

Devoted to Church

Message 02 of 04 in the series: "Devoted 2021"

A. Some important definitions:

"Devoted" = 100% engaged

"Church" = "ecclesia" = a group of Christians

Note: In our culture, "church" also commonly refers to a building, worship service, or denomination.

Note: In the Bible, "church" NEVER refers to just one person.

"Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust... Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them..." Acts 14:23, 26-27 (NLT)

B. God has always desired to create a group of people who He can call His own who will love Him and bring Him glory.

1. This was God's desire in the OT.

"Then God said to him, '...you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations... This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.'"

Genesis 17:3b-7 (NLT)

"Therefore, say to the people of Israel: 'I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God.'" Exodus 6:6-7a (NLT)

2. This was God's desire in the NT.

- The Church is God's people. "...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy." 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NLT)
- The Church is God's family. "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son." Ephesians 1:4-6 (NLT)
- The Church is Christ's body. "All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NLT)

C. Some dos and don'ts for being devoted to Christ's Church:

1. We do need to love each other.

"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

John 13:34-35 (NLT)

"If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?" 1 John 4:20 (NLT)

2. We don't need to cause division.

"I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NLT)

3. We do need to do things together.

"...Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV)

"They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people." Acts 2:46-47a (NLT)

4. We don't need to neglect meeting together.

"...let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)

"But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!"

Revelation 2:4 (NLT)

5. We do need to pray for our church and the worldwide Church.

"Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere." Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

Life Application: I must determine whether or not I am devoted to Christ and His Church.

"Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself." Ephesians 1:21-23 (NLT)

"Be devoted to one another in love." Romans 12:10a (NIV)

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Connect Group Questions

1. What does the word "church" mean to you? What feelings/emotions does it evoke?
2. Discuss Centerpoint's belief statement on the Church: "The Church is the body of Christ, created by His Word and Spirit. The Church is not a religious institution, denomination, or building but is made up of all people everywhere and in every time who have surrendered their lives to Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God and to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth. All members of the church are called to ministry and service."
3. Which of the following images used in the New Testament to describe the church is most helpful to you?
 - The Church is God's people. (1 Peter 2:9-10)
 - The Church is God's family. (Ephesians 1:4-6)
 - The Church is Christ's body. (1 Corinthians 12:10-27)

What would Centerpoint look like if we were all 100% devoted to being God's people, His family, and Christ's body?

4. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. Even though churches have reopened worship services this year, worship attendance has dropped off dramatically in comparison to 2019. The same trend doesn't appear to be true regarding attendance at college football games. Why do you think this is? What do you think the long-term consequences of this will be for individual Christians? ...for the Church? ...for our church?
5. In John 13:35 Jesus said, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." Why do you think this is so?
6. Spend some time as a group praying for our church and churches all over the world. Ask God to:
 - Help us love each other. (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:20)
 - Protect us from division. (1 Corinthians 1:10)
 - Give us a desire to worship, serve, and share our lives together. (1 Thessalonians 2:8, Acts 2:42-47)
 - Keep us from apathy and drifting apart. (Hebrews 10:25, Revelation 2:4)
 - Remind us to pray for each other. (Ephesians 6:18)