

Fully Devoted: Cultivating a life of gospel mission

Acts 2:42-47

MPS: Christ-followers create a Jesus-centered culture of gospel mission when they cultivate a life of full devotion to Jesus.
OBJ: Every person can understand how they help create a Jesus-centered culture of gospel mission through three stages.

INTRO How many have made New Year's resolutions this year? How many have cast off NY Resolutions? How many NY Resolutions could best be characterized by this quality, "half-hearted"? Half-hearted NY Resolutions are worthless!

TRANS Today I want us to talk about living **Fully Devoted**. **HOW** does Jesus grow a culture of worship, fellowship and mission through which His power is made known in this world?

READ Acts 2:42

Christ-followers create a Jesus-centered culture of gospel mission when they cultivate a life of full devotion to Jesus.

OBJ: Three stages will help every person see how they help create a Jesus-centered culture of Gospel mission.

Stage 1: a full devotion.

Luke begins, "*And they devoted themselves*" (.42) When Luke records the first snapshot of the early church, he gives insight that helps us today. He identifies how they honored Jesus, what they valued and how they practiced their faith. **Devotion is the first, defining characteristic of Christians in the New Testament church.**

Devotion to Jesus forms the first, defining characteristic of the Christian life. Devotion sets something apart for a higher cause or use. It is a defining quality of life, a 'state of being that perseveres in a specific action'. When we devote ourselves to a cause, we give our affections & desires (heart), thoughts (mind), time, energy and money. Life is filled with that which we are 'devoted to'. We give every part of our life to it. **Devotion shows great commitment, the discipline to do it until the desired result is accomplished.**

TRANS There's a reason devotion forms the first, defining characteristic of the Christian life. And, the first stage of Jesus-centered culture in the church. I want to consider devotion a little more as this first stage, and defining characteristic for the Christian.

Devotion is all about love. When we know God's love, we devote ourselves to Him. John writes, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:16, 19) **Devotion is the right response to God motivated by God's love for us.**

Devotion requires a definite object. You can't be devoted to something you haven't identified or are only vaguely familiar with. When you give yourself to something, you have to know what it is. Loving God is determined by relationship with Him, which comes only by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. (Eph 2:8, 9) God never saves outside of or without the finished work of Jesus on the cross. **Christian devotion centers fully on Jesus because Jesus is fully God come to show God's love in salvation.**

Devotion demands a clear decision and depends on decisive action. Devotion demands that you remove or lessen commitment to everything else. Every "Yes" to God's glory will demand many "No's" to good things in your life. Until you start saying no to that which distracts or competes for your attention, you will never say "yes" to that which deserves your undivided attention. Saying "no" is a decision of discipline, not of preference. When we 'hedge' or forsake our decision, choosing rather to drift along with things we didn't say "no" to tied on, we convolute our devotion, and divide our love and loyalty. Contrary to popular deception, true love never originates in feelings. Love is real, concrete action. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8) **Devotion shows the action of our love to God.**

Devotion is best practiced as an initiating discipline', not a response mechanism based on feelings. Jesus enjoyed loving fellowship with the Father for one reason; he knew the Father's unending, unfailing love because he listened to obey all that the Father said, not because he felt something from the Father. [Our devotion to Christ is a right response to God's love in sending Jesus.](#) A full devotion cultivates a fuller experience of His love. [Devotion is determined more in our day-to-day discipline of routine than in moments of heightened experience or intense frenzy.](#)

Devotion determines perseverance to endure. The good that the object of your devotion produces is greater than the pain, discomfort, inconvenience or heartache of any given moment. The night before the biggest moment of his human life while in the garden Jesus said, "My soul is sorrowful, even to death". Then he prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matt 26:38, 39) [Devotion determines that no matter what, I will hold fast to the one holding me.](#)

Half-hearted devotion to something that deserves full devotion is most pathetic. [My junior high coach used to bemoan half-hearted devotion, though he used another part of the human anatomy to referring to it.] Casual participation in the Christian life is not just the sign of a lack of commitment, but the denial of God's love and absence of our devotion. 'Half-hearted devotion' to Jesus is a theological statement, demonstrating that we believe differently about God than He has said about Himself. Devotion to Jesus is either full, or it is deceiving, harmful and useless. [Half-hearted devotion to Jesus is full idolatry for the Christian.](#)

"And they devoted themselves" Acts 2:42

Stop and ask yourself, "what am I devoted to?" Look at your calendar and schedule. Check your bank ledger. Evaluate the GPS record of your driving. Monitor the re-occurring thought pattern that you regularly encounter. Identify the thing your heart keeps saying "I don't care what it takes, get it!" about. That's what holds your devotion. They devoted themselves because they were devoted to Jesus. [Devotion to the Lord Jesus through the local church is a faithful and Biblical response for Christ-followers. Whatever holds your devotion is holding you.](#)

Prayer: I pray and labor to see the Lord Jesus Christ build a culture of fully devoted Christ-followers at LifePoint.

