



# Faith Family Discipleship

## **Devoted to God's Word** *Acts 2:42-47 & Selected Passages*

**Main Idea:** Devotion to the Word of God is one of the most basic things the Lord uses to advance his Word, making disciples of Jesus Christ in and through his faith family.

### **The Lord's faith family should be characterized by devotion to God's Word (Acts 2:42).**

In the first description of the Christian church, one of the first words used to capture the character of the church was a Greek word that literally meant that the believers were "continually devoting themselves" to something. This word is important. To be devoted to something carried the notion that it was a continual action and a constant state of being for the early church. They weren't just thinking about these things occasionally, but they were devoted to these things continually. Their affections and their actions were set on pursuing what they were devoted to, and the first item in the list of things that the church was devoted to was the "apostles' teaching." Remember, the book of Acts covers the history of the first thirty years of the church. From the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven to the final imprisonment of the apostle Paul before his death in the mid to late 60s A.D., Acts records the history of the early church, which encompasses the timeframe in which most of the New Testament was written. However, at the birth of the church at Pentecost, the New Testament wasn't written! What we now have as God's Word in the New Testament was contained in what the apostles taught. The stories of Jesus' life and teachings, as well as the application of the gospel to the lives of God's church, were what the apostles taught and proclaimed. In other words, the apostles' teaching was the very stories, teachings, and truths that would become the New Testament we have today. At the beginning, the Lord's faith family was devoted to his Word, and the Lord's faith family still today should be characterized by devotion to God's Word!

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to study the word that's translated as "devoted themselves" in Acts 2:42. What does this word mean? What should that look like in your life as a believer?
2. What is the apostles' teaching? How does studying the context and the timeline of books of the Bible help to answer that question. Why is studying context important when it comes to understanding God's Word?
3. Are you devoting yourself to the apostles' teaching? What does that look like on a weekly basis? What does it look like on a daily basis? How does this apply every moment of every day? How do discipling relationships in your faith family encourage and protect devotion?

### **The evidence of a faith family devoted to God's Word includes...**

- *A devotion to teaching the Word (Acts 2:42, 4:2, 5:25, 5:42, 15:35, 18:11, etc.).*
- *A devotion to proclaiming the Word (Acts 4:2, 5:42, 8:4, 8:25, 9:28, 10:36, 15:35, etc.).*
- *A church that the Lord is using to advance the Word and to grow his kingdom (Acts 2:41, 4:4, 6:7, 8:14, 11:1, 12:24, 13:49, 19:20, etc.).*

If there's any question that the order of devotion in Acts 2:42 is accidental or unintentional, the book of Acts itself provides the clear answer: The Word is the very thing that God uses to make disciples of Jesus Christ in his world! A brief survey of words related to teaching the Word and proclaiming the Word (preaching or speaking the Word) provide a consistent and constant witness that the work of



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the Word was the priority for the faith family of God in the first century. The evidence of this is seen in the devotion to teaching the Word in the early church. From the birth of the church at Pentecost, teaching the Word became a foundational characteristic of the church. They were committed to teach the Word of God when gathered together privately, and they were committed to pay the price for teaching the Word of God publicly. Regardless of the risk or consequence, the testimony of the church was clear: A faith family devoted to God's Word is a faith family that teaches the Word. The evidence of their devotion is seen in the devotion to proclaim the Word in the early church. In addition to teaching the Word, the proclamation of the Word – which in Acts is described as proclaiming, preaching, and speaking the Word – was also a key characteristic of the early church. The proclamation of the Word was connected to the work of evangelism. The church was committed to sharing the gospel and calling sinners to repentance and faith just as much as they were committed to teaching the gospel to grow faith and to build up believers in their faith. Regardless of the risk or consequence, the testimony of the church was clear: A faith family devoted to God's Word is a faith family that proclaims the Word. Finally, the book of Acts makes it clear that a church that's devoted to the Word is a church that the Lord is using to advance the Word and to grow his kingdom. God revealed in the record of his work through his faith family in Acts that the Word is foundational to his work. The phrase "the Word" is used multiple times in the book of Acts to mark the movement of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The work of "the Word" is continually associated with the Lord's work of growing his kingdom through adding souls to his church. From the whole testimony of Acts, the answer is clear: The Word is the very thing that God uses to make disciples of Jesus Christ in his world!

1. What's the difference between teaching and proclaiming God's Word?
  - a. What is teaching? Study the word and the use of the word in Acts to help you answer that question. What is the purpose of teachings?
  - b. What is proclaiming (preaching)? Study the word and the use of these words in Acts to help you answer that question. What is the purpose of proclaiming?
2. How are you devoted to the teaching of God's Word in your faith family? How does your faith family – the church – as a whole contribute to a devotion to teaching the Word?
3. How are you devoted to the proclamation of God's Word in your faith family? How does your faith family – the church – as a whole contribute to a devotion to proclaiming the Word?
4. How do you see God advancing the Word and growing his kingdom in your church?
5. In Acts, do you see segmented ministry (children, youth, young adults, etc.), or do you simply see the church all together and God's work happening with all ages and with families gathered with one another? How does this relate to faith family discipleship in your church today?