

**Theme:** As You Are Going: The Church on Mission

**Message:** Devoted – Acts 2:42-47

**Aim:** Explore the devotions of the early Church.

**Intro:** Devotion is defined as love, loyalty or enthusiasm for a person, activity or cause.” One can be devoted to duty (soldier), a devoted husband/wife (as should be), or a devoted fan of your favorite sports team (in lieu of the Patriots being in it, go Niners!). We who are in Christ should certainly be devoted to Him & to the Great Commission, the Church & each other. The Greek definition of devoted, found in our text today, is to be “steadfastly attentive unto; giving unremitting care to.” Theme: As you are going: the Church on mission. The mission is God’s mission – to expand His kingdom throughout all the earth & complete His family by the gospel going forth thru the Church to the lost world. If we’re to be a church on mission, we must be devoted to the same mission & in the same ways the newborn church was devoted. **Acts 2:42-47** [READ]. Commentator David Gudzik - let me tell you why I quote – Pastor Derek also – David Gudzik as much as I do. Gudzik is the Sr. Pastor of Calvary Chapel in Santa Barbara, CA, having been college professor & pastor for over 20 yrs prior. He has, in my opinion, a good way w/words, & is easily accessible on [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org), which offers numerous Bible commentaries online. He is, I believe, soundly Biblical, for the most part. By that I mean that for the most part he agrees w/me! Seriously, I have found him to be solid in his Biblical thinking, tho he is not yet dead. If a commentator is dead, his value goes up exponentially. Gudzik wrote this about our text: “On the day of Pentecost the sound of the rushing wind, the tongues of fire & the conversion of 3000 were all remarkable events (understatement). But the things described in Acts 2:42ff were the abiding legacy of God’s work.” What’s he talking about? Our text today is one of several summary statements made by Luke throughout the book of Acts. It brought Luke’s report about that remarkable Day of Pentecost & the birth of the Church to a close, but also opened the door to what would happen in the days/weeks/months/years to come. I) **And they devoted themselves...** The “they” referred to was the 3120 disciples who made up the newborn Church. They were newly related bro/sis in Christ. Some of them would

find themselves newly outcast from their families. Some of them probably couldn't go home, to whichever of the 15 or so nations they represented. Some of them lost their livelihood, or at least had not yet reestablished it in Jerusalem, where they weren't expecting to stay. "They devoted themselves..." Commentator Richard Longnecker pointed out that some translations have it "they continued steadfastly in..." It was "a steadfast & single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action – w/no departure from it." Then Luke told us what II) **They devoted themselves to...** Pay attention: the need for such devotion has not waned. 1) The apostles' teaching. Tho their lives might have been in danger, as we shall see, the apostles had no intention of leaving Jerusalem & these young believers. They devoted themselves to the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Great Commission, of making disciples. They had witnessed about 3000 come to faith & had baptized them (if each of the apostles did the actual baptizing, that would have been over 233 apiece! Oh, my aching back!). Now they turned their attention to teaching them, as Jesus mandated: "***teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...***" It wasn't just anything they wanted to teach; not their agenda, but the Lord's! They taught what they had been taught by Jesus. That word "teaching" is the Greek "dediche" or doctrine – the truths of Scripture. These new believers needed to be grounded in the truth of Christ, & they wanted to know more. So do you/I need to be grounded in the truth of Christ! Are you devoted to the apostles' teaching? One of the most important characteristics of a disciple is to be teachable. One of the greatest frustrations of pastors & teachers in the church is when folks aren't all that interested in being taught. Maybe it's the boring style of the teacher, or maybe the unwillingness of the student. The word disciple means "one being taught." Are you being taught? There are several opportunities throughout the week for you to be taught - & if interest would be demonstrated, we would develop more. Take advantage! 2) The Fellowship. Interesting that Luke wrote "the" fellowship, meaning, specifically, the fellowship of the Church, the association of believers. The Greek word is koinonia – joint participation, a sharing in. They knew they needed each other & were devoted to not just being together but participating in their lives of faith together, in their

experience of Christ together. Are you devoted to THE fellowship? Beyond Sunday morning are you steadfastly attentive to your church family, giving unremitting care to each other? Some of you are/do. To be commended.

