

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES: To help you understand and become a part of the rhythms God designed for the Christian Faith.

- Oftentimes, people just embrace an idea or practice that was handed to them and don't ask... Why are we doing this? // Where did this come from? // Is there a precedent for it? // What is the heart behind it?
- Some just follow tradition, and some just reject it because they don't know the "why."

WHY THIS SERIES?

- So many feel they have the right to decide the terms of Christianity and to redefine the Scriptures.
- Many people's faith is about their personal likes or dislikes. Rather than letting Jesus and His word dictate the terms of Christianity, people pick and choose.
- We want to set the foundations, again, for what God meant the church to be.
- We want you to know that God designed the church knowing what humans are and the temptations we will face.
- You may not be aware of this, but this church is set up to mimic as closely as possible the first church—what they did and how they did it.
 - The pastors are equippers. They're not above others, but have a task.
 - We have Elders as the first church mandated.
 - We meet as the early church did—on the first day of the week, and from house to house.
- Remember the church was God's idea—Jesus' church is God's idea. (Matthew 16:17-18)
- The disciples were sent out to make disciples and form the Lord's church. (Matthew 28:18-20)

THE BOOK OF ACTS FOLLOWS THE DISCIPLES' SPIRIT-LED EFFORT TO DO WHAT THEY WERE TOLD.

Acts 2:36-47 ³⁶Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." ³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

NOTICE THE PEOPLE WERE *DEVOTED* (sold out to; absolutely committed to).

- God has always desired a devoted people.

JESUS QUOTES DEUTERONOMY 6:5—THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT:

Matthew 22:37-40 ³⁷Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

DEVOTED TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING, TO THE WORD OF GOD, THE DISCIPLES' AUTHORITY.

- Which led to the rest of their behaviors...
 - Devoted to meeting at specific times—in the temple courts and from house to house.
 - Devoted to communion (the breaking of bread)
 - Devoted to prayer
 - Devoted to worship

DEVOTED TO WHAT? BELIEFS, BEHAVIORS, RELATIONSHIPS, TIMES, AND DATES.

- In the Old Testament, God set up times, dates, celebrations, and gatherings to cause us to remember and to bind us together IN the New Testament.
- The Apostles (led by the Holy Spirit) set up rhythms and practices.
- We meet on the first day of the week (but also Thursday & Friday)—the day doesn't matter so much as the practices.
- These people of the early church became a new spiritual nation, family, body inside of other countries.
- God's word became central to what they did via reading it, absorbing it, feeding on it, praying through it.

Acts 20:7 1 Corinthians 16:2-4 Thessalonians 2:13 Colossians 4:16

THE WORD PLAYED THE CENTRAL PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

- Paul uses Jesus as an example:
 - Reminding people that they are clean by the proclamation of Jesus' Word.
 - Cleansing us from the behaviors of the world (sanctification), giving us a way to live. (**Ephesians 5:25-27**)

MEDITATING ON THE WORD BECAME A SOURCE OF SOUL-FOOD. (See Deuteronomy 8)

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

- Notice that fellowship with other believers is intertwined throughout the Scriptures.
- It's important to note what they did and why. (See **Hebrews 10:23-25** and **Hebrews 3:12-13**)

WHY YOU SHOULD BE COMMITTED TO A WEEKEND SERVICE AND THE SHARED PREACHING OF THE WORD:

1. It prioritizes Jesus as first on the first day of the week; everything else falls in line behind it.
2. It reveals to your kids what matters most to you.
3. It washes and feeds your mind and heart.
4. It develops relational ropes and experiences that remind us we aren't alone. If your kids are going to be Christians in this world, they need to know they aren't alone. They are not as weird as they will be told they are.

A NEW COMMITMENT THIS YEAR

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Acts 2; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 10:19-25

1. What have you ever wondered "why" about things in a church service environment?
 - A) How would you explain why we have preaching to a child or someone who is not familiar with church?
2. Read Acts 2:42-47 and Hebrews 10:22-25—twice. What do you see about how those who follow Jesus and their ways of gathering together?
3. What comes to mind when you hear "devoted?"
 - A) What do you think of when you hear "devoted to the apostles teaching?"
4. How does gathering together to hear the word of God be shared through preaching help you follow Jesus better?
 - A) What could challenge or get in the way of gathering together?
5. In what ways can you contribute to the "gathering to hear the word together" environment and experience?
6. What is God showing to you? How will you respond this coming week?

Passages to prepare for next week: Luke 22:7-23