

*1 Timothy 2:1 NIV - I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people--*

One type of prayer is intercession. In the Old Testament the priests made intercession for the people but through Jesus we can make intercession for a broken and hurting world that needs God.

*We don't intercede to change God's mind but to be aligned with His heart for others and pray that God's goodness will be revealed to them. Is there anyone God has placed on your heart to intercede for, and if so, is this someone your group can join you in prayer for? Take some time to intercede as a group for those who need Jesus' touch in their lives right now.*

## WRAP-UP

As we devote ourselves to the Apostles' teaching, joining in fellowship, sharing communion and meals, and prayer may we stand in awe of what God has done and will do in the future. And may God create in us a heart of generosity that compels us to share our very lives with God and His people as they did in the early church. Finally let us express an outpouring of our hearts through the worship of God. As we begin to regather, let's ask ourselves, "Who are we becoming, why do we exist as a church and will we keep Jesus at the center of everything we do?"

## Memory Verse

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*

*- Acts 2:42 NLT*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: \_\_\_\_\_

### Challenge-

*Seek God for direction as New Life regathers. Is this the right time for you to be there? If so, let God touch you in new and fresh ways as you rejoin with other believers. If not, join us online and pray for unity in the body.*

## **"Who We Are Becoming, and Why We Exist"** **Book of Acts – Week #4**

### INTRODUCTION

After Peter preached at Pentecost the church sprang to life. In Acts chapter 2 we catch a glimpse, an ideal snapshot, of what their lives were like. It can be tempting to use this description of the church as the steps we need to follow in order to be a Spirit-filled body of believers. But they did not live this way in order to get results and neither should we. They knew *who* they were becoming in Christ and *why* the church existed, which naturally led them to be devoted to their way of life. Let's search for the "why" and the "who" not the "how" of this passage.

### Key Passage

*Acts 2:42-47 NLT - 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity-- 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.*

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### 1. What We Devote Ourselves To

In Acts 2:42 we see the believers were "devoted" to a number of practices. The word for devoted (*proskartereō*) means to be continually loyal and steadfast to something. There was no doubt that these four practices shaped their daily lives.

The actions of the believers' lives followed what they were focused on, and the same is true of us. The content we consume becomes what we devote ourselves to. For the early church, the first thing they devoted themselves to was the Apostles' teaching. If our focus is on anything that doesn't have Jesus at the center (social media, sports, politics, entertainment) this becomes what we are continually loyal and devoted to.

*Pastor David challenged us to take a "Devotion Inventory". What are the things we constantly consume and focus on? One way to do this is to ask a close friend or spouse if the content of your conversations, or social media posts reveals someone who is devoted to Jesus, or someone devoted to something else. How do you feel about taking this inventory?*

If you are devoting yourself to things other than Jesus, they can dominate you, but turning your devotion to Jesus will set you free.

## 2. Fellowship

While there is a time for solitude, the bible doesn't teach that our faith is lived out in isolation.

*Ecclesiastes 3:1 NLT - 1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.*

*Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT - 24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

There is an idea in western culture that it is acceptable to have a relationship with God that doesn't include anyone else- "It's just me and God". But our faith is refined in community. Even during our recent period of sheltering at home, the church has gathered online, outdoors and at homes in small numbers. While the experience is different from meeting all together in the church building, it is a reflection of the early church, as we see in Acts 2:46.

*What are some of the ways you have maintained a connection with other believers during the past 3 months? Why was that important to you and how did it impact your faith during that time?*

Isolation has the potential to increase division. But when we have fellowship with one another God has more opportunity to deepen our relationships and knit our hearts together.

*What is it you most look forward to as we begin to regather on campus at New Life?*

## 3. Sharing Meals and the Lord's Supper

Something special happens when we share a meal together. It is a part of what we do as a family, including a church family. Perhaps this is why so much of Jesus ministry involved food. But when the church shares in the Lord's Supper it has a spiritual dimension; it reminds us of Christ's life, death and resurrection. It reminds us of who we are in Jesus and the hope we have in His second coming.

*1 Corinthians 11:26 NLT - 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.*

*If you are in a Life Group, have you ever shared communion together? If not, now might be the time to plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper just as the early church did. When you do take communion, let it serve as a reminder of who you are as the people of God.*

## 4. Prayer

The final practice mentioned in this passage was prayer. We may take this privilege for granted, but in fact we have been given a precious gift. We can come into the presence of the creator of the universe and commune directly with Him through prayer.

*Colossians 4:2 NLT - 2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:17 NLT - 17 Never stop praying.*

*There are many ways we can pray. What would you say is the type of prayer you pray most often: thanksgiving, praise, intercession, petition...? Which would you like to increase?*