

Session 3

THE CHURCH IS COMMITTED TO THE WORD

*Acts 2:42-47; Colossians 3:16;
2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Memory Verse

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

– ACTS 2:42, CSB




The Church Is Committed to the Word

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Devotion to studying God's Word, both individually and in community, is a vital attribute of a healthy church.

CALL TO ACTION: Do you have daily devoted time in the Word? Are you in a group to study the Bible with others as the early church did? Do you come to your group and to worship gatherings with an eager expectation to hear the Word?

Second Kings 22–23 records the story of Josiah, King of Judah. At this point, God's people had fallen far from obedience to the Lord, worshiping other gods and doing what was right in their own eyes instead of seeking God's will. In King Josiah's reign, during a renovation of the temple, the high priest found a copy of the book of the Law and presented it to the king. When it was read to him, he tore his clothes—a sign of severe distress—because he realized the people had forgotten God's law! Grieved, Josiah attempted to turn the people back to obedience, renewing a covenant with the Lord, making reforms, and seeking to follow God's law. After reading the truth in Scripture, Josiah “turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength” (2 Kings 23:25) and, “he did what was right in the LORD's sight” (2 Kings 22:2).

When we read and understand the truth in Scripture, it can and should transform our lives. The study of God's Word shows us where we are missing the mark and how we can turn fully to the Lord, just like King Josiah. The study of Scripture is a vital discipline for a healthy church. Today, we'll study an example of a healthy church community recorded in Acts and see what the Bible says about how and why we should study Scripture.

 What does it mean to “study” God’s Word?

 How do you study God’s Word on your own? Why do you think it’s important to study God’s Word together?

Session Summary

In our passage in Acts, we see four elements of community that the early church was constantly and persistently devoted to: learning, community, breaking bread, and prayer. This was not only important for the early church, these elements are vital for the church today.

An important way the people of God learn is by studying God’s Word, both in community at church and individually through private study at home. All Scripture—even the parts that make us nervous, or we view as “boring”—is given by God and useful for us in several ways. The Bible teaches that God’s Word is to dwell richly with us (Colossians 3:16). We should read and hear it often, seeking to be increasingly familiar with the truth in its pages.

1. A Generous and Growing Church (Acts 2:42-47)

 What activities did Luke include in this passage to describe the early church?

 How do you think this focus contributed to the growth of the church?

Last week, we studied the early church's dedication to prayer. Jesus's followers were "continually united in prayer" (Acts 1:14). Prior to today's passage, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas (who betrayed Jesus) among the twelve (Acts 1:15-26), and the Holy Spirit arrived at Pentecost (Acts 2), just as Jesus had promised.

While the Holy Spirit has been at work since the days of the Old Testament, this event at Pentecost marked the beginning of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for all believers (1 Corinthians 6:19). After the Holy Spirit came upon this gathered group of believers as "tongues like flames of fire" (Acts 2:3), the Spirit-filled believers began to speak in many languages, and Peter delivered a sermon to nearby Jews that resulted in around three thousand people being saved and baptized (Acts 2:41).

Our passage in Acts picks up right after this. Jesus's command of the Great Commission didn't just stop at telling people about Him. He commanded His followers to make disciples, requiring a strong, active community rooted in God's Word.

Notice the activities of the early church (v. 42):

Learning: Now that these new converts had believe in Jesus for salvation, they had a lot to learn about Him and what it meant to follow Him.

Acts records that they devoted themselves to learning from the apostles' teaching. The Greek word Luke used here (*proskartereō*), carries a meaning of perseverance and constant attention and is the same word Luke used to describe the early church's devotion to prayer in Acts 1:14.¹ Their devotion to learning from the apostles' Spirit-fueled teaching was ongoing.

This teaching would have included explanation of Old Testament Scriptures pointing to Jesus being the prophesied Messiah and accounts of the things they witnessed while walking alongside Jesus in His earthly ministry. In this, we see the apostles both acting as Jesus's witnesses, as He commanded in Acts 1:8, and making disciples, as He commanded in Matthew 28:19.

In the church today, we undertake a similar mission by teaching faithfully from God's Word and sharing how we have seen His work in our lives.

Community: We aren't meant to be isolated—God created us for life in community. In addition to this constant, persistent devotion to teaching, the believers devoted themselves to fellowship. They lived in a healthy community. The Greek word Luke used for fellowship here is one you may be familiar with: *koinonia*.² *Koinonia* happens when believers come together in community. The community Luke described here didn't just come to a shared building on Sundays, they met together every day to eat, pray, and praise.

They came together in a practical sense, too: “They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:45). As the believers had needs, they came together in community to meet them; they took care of each other.

In the church today, one way we do this is forming groups (like this one) to walk through life together. Though we may not see each other every day, our community should serve a similar function.


Breaking Bread: They prioritized sharing meals together. Hospitality was a special and important part of ancient Jewish culture. Sharing a meal communicated love and trust. This space was important, and we see that the early church devoted themselves to this practice with each other.

