

Talk/Bible study notes for youth resource



Bible focus

Read Acts 2:42-47. Here we see a radical vision of what a community of faith should look like. The passage is only 6 verses long yet it is one that is incredibly challenging for us today, and has the potential to completely transform how we do church.

Write **DEVOTED TOGETHER and OUTWARD** on a board or PowerPoint presentation. Briefly share how the early church displays each of these characteristics in the passage e.g. Together - “they had all things in common.” Then take time to unpack each point a little further, trying to apply to your church context.

DEVOTED

Big idea: Church isn't just another thing we do, it's who we are!

Key verses: vv42-43, 46

Church wasn't something they did, it was who they were. The entire identity of these early believers was consumed by their calling as a church. They “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” They were financially generous and filled with awe at the work of the Holy Spirit, praising God day by day with thankful hearts. The good news of Jesus transformed every aspect of their lives

At times it can be easy to only be a 'Sunday Christian'. Perhaps it can be difficult to display faith in Jesus in our school / college / work, but ultimately we know that we can still come to church every week and worship God without fear of being arrested and sent to jail! We therefore can become lazy in our faith, seeing church as just another thing we do in our long list of activities for the week. Yet this was not the case for the early church.

Being devoted looks like passionate prayer, radical worship, hunger for the Bible, desire to grow and regularly meeting with our church family. A devoted church prioritises these things above anything else, committing time, energy and resources to them.

Discuss:

- Which of these aspects of devotion is your church strong in? e.g. “Our church is great at praying.”
- Which of them you need to develop in? e.g. “I could be more committed to...”

TOGETHER

Big idea: The church should be a group of people from diverse backgrounds, united by our love for God and our love for one another.

Key verses: vv44-45

“How could Christianity be true when there is so much division in the church?”

“Religion is the cause of so much conflict the world would be better off without it!”

You have maybe heard statements like these before. People can often look at the church and see division and conflict. A disunited church is never an attractive prospect for an outsider looking in. Why on earth would you want to be part of something like that?

Yet in Acts we see an early church that was bound together by their love for God and for one another. This was a gospel community, not just a church building, uniting people who otherwise would have never seen eye to eye. No more was there Jew or gentile, slave or free, man or woman, for they were all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28) with one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). Once they realised that their identity was found in Jesus, they shared their possessions, their money and their lives as they pursued something greater than themselves, something of eternal importance!

This early church certainly weren't uniform, but they were united. The passage speaks of hospitality, food, togetherness, relationship and community. It's more than a digestive on the way out of church! People didn't hold on too tightly to their own stuff. They shared their resources and no one was in need.

Discuss:

- What things have the potential to divide a church?
- Why might this be so dangerous?
- What steps can we take to fight against disunity?

OUTWARD

Big idea: We aren't supposed to keep the good news to ourselves.

Key verse: v47

The church in Acts was completely devoted to meeting together to learn more about God, to praying for one another and to sharing each other's lives. These are all really important parts of our calling as a church. In fact without them, we wouldn't really be the church at all! Yet meeting together was never supposed to be all that we do. Church can never become a clique or a closed group. Instead, our calling is to reach out to those who are lost in their sin, bringing light to the darkest of places as we seek to make disciples of Jesus. The church is not to remain simply as a cosy community, but one that faces outwards to the world.

The description of these early believers in this passage speaks of risk and adventure. It screams of people whose whole lives were on mission, not crippled by the fear of failure or bound by the bonds of tradition. Their witness wasn't to be restricted to a single location – it was an outward movement to anywhere and everywhere - from their home, to their neighbourhood, to their city and much further beyond. Their lives gave witness to Jesus. They spoke out, opened up and invited in. They reached out to the lowly and the lost. They were fearless, bold and brave. They moved away from safety and stepped out creatively. And the result? The Lord added daily to the number being saved.

When we have an encounter with God, our lives are never the same. The Christian life is one of constantly dying to ourselves as we follow Jesus in every part of our lives. Faith in Jesus should never be comfortable, and it should never be kept to ourselves! God was "adding to their number daily those who were being saved". We know that salvation comes from God, and it's only through the power of the Holy Spirit that our hearts can be changed, yet God chooses to work through us, His church! We all have a role to play in God's plan to save people all over the world.

Discuss:

- In what ways can we be so focused on what happens inside the church building that we become too inward looking?
- How can we change this and what are some of the ways we can be reaching out better to those outside the church?
- As a church, are we praying and expecting the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of those around us like this example in the early church?