TRANS Since devotion requires a definite object and depends on decisive action, then let's be clear about our objects and actions.

Stage 2: four practices to center life on Jesus

"...to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Acts 2:42

Devotion to Jesus has four practices. First, they are devoted to **the Apostle's teaching.** The apostolic teaching for us today means the Bible. The Apostles taught from the Old Testament as the Holy Spirit inspired them to write the New Testament. They followed Jesus' teaching and model to interpret all scripture with Jesus as the Christ, the fulfillment of all God's promise. When you make the Bible anything less than God's written revelation of the living Lord Jesus Christ, you fail to follow the Apostolic teaching. [Christians devote themselves to God's Word, the Bible, to center our lives on Jesus.](#)

APPL [Do you have a plan to read and study the Bible this year?](#)

You do if you are devoted to Jesus. Devotion demands a clear decision and a decisive action. [You've got to be IN the Word until the Word gets IN you.](#) If you simply show up at gathered worship and Community Group you automatically build in three times each week to demonstrate your devotion to God's Word. I encourage you in this daily practice. This church depends upon it.

Second, they are devoted to the **fellowship.** [Do you know what fellowship is?](#) Fellowship is the part of church that you don't get in any other form of "community"; what you most want out of the church. The word, *koinonia*, means intimate association through the act of mutual sharing by participation. Fellowship is loaded with gospel meaning and goodness for your life. [Fellowship is the means through which God ministers the power of the gospel by Holy Spirit to meet each person's need through the congregation. Christians devote themselves to the fellowship of the local church for God to work the gospel's](#)

power in their lives...together.

Third, they are devoted to the **breaking of bread**. Breaking of bread gives focus to this fellowship. Most likely, a dual understanding is correct here. The early Christians shared regular meals together. But this likely also refers to sharing the Lord's Supper together to remember Jesus' sacrifice. Participation with other Christ-followers in remembering the work of Christ in life and building relationship that encourages and builds us up to live as he has called us, this is the Christian community. [Christians devote themselves to the breaking of bread to remind one another that all of life comes from God, in provision and salvation.](#)

Fourth, they are devoted to **the prayers**. Prayer is not an accessory to the Christian life. Prayer IS the principle, initiating work in gospel mission. Jesus prayed regularly to the Father with His followers. His followers pray regularly. The early church built relationship with God by making prayer a priority. We must practice prayer not only because it is taught, but because we are dependent upon it to know God more intimately and trust him more completely. Prayer builds a communication funnel of eternal life in relationship with God. [Christians devote themselves to the prayers to center the conversation of the church and the heart of every person on Jesus Christ, in order to conform every person to His Will and move the whole congregation forward on His mission.](#)

These four practices are vital to center the church on Jesus. They are not multiple choice, but "choose ALL" because they all apply. NO, God doesn't love you less if you don't practice them all. But you don't experience His love as He has willed for you to experience Him. **[ILLUS** If you never come home after your honey-moon, it doesn't mean you're not married. It does mean your marriage sucks. And while you may not be immediately aware of it while away, you WILL come face-to-face with it when you get home.] One other note of importance about these four practices. Each one begins with the definite article. These are not "any" practices, to be used at one's own will or discretion, or in any way one chooses. [Christians devote themselves to these specific practices among the local congregation because they serve to center each person on Jesus and His mission.](#)

WARNING of a Common Christian Problem: You sense that your relationship with the Lord is waning or weak, that you need to do something to help or improve it. This is a very common problem. The BIG mistake most people make to "improve" their Christian life is they try to increase Phase 2 with no adjustment to Phase 1. When Phase 1 is wrong, it doesn't matter how expansive or extensive phase 1 becomes, it's still operating at half, or less, capacity, and will always provide an insufficient glory, pleasure, joy, peace and gladness. **You will never be satisfied in your relationship with God until He alone holds ALL your devotion.**

TRANS Finally, I want you to see that when Christians devote themselves to these practices in the church, a Jesus-centered culture for mission is built.

