

Marks of A Healthy Church, Part 1 **Acts 2:41-47**

*A healthy Church is marked by a deep commitment to the Lord,
to His people and to His work in the world.*

The Acts community had a devotion to the Lord that can be seen in their devotion to the Lord's Word, the Bible. Among other things, they were devoted to the Apostles' teaching. This is more than passive listening. They had a deep hunger to continually learn.

In his record of the early Church in Acts, Luke hits the pause button. We've encountered a flurry of activity. Up to this point, Luke has been painting with very broad strokes. Now he zooms in so we can see what the Church was doing in its earliest days. This is not to be read as if it's a liturgy or a statement of what they did every time they were together. This is a summary.

They were devoted to The Apostles' teaching. It's easy to read over this but please notice the presence of the definite article. Truth is specific, which also means it is exclusive. They were devoted to one teaching and that one teaching is specifically identified as – the Apostles' teaching.

This is specific and exclusive. It's also less than two months after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Here's the spiritual lineage of the early Church as of Acts 2:

Jesus ⇨⇨⇨ Apostles ⇨⇨⇨ First Christians

If the first Christians are narrow and exclusive, it's because the Apostles are narrow and exclusive. If the Apostles are narrow and exclusive, it's because Jesus is narrow and exclusive. This is a real problem for our postmodern American culture that wants all ideas to be the same. The first Christians were narrow because the Apostles were narrow because Jesus was narrow. This is also a real problem for those who want to slam the Church for being intolerant and appeal to Jesus as accepting everybody.

Jesus did not come as one of many Sons of God. Jesus came and presented Himself as the only Son of God, the only Messiah, the only Redeemer, the only Savior. Jesus is specific which means He is exclusive. The reason Jesus is specific is because He is unique.

Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6

The Apostles did not teach a new message. The Apostles proclaimed Jesus and they explained how to live as followers of Jesus. The Apostles' teaching is the content of the NT.

The word "devoted" speaks of doing something with intense effort. Receiving the Word of God was never meant to be a passive experience. Here's where it goes both ways. Not only were the new followers of Jesus devoted to the Apostles' teaching, the Apostles were devoted to teaching them. The task of the Apostles is to reform Israel. They embraced that task by diving into the Scriptures. They taught and they preached and they told the story of Jesus.

Recommend Reading for parents with young kids:

Read Aloud Bible Stories, The Picture Bible OR The Action Bible, Jesus Storybook Bible.

Recommended Reading for adults who want to know more about the Bible:

More Than a Carpenter (Josh McDowell), Has God Spoken? (Hank Hanegraaff)

Bible Reading Plans: <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/bible-reading-plans/>

Home Group Discussion Questions:

1. How are you doing at Bible reading? Is this a challenge for you? Do you have a particular plan? Need any ideas from your group?
2. What new insights on the Christian journey did you gain from this message?
3. Does it help you to know that the early Church was singularly devoted to the Apostles' teaching of the gospel story? How does that help or challenge you?
4. Did you hear Pastor Karl mention revival? Does this seem like revival to you? The early Church did some basic things and "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved". It seems that revival couldn't be that simple yet there it is in Scripture. Your thoughts?
5. Does any of this "devotion" to the Word of God look like you? How can you align your life more closely with the challenge of being devoted to the Apostles' teaching (the Bible)?
6. What do you think of the claim of Jesus to be the only way to God?