3) To the breaking of bread. Because Luke also reports that they broke bread in their homes, “w/glad & generous hearts” (vs46), I believe this reference is to observing the Lord’s Supper together, as we did last week. Jesus had told the apostles to remember Him as often as they ate the bread & drank the cup, so the Lord’s Supper was a regular observance for the young Church. We’re not told how often they communed together in this way, but they were devoted to it. Are you devoted to remembering Jesus, to being mindful of what He has done for you in Christ? It seems that this observance went together w/4) The Prayers. They were devoted to the prayers. Again, it was not devoted to prayer, as we all need to be, but to “the prayers,” meaning, I believe, there were specific & regular times of prayer. James Montgomery Boice wrote: “In the Greek the definite article occurs before the word ‘prayer.’ The text actually says, ‘to the prayers.’ They devoted themselves ‘to the breaking of bread & to the prayers.’ Obviously, that is a reference to something formal – to worship in which the people got together & [prayed &] praised God.” Are you devoted to worship? Are you devoted to prayer together w/other believers? Every major revival movement came as a result of prayer. Success in the mission of the Church comes as a result of prayer, followed by obedience. Note then that God the Holy Spirit participated w/the disciples as they learned & fellowshiped & worshipped & prayed. “Awe came upon every soul, & many wonders & signs were being done thru the apostles.” God was showing Himself strong on their behalf, moving in mighty ways among them. It’s obvious also that those in the early Church were devoted to

5) Each other, even to the point of sacrifice – vs44-45. Again, some, even many of those 3000 who came to faith on the Day of Pentecost stayed in Jerusalem (perhaps until they were scattered back to their home countries). Many didn’t have jobs – no livelihood. The body of believers had to share & they did – voluntarily giving of their means to support each other. This wasn’t communism; it wasn’t forced, but freely given. Some even sold property & brought the proceeds to the apostles & others

appointed to organize it. They “distributed...to all, as any had need.” Their faith in Christ & Christ Himself became more important to them than what they owned. The Church was more important than their portfolio. We’ve certainly lost that ideal, & I’m not sure we can ever get it back, except for the work of God in our hearts & in the Church. We’ve regulated such provision to the government & lost much in the process. They were also devoted to 6) Doing life together – vs46. This is the out-working of koinonia. Day by day – every day, again & again – they continued to attend the temple together. These new Christians didn’t stop being Jewish. They were faithful to their heritage & lifelong teaching, now w/new light, insight into the truth. They were of one mind, passionate about worshipping God. Are you? And they passionately practiced hospitality, “breaking bread in their homes” – from house to house. They shared meals together. Again, some would not have been able to host others but they joined together, eating meals together. They enjoyed fellowship around the table – w/glad & generous hearts – freely giving, freely receiving. Praising God together, living life together. This was true community. Note that the 2 go together – worship & community, by God’s design. Pastor Derek sent me a quote from Wayne Baxter of the Gospel Coalition, who wrote: “Community is the fruit of Christ-exalting worship. Community is not what we’re to aim for; Christ is.” As they sought Christ, to know Him more, they found community in Christ. The same is true for us. Finally, it is also obvious that these believers were devoted to 7) Being witnesses for Christ, sharing the Gospel. The early Church didn’t do all this, which Luke described for us, in a vacuum. They weren’t hiding their light under a basket. Others were clearly observing & were moved by what they saw. The Holy Spirit was at work. These believers had “favor w/all the people.” Those outside the Church saw the amazing work God was doing & the transformation God had wrought & was continuing to work in the lives of those disciples. That won them opportunities to share their faith, share the message of the Gospel. They could boldly proclaim, “Jesus is the Messiah! God has changed my life. You too can have forgiveness & the gift of the Holy Spirit & relationship w/Almighty God & sure hope of eternal life.” Led by the Spirit, those 3120 disciples were instruments in the hands of God, channels of His

love, declarers of His saving truth. Are you devoted to being witnesses for Christ, being used by God the Holy Spirit in the lives of those around you? Look at III) **The Results** – vs47b. “And the Lord – all God’s work – added – one person at a time – to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Only God can save, but His plan A is to use the Church – You/I – to reach the lost. He doesn’t have a plan B. God was using these believers’ unity & gladness & transformation & willingness to share the gospel to reach those around them; & they were coming to faith in Christ! God can & will use us too! Gudzik wrote: “This is God’s prescription for church growth. If we take care to follow the example of Acts 2:42-47a, God will take care of growing the Church Himself.” Do you want that? Do you want God to grow the Church, this church? Then by His grace we must be devoted – devoted to Christ, devoted to the Church, devoted to Biblical teaching, devoted to worship, devoted to each other, devoted to reaching the lost & making disciples. As you are going, be the Church – the Church on mission!