

# TEACHING

## Week 2 | Ancient | Acts 2:42

### Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

### Deeper Dive

The book of Acts begins with Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus before He ascended to heaven. Soon after, we see thousands coming to faith in Jesus, and the birth of the early Christian Church. Acts 2:42-47 describes the Spiritual Practices adopted by followers of Jesus, as this early body of Christ forms into what we know as the modern church.

### Day 1 - What was the apostles’ teaching?

During the days of the early church, many of the apostles and those that followed Jesus’ ministry served as “witnesses” to what they had seen and learned from Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. They were continuing to teach the lessons they had learned from Jesus. The religious leaders that had persecuted and killed Jesus did not approve of the apostles’ teaching and new followers of the early church. They couldn’t understand the loving and grace-filled message of Jesus that they were continuing to teach, and feared the conviction and brokenness it exposed in themselves. Jesus had turned their self-righteous, law-over-love, condemning, judgmental teachings upside down and they felt their power, control and authority being questioned. Why did this new teaching show grace and love towards the poor, the broken and marginalized? How could Jesus have claimed Holiness, yet be in the same room with “unholiness”? This false sense of self-righteous protection was being shaken. They were teaching that obeying God’s law was the only way to salvation. Of course they had also added MANY other stipulations to God’s law over time. In contrast, the apostles were teaching that you needed to accept God’s forgiveness, grace and love FIRST, and through maturing in your faith God would give you the strength and wisdom to surrender to His Will and obey Him fully with your life.

The religious leaders couldn’t understand that this new covenant wasn’t erasing the law, but that it was because Jesus had *fulfilled* the law. Jesus was THE shining example of how the law was actually supposed to be lived out, instead of using God’s law as a weapon, or a tool of judgement. The Good News of the apostle’s teaching was the grace towards those that had been condemned by the idolization of the law. Jesus’ death & resurrection had established a new covenant with the people of God, and the early church was born out of this teaching. This was the GOOD NEWS!!

- Are there areas in your life where you are like the religious leaders? Are you trying to be obedient to God without the power of His love and grace?
- Are there areas in your life that you have added to God’s laws? Have you put pressure on yourself to accomplish things in your faith journey that God didn’t necessarily call you to do?

## Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Psalm 19: 7-11** ~The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold, they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.
- **Psalm 119: 14-16** ~I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.
- **Psalm 119: 103-106** ~How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
- **Psalm 1: 2-3** ~but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

Week 2: Teaching

## Day 2 - Teaching God's Law

When we hear the words "God's law": Are we imagining an angry preacher screaming from the pulpit?; or maybe that old Sunday School image of Moses with lightning bolts and the 10 Commandment tablets over his head?; do we feel like we've failed even before we've started?

For many of us, "Law" can be one of those words that causes us to recoil. Why do we feel so negatively towards the concept of laws? One reason may be that we honestly don't love being told what to do. In our human nature, even from the very first sin, we tend to want to do things our own way. We want to feel like we are in control, and having rules or laws puts God in authority over us. Of course another reason might be painful past experiences when someone used the laws of God in a wrongful or condemning way. The misuse of God's law is not a modern phenomenon. As we talked about yesterday, people throughout history have used the Laws of God in ways God never intended. Jesus encountered this during His ministry, and today is no different.

What exactly are God's laws? In very basic terms, God's laws are defined as: the commands and principles given by God to guide our behavior, relationships, and the way we live our lives. God's laws are a reflection of His very nature. Above all else, they are meant to mold and change our hearts & souls to make us more like Him as they reveal:

- **Our sin and brokenness** ~ God's laws reveal how imperfect we are as compared to who God is, and who He calls us to be. This is how He establishes true right from wrong. His laws are our moral compass that should provide protection & help maintain His loving order in our chaotic world. His laws also reveal our need for His love, guidance, strength, and forgiveness in our lives.
- **The peace & promises of God** ~ Ever wish life came with an instruction manual? God's laws serve as our ultimate guide. We are called to follow Him and live in surrender and obedience to His will. This isn't because He wants control, it's because God knows and wants the absolute best for us. In His great love for us, He wants us to live in the freedom and peace that only comes from following Him.

As we read these verses in Psalms, David calls God's laws perfect, refreshing to the soul, joyful, radiant, precious, pure, sweeter than honey, and even something to be "delighted" in. As we mature in our faith, and grow to understand God & His laws in their true and full nature, we can better understand his reaction to delighting in the law!

Daily Reflection:

- What is your first reaction when you hear the words "God's Laws"? Why do you think this is? Pray and ask God to begin a work of healing if you need His help in getting to a space of finding freedom & delight in His instructions and guidance in your life.

## Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** ~If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.
- **Matthew 5: 21-22** ~“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. .
- **Matthew 5: 17-19** ~“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

## Day 3 - Teaching the heart behind the law

God’s laws reflect the complexity of His nature. How can God love us unconditionally, yet hate the sin in our lives? Sometimes it can be hard for us as humans to understand the multi-faceted nature of God. It can even seem almost contradictory.

This idea of unconditional love & grace along with the Holy condemnation of our brokenness and sin perplexed the early church, just as it can for us today. Thankfully, Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live out these principles in perfect balance. Jesus lived a life fully embodying the loving, merciful and forgiving heart of God while still calling us to whole hearted Holy obedience to the Will of God. Jesus ate with sinners, offered them grace and forgiveness while also calling them to “go and sin no more”. Jesus focused less on outward “rule following”, and more on the reflection of God’s nature and the heart behind the rules. For example: when the law says not to murder someone, Jesus takes it a step further and asks us not to even “think” badly of someone in our hearts. His teaching didn’t erase the law, instead it goes beyond the outward expression of the law to honor God’s purpose in the law. Another example was in Matthew when Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the sabbath. This was against the interpretation of the “law” at that time of working on the sabbath. However, Jesus was sinless and rebuked their interpretation of the law saying that God calls us to “do good” on the sabbath, not to ignore those in pain around us in order to rest from work. They had missed the heart and the purpose behind the gift of sabbath that God had intended.