READ Acts 2:43-7

Stage 3. Participate to invest life and labor for a culture of gospel mission

*And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. **Acts 2:43-47***

Just as one word, "the", distinguished the four practices, so one word distinguishes these last five verses; "And". These verses record culture created by the devotion of the Christ-followers. All that happens among the gathered body depends upon and grows out from the work of God in every Christians among the gathered body. All that happens among the local church is a direct result of what Jesus is doing in the individual lives of His people, and working to reveal himself among the body when she is gathered in worship. When God's people live fully devoted to Him, He creates a culture among them characterized by four distinctives.

The first distinctive is worship that glorifies Jesus' Name .43

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. .43
Awe came upon every person. This was not necessarily a genuine response to the gospel, but rather an unavoidable reaction to it. The same feeling of awe that came upon all held very different outcomes, no doubt. Many just liked to see the 'signs and wonders' show. Some were just entertained. They liked the attraction element of their work, but held no connection to the message that the signs and wonders pointed to. Whatever each person found from the "awe" they experienced one thing was sure, it all point back to Jesus. [The "awe" of worship should always point every person to Jesus to worship Him as the only One who is worthy.](#)

The second distinctive is community that strengthens the unity and love of "togetherness" among them .44

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. .44

Unity characterizes each individual Christ-follower as well as the whole church. Unity is defined by the given-ness of each Christ-follower to set their mind as 'one' with all the others. There is individual responsibility within the shared community. This is not a reference to total agreement in every detail or circumstance, but a focus for the sake of the gospel and its work in the lives of people. [Every Christ-follower in the church has the personal responsibility to build unity.](#)

Spiritual unity builds personal commonality from shared experiences in life among people. In the church, our shared experience of salvation in Jesus Christ defines our commonality in all of life. Commonality establishes a mutual affection for one another, which moves the heart of one person on behalf of the need of another person. Understanding how God has met our ultimate need in Christ Jesus, we transfer this 'meeting of need' into our context by taking that which is ours and using it to meet the needs of others. Sharing may include material possessions, but first and most means the sharing of our gifting for ministry. [Devotion to Jesus means Christians are devoted to the unity of His church and meeting the needs of one another in the church.](#)

The third distinctive is ministry with one another that grows and mature each one .45

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. .45

The willingness to meet needs in their church begins not only with the need itself, but within the heart prepared to meet needs. Instead of fostering a mentality that valued the acquiring of and maintaining of stuff, they used their possession and goods as a tool to minister to others. When a need arose, the willingness to see that need met moved Christ-followers to sell their own possessions. When considering what one could do to meet a need, a heart of generosity led them beyond their ability and into the sacrifice of themselves for the sake of generosity to others. [Christ-followers live as stewards for God to use all of life to serve His Kingdom purpose.](#)

The fourth distinctive is mission that draws in those not yet among them .46-47

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

'Together' or 'one-mindedness' tells us that mission rides on the rails of individual responsibility and a congregational commitment that flows from devotion to Jesus. A strong commitment to participate in the life of the Church is essential to build a strong together-ness among Christ-followers in community. Commitment is defined by participation. (Steven Covey) And from Luke's list we see that the participation of the culture mirrors the participation of every Christ-followers devotion. [Devotion to Jesus is a personal practice regularly participated in among His gathered people.](#)

When Christ-followers live in a rhythm of following Jesus, other people take note and follow along. People devoted to Jesus, worshipping Him, discipling and ministering to one another, and sharing God's love with all. There should be a regular flow of people being saved in the community of Christ-followers. Our question must always be, **"What am I doing to allow God to use me to lead others to become and be a real Christ-follower in life...together?"**

["And" tells us that God builds a Jesus-centered culture to serve His mission in the world when Christ-followers live devoted](#)

to Jesus.

Christ-followers create a Jesus-centered culture of gospel mission when they cultivate a life of full devotion to Jesus.

You can't devote yourself to anything as long as you are distracted, deterred, divided, or dead. It begins here... **Christian, what will you devote yourself to?**

I, as your pastor with the strongest and most compelling exhortation, encourage you to devote your life to Jesus through this local congregation, LifePoint Church!