Luke recorded that they went from house to house to share meals and “They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.” (Acts 2:46-47) Think back to a dinner with good friends or loved ones that left you feeling joyful, with a full heart. The beauty of community often happens around a table.


In the church today, we might live similarly by cultivating the type of community that comes from sharing literal meals or other ordinary moments of life together.

Prayer: Just like the believers in Acts 1:14, this growing body of believers remained devoted to prayer. As we discussed last week, this practice, both in community and in private, is vital to the life of a healthy church and the life of a believer.

As the early church came together in community in these ways, we see the Holy Spirit working powerfully through them. Acts 2:47b records that “Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” When a church is healthy and working together, the Holy Spirit often works in this way!

 Application: With this model of the early church in mind, what is our group doing well to grow together? What are some new things we could do to be more intentional about growth as a group?

2. The Word is Profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

 What do these verses tell us about the purposes of Scripture in our lives?

 What did Paul say results from studying Scripture?

In our text in Acts, we saw a living, breathing example of community within a healthy church. One of the things that we saw was that the believers were devoted to the apostles’ teaching, from which they received what we would call today solid biblical teaching. In the case of the early church, they were learning from men who had been, literally, hand-picked by Jesus and were firsthand witnesses to Jesus’s life and ministry. Today, teachers in our churches are also called and equipped by the Lord to make disciples. An important way they do that is through the study and teaching of God’s Word.

Studying God’s Word is an essential element in a healthy church. A healthy church studies God’s Word together (in small groups, Bible studies, and through sermons) and individually (through personal study). Don’t make the mistake of thinking that studying God’s Word is only your pastor or teacher’s job. While studying the Word together at church is important to our spiritual growth, it is the responsibility of every believer to read and study the truth in God’s Word personally. One of the ways

we love the Lord with our minds is by studying His Word (Mark 12:30), which He has lovingly preserved for us. God's Word contains truth, advice on how we should live, gives us insights into His good character, and God uses it to speak to us. When we store up Scripture in our hearts, we build a strong foundation for the Holy Spirit to encourage us by bringing Scripture to mind when we need it. This is one of the most important things we do as believers.

Let's look at what Paul wrote about Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture: All Scripture. Not some, or the parts that are easiest to understand, or the parts that we don't find boring. All Scripture has value for us, and if that is true, don't you think we should read it all?

Scripture is inspired by God: God used and equipped humans to record what we now know as the Bible, and it is inspired by Him. What's inside is true and reliable and comes from the Lord.

Scripture is profitable: Scripture is "profitable," or "useful" (NIV) in several ways. Paul specifically listed:

Teaching: Scripture is useful for making disciples and helping others learn about Jesus, and this isn't just reserved for those called to teach formally. Scripture is useful for teaching others in our lives about God's goodness and how we should live. God uses Scripture to lead people to Jesus.

Rebuking and Correction: The Bible helps us understand how we should (and shouldn't) live as followers of Jesus. When we are students of the Word, the Holy Spirit uses it to point out sin in our lives that needs correction and then help us fight against it.

Training in Righteousness: Have you ever received training at a new job? We don't just show up on the first day knowing all our new company's policies and how to log into the system. Likewise, as believers, we need training, and we don't ever stop learning. The Bible is the handbook for this training.

Paul said effectively engaging with God's Word makes us complete and equipped for God's will for us.

 Application: Reflect on Paul's list of ways Scripture is useful. How might you seek growth in engaging with God's Word?

3. Dwell Richly with the Word (Colossians 3:16)

 What does it mean to “dwell” with someone?

 What does it mean to “dwell” with God's Word?

Colossians was written to encourage a group of believers in Colossae. The passage this verse is pulled from contains a set of imperatives that showed the Colossians (and us) how we should live. Verse 16 deals specifically with our relationship with God's Word.

Think about what it means to dwell with someone. Most of us have had the experience of living with someone else: a spouse, a child, a parent, a roommate, or a friend. When you dwell with someone, you are around them regularly. You spend time with them and know about them.

When we dwell with God's Word as believers, we are around it, reading it, praying over it, and spending time in it. We know things about it. We interact with it (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible should permeate all areas of our lives and drive our decisions.

A habit of studying God's Word transforms our lives and is vital to the life of a believer. Just like the believers of the early church in Acts, we should be devoted to studying God's Word. As we are, the Holy Spirit works in powerful ways. This instruction to dwell with the Word is meant for the individual believer and the church. When the word of Christ dwells richly among believers, worship—a beautiful way to glorify the Lord and grow closer to Him—naturally follows.

❓ Application: How might you seek to “dwell” more with God’s Word in daily life?

Conclusion

❓ Where do you need to grow in love for and engagement with God’s Word?

❓ How might our group and church follow the example of the early church in Acts 2?

❓ How does growing in God’s Word lead us to tell others about Him?

Memorize

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

- Acts 2:42, CSB

References

¹Blue Letter Bible, “Strong’s G4342 – proskartereō,” accessed March 19, 2025, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4342/csb/mgnt/0-1/>.

²Blue Letter Bible, “Strong’s G2842 – koinonia,” accessed March 19, 2025, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2842/csb/mgnt/0-1/>.