Paul makes this very clear in 1 Corinthians 13, when he gives examples of following God outwardly, without the strength of God’s loving nature inwardly. He says this type of outward obedience is no better than a “clanging cymbal”. If you’ve ever heard a clanging cymbal, you probably wanted to cover your ears and run away. This is exactly what happens when we try to follow God’s laws without the purpose and heart behind those laws. We tend to push people away from the Good News of the gospel.

Spiritual maturity comes when we fully surrender our hearts to follow God from the inside out. God is always WAY more concerned about the posture of our hearts, than the perfection in our actions.

Daily Reflection:

- As you try to be obedient to God’s Will in your life, are you more focused on rule following? Or are you allowing God to truly change your heart and guide you from the inside out?
- Are there areas that you have become a “clanging cymbal”? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the true posture of your heart?

## Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Acts 2: 36-41** ~“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.
- **Joel 2:13** ~Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.
- **Luke 6:46** ~“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

## Day 4 - Good Teaching = Good News

From ancient Old Testament tablets to life transformation, following the law of God is meant to change your life as you surrender to His teachings. God, and His laws, are absolute, never changing, and fully complete. Even so, we can see evidence throughout history where people have attempted to add, twist, and change God’s laws to fit their narrative. Before we get too “judgy”, or start to think of people that we believe have done this, don’t we often do the same? Maybe we emphasize the pieces of God’s word that make us feel better about ourselves? Maybe we don’t like hearing the sermons or teachings that convict us, or “step on our toes”? Jesus often ruffled feathers in this way. However, he was a master at cutting to the heart of an issue in a spirit of love and reconciliation verses a spirit of condemnation or judgement. This is good teaching, and this is what the apostles were also trying to teach in the days of the early church. Good teaching hurts at times, and steps on our toes. When we read these verses in Acts 2, as Peter is addressing the crowd, it says that it “cut them to the heart”. Ouch! This was not a “feel good” message. Instead, it says he warned and pleaded with them to repent from their sins. This might be one of those Sundays that you want to sink into the pew if you brought a friend, right?

If we are honest, we don’t always want good teaching. Who wants their toes stepped on, right? Can’t we just soften God’s message a little bit? Can’t we teach about the things that are convicting for others, and lets us feel good about ourselves as we sit in judgement of them? Similar to eating our vegetables, good teaching may not be as tasty going down as chocolate cake, but it is the nourishment for our souls that our bodies truly need. Throughout the Old Testament we see examples of this “good teaching” that caused Israel to repent and return to the Lord.

Surprisingly, after Peter’s humbling and harsh “good teaching” message it says that over 3,000 came to know the Lord that day. They didn’t need a chocolate cake “feel good” message, instead they needed to be “cut to the heart” in love. They needed to fully understand their need for a savior, and they needed to hear the Good News of God’s grace and forgiveness.

Daily Reflections:

- Have you ever had your toes stepped on by “good teaching”? Did your offense cause you to miss the message that God intended for you to receive? Or did you allow it to “cut to the heart” and begin to change your life?
- If you are totally honest, have you ever tried to tweak or soften God’s teaching to fit your narrative? Have you tried to justify yourself by minimizing your sin to judge or condemn someone else?

## Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Joshua 1:8** ~Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
- **Proverbs 6:20-23** ~My son, keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them always on your heart; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life.
- **Matthew 7: 24-29**  
~"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

## Day 5 - How to be a devoted student

We have learned this week that God's Laws teach us right from wrong, and exposes our need for God's grace in our lives. The apostles taught this foundational message of Good News to the early church, as they "devoted" themselves to the teachings of Jesus. As we practice being devoted students to these teachings, we will inevitably mature in our faith and begin to experience the delight, joy, peace and goodness that comes from following Him from the inside out. Remember that devotion isn't rules & perfection, it's consistently returning to Him. When you fail (and you will), don't let shame kill your devotion, allow God's grace to restore it again and again. Pray over these practical ways that you and your family can be devoted to good teaching in the New Year:

### 1. Rhythm of Personal Study:

- **Consistent & simple:** Prioritize consistency over intensity with a mindset of showing up even if you don't "feel" like it. Choose a time of day that you can be consistent. Even if it's only 15 minutes, 15 min is better than none. Choose a book of the Bible or a devotional book and make a doable plan for daily study.
- **Formation over information:** Get those toes stepped on!! Ask God to make you a teachable person. Ask God how this scripture should apply to your life, and humbly accept His answer. Don't be afraid to bring Him your brokenness, doubts and fears. Allow God to soften and change your heart from the inside out.

### 2. Rhythm of a Teaching Community: (If you need help joining a teaching community, please email [meloniep@gumchurch.com](mailto:meloniep@gumchurch.com))

- **Accountability fuels devotion:** In Acts 2:42 being devoted to teaching was done in a communal context, not alone. Discussing what you've learned in a small group, or with a friend, will encourage you put it into practice.
- **Teaching was received not curated:** In order to be good students, we need to receive good teaching. This means attending worship services, participating in small groups regularly, and studying with those that are strong in their faith.

### 3. Rhythm of Teaching Others:

- **Teaching reinforces devotion:** Teaching others what you've learned will only reinforce the truths that God has taught you. You don't need to be a Bible Scholar to share what God has done for you. Whether it's your kids, a small group member, or a friend, share the Good News of what you're learning on a regular basis.