



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 7 The Vibrant Body Pt. 1 - DEVOTED
By Pastor Jody May 09/25/2022**

Acts 2:42-47 ESV

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

[INTRODUCTION] What makes a Vibrant (displays what has gone into it)

Body? You have to be devoted, which will look like radicalness, to everyone else, but in the end, it will make one **attractive**. Attractive in a way that makes other people ask, **"What did you do to get to this point?"** That is the key in disciple making btw, it is hard to make a disciple if what you are doing is not attractive to others. If there is nothing appealing in your life about your faith, then don't be surprised when you have no one to disciple. Yet the church in Acts is called to be a witness for the great commission IS to MAKE DISCIPLES! People should want to ask you why you are different, my question for this church, is have we given people enough to feel compelled to ask us?

Family we are coming to an end of an age that was called the **seeker friendly movement**. That was an age where churches spent more money on buildings, programs, and staff to entice people in the doors. It was a failed experiment, and what the church has learned in an accelerated pace, thanks to the Pandemic, is that what you got people in your doors with you have to keep them with it, but when people stop showing up because of fear and laziness then that plan is trashed. You see, the truth of scripture is in the end it is the People of God, not programs, not mega pastors, and rock bands, that attract the world to God through the evidence of the Spirit in one's life!



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This is what made Jesus so attractive! He didn't spend one dime on hiring musicians, having a marketing team, or renting a building, He was attractive because people could see His radical devotion to loving His Father which was demonstrated also by how well He loved His disciples. Jesus wanted not just His disciples to know this way but for us all to know this way.

John 10:10b ESV

"I came that **they** may have life and have it **abundantly.**"

Christ came to earth to **make a new group of people** that would display an abundant life as they live together. This new life comes by delivery of the Spirit as promised in the OT, through that day at Pentecost. The book of Acts records those events producing the first witnesses. Now we need to start to notice that the Spirit was not leading people into rugged individualism, this is much different than the age of enlightenment, or the modern era, whereby people were throwing off the church and dependency on one another. During this time of the first century church, Jesus doubled down on the idea of a **corporate identity**.

In the OT that identity was Israel and now in the NT it will be the church who will be known as the people of God. The church corporate will be the new group, the new nation replacing the old one, the new bride of Christ which will offer a group witness to the world of the power of Christ. The Church will give a witness to how it is thriving, surviving, and glorifying by God's good and gracious care (**like the Exodus**). The Church as a Vibrant body, this new corporate identity of God (kingdom), will make people wake up and take notice.

What we have here in the end of chapter 2 of Acts are the first converts compelled by God's Spirit to develop this real relationship with an unseen Lord **through COMMUNITY**. They chose to stay put, pulled all their resources together, and put everything they had towards making known the name of Christ. Jesus did come to give people abundant life, but **abundant life is displayed through living together as a people group**.



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All of Westernized culture knows what it means to live separately and independently, that's our natural inclination, but the church shows what it means to live concertedly. Abundant life blossoms when people sacrifice some of that individual freedom for the better goal of glorifying Jesus. That's no small feat, for everyone it seems like today that most would rather go in it alone, but that's why it is such a great witness when the Spirit changes our hearts and graces us with the ability to get along.

The HS has given these first converts something so strong to these people that it enabled them to **overcome the idols** of self and that was a **desire to make much of Jesus!** That is the same desire 2,000 years later. That same desire today makes the people stop and take notice of the church, when we care more about making much of Jesus than we care about ourselves!

We want to be a church like that. COVID and POLITICS right now has our country running around in circles where everyman is out for themselves, but the church right now has a great opportunity to show that we can rise above that. That love for Christ is what gets people to work together not love for self. In a word it is the act of **DEVOTION**.

⁴² And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Devoted is a phrase here in the Greek to mean a continuous and steadfast involvement. Devotion is further shown in v. 46 by a description of what it looks like:

⁴⁶ And **day by day**, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

And this was modeled after the Apostles themselves.

Acts 1:14 ESV

¹⁴ All these with one accord were **devoting** themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.



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A day-by-day (v.46) action, doing these activities together, in and outside the home, and the **byproduct** of a devoted people is **glad and generous hearts**. Which BTW do you want to know how to develop a generous heart? You start giving, and focus on the joy it brings, instead of the pain it took to give. That is a devoted people. This has always been the calling card of the vibrant church. Listen to how the historian and clergyman Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 263 – 339) described this trait of devotion and generosity.

