

# Devoted to the Fellowship

(Series: Reimagining Church; Message Eight)

*“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)*

*“[Lifestyle] enclaves are not communities, just exclusive bands of individuals pursuing their own agendas” (Robert Bella, “Habits of the Heart”)*

- A. **“Gated communities” have “gatekeepers” designed to keep people out**
- B. **“Gated communities” tend to forget those who are outside the enclave**
- C. **Sadly, this often happens in religious communities as well...**

## DEVOTED

*“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer” (1:14, NASV)*

*“Day by day they devoted themselves to meeting in the temple” (Acts 2:26)*

- A. **“Devotion” is a “binding promise or pledge”**
  - 1. **Devotion is an enduring, stick-with-it-ness - even when it’s not easy**
  - 2. **Devotion is a powerful tool in building a lasting community**
- B. **Everyone is devoted to something; no one can be devoted to everything**

## TOGETHER

*“All the believers were one in heart and mind.” (Acts 4:32)*

- A. **Life in this community is marked by...**
  - 1. **...a commitment to unity, oneness, togetherness, and harmony**
  - 2. **...a refusal to tolerate unresolved conflict, constant complaining, personal attacks and resentment or bitterness**
  - 3. **...grace, love, and forgiveness**
- B. **Unity is a precious gift. It is hard to overstate. God is jealous about it...**
  - 1. **...because it is his “dream” for the human race**
  - 2. **...because he sent his Son to die so we can be right with him and each other**

*“He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, dividing wall of hostility...” (Ephesians 2:14)*

*“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you may agree with one another, so that there may be no divisions among you, and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (1 Cor. 1:10)*

*“Finally brothers and sisters, aim for perfection, listen to my appeal. Be of one mind. Live in peace.” (2 Cor. 13:11)*

*“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:18)*

## C. The oneness of the body of Christ requires our devotion

- 1. **Is there unresolved conflict between you and another in the community?**
- 2. **Do you speak negatively about a brother/sister in Christ to another?**
- 3. **Are you involved in a relationship that has grown cold and hostile?**
- 4. **Do you lack empathy? Do you freely offer forgiveness?**

## INTERDEPENDENT

### A. Christ designed his “church” to be a devoted fellowship...

- 1. **...a community to belong, to put down roots, to develop relationships, to worship God side by side, to care and be cared for...**

*“You are members of God’s very own family...and you belong in God’s household with every other believer” (Eph. 2:19 LB)*

- 2. **...a family where we encourage each other to become better followers of Jesus**
- 3. **...a shelter where we come - imperfect, needy, hurt, vulnerable - and are loved, embraced, and encouraged**

### B. So what can I do to make this a reality?

- 1. **First, do some loving**

*“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must love his brother also.’” (1 John 4:19-21)*

- 2. **Second, do some forgiving**

*“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.” (Matt. 18:22)*

- 3. **Third, wait before you jump; that is, always think the best of others**

*“Do not judge by appearance...” (John 7:24)*

*Be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:9)*

- 4. **Fourth, do some joining. What are you doing to nurture your and others’ soul?**
- 5. **Fifth, figure out how you can enhance the lives of those outside this community so they can become a part of this community**

*“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47)*

### C. Every church has gatekeepers (That would be us)

- 1. **By sharing our faith (or not), openness (or not), grace (or lack of it), hospitality (or not), we declare the gates of this church open (or not)**
- 2. **Together, in the power of the Spirit, we can build his community (city) on a hill, so the whole world can see it...**