

INTRO

- What's your earliest experience of a church?

READ

- Acts 2:41-47

In this summer series, we are exploring what the church looked like *then* in order to help us to see what the church should look like *now*.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Ekklesia (*ek-klay-see-ah*) is the New Testament Greek word most often used for church and it means "a called out people." In other words, the church is a people God has called *to himself out of the world for his purposes*.

Qu: From the Acts 2 passage, what are some characteristics and functions of the early church?

"They DEVOTED themselves..."

Acts tells us the early church devoted themselves to certain core practices that in turn made them grow in health, faithfulness and fruitfulness. To be devoted means to: focus on, commit to, be given over to something. As human beings we are designed for devotion, ultimately to our Creator, but sin disorders our devotion.

Qu: where do you see people's devotion being (mis)directed to today?

They devoted themselves TO..."

The passage gives us a list of things the early church devoted themselves to. We can summarize them into 6 core practices and will explore each one over the course of this series.

1. Learning TRUTH
2. Deep RELATIONSHIP
3. Joyous WORSHIP
4. Communal PRAYER

5. Winsome WITNESS
6. Sacrificial SERVICE

These 6 practices became an intentional rhythm of life for the early church that formed their love for God, one another and God's mission into the world.

This is the transforming power of devoting ourselves to certain practices of worship, community, and mission. This is the call to follow Jesus together in community on his mission.

Discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing. Jesus's command to follow him is a command to align our loves and longings with his, to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all--a vision encapsulated by the shorthand "the kingdom of God."

— James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love*

Qu: as you consider the devotion of the early church to these 6 practices, in what ways are you encouraged and challenged in your life today?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray that this summer would be a restful and intentional time of spiritual renewal.
- Pray for God's Spirit to highlight areas of devotion in our life that has been misdirected.
- Pray for wisdom to create your own rule and rhythm of life towards worship, community and mission.