“Famine and war had recently afflicted the city of Caesarea, so when the plague hit in the early fourth-century, the populace was already weakened and unable to withstand this additional blow. The populace began fleeing the city, one of the larger ones of the Roman Empire, for safety in the countryside. However, in the midst of the fleeing inhabitants, at least one group was staying behind, the Christians. As bishop of the city and a historian of the early church, Eusebius, recorded in “The Church History” that during the plague,

All day long some of them [the Christians] tended to the dying and to their burial, countless numbers with no one to care for them. Others gathered together from all parts of the city a multitude of those withered from famine and distributed bread to them all.

Eusebius goes on to state that because of their compassion in the midst of the plague, the Christians’ “deeds were on everyone’s lips, and they glorified the God of the Christians. Such actions convinced them that they alone were pious and truly reverent to God.”¹ ”

These people were not interested in themselves, but they were interested in Jesus and by now the practice was to bring attention to Jesus together.

The first church was always focused on Jesus because Jesus was always focused on them. They couldn’t but help reflect the love that have been

¹ <https://biblemesh.com/blog/the-compassion-of-early-christians/>



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displayed to them, that's what **real conversion looks like**, you have repented, you have turned to follow God by faith, believing in what He has done, and it has wrecked your heart. A Christian is someone that can no longer not do anything, they can't live alone in this world, and they can't but help but be devoted to the cause of Christ.

Point of the Day: Devoted people reflect a Devoted God.

If we desire to push back on all the noise of secular culture, it's cries for tolerance, it's cries for social justice, and its' cries for all things Woke then the church must become louder than culture but not by cries but by actions, specifically **Devotion to our God and one another**, and just like the church in Caesarea they will not be able to not notice us!

4 Marks of a Devoted VIBRANT Body:

1. Devoted to Teaching.

⁴² And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

διδασχῆ (*didachē*). n. fem. **teaching, instruction**. *Either the act or content of teaching.*² In the early church, this term was used to refer to instruction given to catechumens (people preparing for baptism) before their official public profession of faith.

Teaching is of **first importance**. When a church is **vibrant** what you will see is a people **devoted to God's Word**. These first congregants even though they had been awakened by the HS, did not **develop** without a **strict devotion** to Scripture, meaning the **Apostle's teaching on it**. With the Spirit, if anything, what you are seeing is a heightened sense of the importance of discovering what God shows His people in His Word. This all means to live by the Spirit is to live by scripture. You show me a person that says they are Holy Spirit filled and doesn't read much Bible and I will show you a false prophet!

² Jones, M. R. (2014). [Teaching](#). D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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Just to be clear what this type of teaching accomplishes:

We TEACH with the expectation to be freed from this world!

John 8:31-32 ESV

³¹So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set **you free.**"

To be free from control and manipulation of the world means to have a steady diet of God's Word. You and I are created to be taught, we are created to learn, the mind and soul is being constantly shaped. If you are not spending your time being developed by God through His Word, then you are spending time being manipulated by the **god** of this world. **(mom)**

We TEACH with the understanding all of Scripture points to Christ!

Luke 24:44-45 ESV

⁴⁴Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **everything written about me** in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to **understand the Scriptures**:

We are not properly understanding the scriptures unless we are able to see the need of Christ in all the Bible. Jesus' last bit of business, before His ascension, was to tie all that the OT had to say about the law, the priests, the prophets, and kings to Him for all of it pointed to the need for a Messiah. Then in the NT you have the explanation of how the Messiah answers all the problems revealed by the OT, or we can say what is revealed by the use of the law.

The Gospel is the good news that one man has done it all, and we all are free to live in His victory. That means the Gospel is not just the 4 accounts of His life in the NT it is all of Scripture for all of scripture reveals the salvific work of God.



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We TEACH with the intention of using all Scripture for it is fully Sufficient!

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ **All Scripture is breathed out by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be **complete**, equipped for every good work.

We are committed to expositional teaching while being theologically grounded. We are committed to teaching all of God's Word and we are committed to not be led astray by our feelings or cultural trends, so we adhere to Creeds that have stood the test of time for centuries.

What does our preaching show?

What does our music show?

What do our ministries show?

Devoted to teaching is a must, it's where it all starts, and it's what keeps the next marks of a Vibrant Body in line.

