bryan Loritts: "The great success of the first church in the book of Acts was not in her programs or visionary leadership, but it was in her praying."