2. Devoted to Fellowship.

⁴² And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

κοινωνία (*koinōnia*). n. fem. **fellowship, communion, sharing, participation.** A term that conveys a sense of commonality, solidarity, and shared responsibility among households or individuals.³

³ Davis, D. L. (2014). [Assembly, Religious](#). D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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Now we have a bunch of people who are continually participating, devoted, to the act of living in community where they share and participate mutually, and where this takes place show up again in v. 46:

⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes

These first converts didn't just come together once a week in a predetermined location to hear a teaching, they were in each other's homes. Here at HCC we try to help in that process by promoting community with gatherings in the homes of our elders and candidates but that is just the beginning. My fear is family that some of us think that meeting in each other's homes is an extra, or it is not as necessary. But family where else are you going to talk out and live out what you are learning UNLESS you are in community with your family.

The calling to Christianity is not a calling to limited time among its' people:

1 Corinthians 1:9 ESV

⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the **fellowship of his **Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Paul is making a statement to the church at Corinth, since they were having a problem getting along, that before he ever writes his letter of correction, he points out they were called into a "fellowship" that is supposed to be about His Son.

Tolkien based his thesis on the first book of His trilogy on this very quality. The Lord of the Rings is built on the, "Fellowship of the Rings". He shows how different races, (literally different than just people) were called to build community around the destruction of the one ring. It is a glorious representation of the church and how they had all things in common and had to get over their differences for the good of all (not to mention the WWII efforts of the allied forces). That's what all the epistles are about in the NT, people getting over themselves because their fellowship was not about what they were trying to get out of it, but that Jesus would be glorified through it!



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(Mention of some of *one another* Commands from scripture)

The majority of the battle in Christianity is not social justice causes it is the cause of fellowship between people who want to be for themselves. Again, this is what makes the church attractive people want to know what keeps us together. When you are devoted to the common cause it brings added joy.

3. Devoted to the Breaking of Bread.

⁴²And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and the prayers.

This is probably in reference to the Lord's Supper. This early church ordinance or practice was most likely enjoyed within the confines of a meal.

Here in Jerusalem the church daily reflected on the torn body and poured-out blood of Christ. After these earliest days the church grew, became more stable, and spread out geographically. Then it seems the church began to take the Lord's Supper in conjunction with the meal they shared together in the evening on the Lord's Day.⁴

The point is that fellowship was highlighted around the memory of and the celebratory nature of remembering what Jesus had done for them. The meal is to celebrate their Savior. We kind of double dip on this notion, we like to promote you all in doing meals after we worship to perform this function like the early church, for it helps us to celebrate and remember Him. We also like to do communion every week for again it helps us to celebrate and put the focus on Christ.

Devotion to the Breaking of Bread, is a devotion to remembering what Christ has done. That brings us to our last point for today.

4. Devoted to Prayers.

⁴ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition / Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN: Holmann Press, 2017), 38.



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⁴² And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the **prayers**.

It is recorded in history and in the scripture the believers' constant practice of prayer. It was different than in the OT. You don't see a lot of common people do the praying in the OT, prayer was usually done by representatives as the prophets or the priests. In the new church Jesus is the New and everlasting priest and through the Spirit He receives the prayers of all people. All people are encouraged to engage and pray that "thy will be done".

Family, let me just make sure everyone understands a few things about prayer.

Prayer is a necessity of the Vibrant church.

Prayer is the glad responsibility of the NT church.

Everyone is to be a part of the ministry of prayer.

Once a month let me just say to all in here you are invited on a Weds evening to come and join us for corporate prayer. **What you are missing out on in understanding how God is answering the prayers we are asking.** If you want to be aware of how God is moving around you then you need to come and hear what is being asked and how He is answering.

[CHALLENGE / APPLICATION]

Now let me close with this. You may be wondering if that is the extent of what we are called to do, then what about growth, and building initiatives, and budget needs, and community outreach. Let me give you the answer to all of that from v. 47:

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.



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Family, the process for growth, the process for discipleship, and the process for the next generation has already been lined out. Are we devoted to His Word, Fellowship, Celebrating Christ, and Prayer. If we are **DEVOTED**, then **God has promised to bring growth.**

Devoted People reflect a Devoted God. God will not allow a people who honor Him without being noticed. He will bring the lost to you, do your part and be devoted to the work of the church we find here in Acts.

The offer is also to those of you far off, this story is recorded for you to see that all are offered this opportunity to come and become family. This is the gracious offer of God to be brought into a fellowship built around and for His Son. We all have joined the same way here, by crying out for the Lord to save us, turning to Him in repentance, being baptized in His name, and the reward is having eternal life lived out with His people. If that is your need today then come and let Bill or I know that you have been called to follow Him.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that deserves the glory that we can bring Him through our devotion.

Go in the name of the Son, that was devoted to us first so that we would become His new corporate identity.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that will be eternally devoted to us, preserving us in our work, while He works through us to attract more to His Kingdom.