

The Beginning of Christian Community

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[2 : 44] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. If you're doing this before us, we're going to be perfect before us. perfect before us. If we're doing this before us, we're going to be perfect before us, we're going to be perfect before us. to us about tonight and convicts us in whatever it may be. God, this is your time. Show up, do your work to the glory of Jesus. That's our prayer, and we ask it in his name. And God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. Well, \$13 doesn't sound like very much to most of us, but to Charles, it was everything. You see, Charles was a missionary working with the poor in Haiti, and he was serving a very small congregation there that was participating in a thanksgiving service that they were taking up an offering, and he had challenged them to bring a sacrificial offering for the mission. And when the service was over and Charles and several others were counting the offering and going through that, they noticed an envelope with the name on it, Edmund, and inside was \$13. Charles was stunned. In fact, so stunned, he couldn't even speak because he knew

Edmund, and he knew that Edmund was just a poor farmer that had very little money at all. Edmund lived day to day with very little despair. In fact, Charles knew that \$13 was about the equivalent of three months' income for Edmund. Charles immediately left the church and went out through the village to try to find Edmund, and later that day he found him, but Edmund didn't want to talk.

Charles persisted, and he asked him, listen, where did you get that money? And Edmund didn't want to answer, but he continued to push, where did you get that money? And finally, Edmund reluctantly said, I sold my horse. And once again, Charles was speechless because he knew that Edmund had just admitted to selling his primary means of making a living. And as he turned to walk away, Charles turned to Edmund and asked him one final question. He said this, why didn't you at least come to the church and give that offering yourself? And Edmund said, because I didn't have a shirt to wear. I want you to get the picture of Edmund in your mind. Here is a man who is sacrificing his primary means of income to participate in the mission of God. A man so poor, he didn't even have a shirt on his back.

And it is a picture of many beautiful things, but one thing it's a picture of is devotion, commitment, being all in, being sacrificial towards something. And I wonder this evening, Faith Family, do you know anybody that's devoted to something? Do you know anyone who is devoted to something? That is the kind of person that will sacrifice anything at any time for whatever that mission or cause might be. And there are lots of examples of this, right? I mean, many of you know of devoted fans that will practically sell their firstborn just to go to the game or to get season tickets. There are devoted followers on both sides of the political aisle that will do anything, believe anything to get their candidate elected. There are devoted parents that will do anything in their power, whatever it takes to provide for their children. Or maybe devoted friends that are willing to stand with you in the fire and take the bullets and walk with you in life. Devotion.

[7 : 23] Loyalty. Commitment. Being all in on something. Everybody right here. That is precisely what we see.

Here at the end of Acts chapter 2. Look at verse 42 again. In fact, the word is even used. And they say it, devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Now, let's quick review before we come into this passage. Now, you remember in Acts chapter 1, Jesus has just been crucified and risen. And before he ascends back to the Father, he appears to the disciples and he tells them that the Holy Spirit is going to come. But to wait, there's a time of preparation before this happens. The disciples wait. And then 10 days later at the festival of Pentecost, at this celebration, the Holy Spirit comes down. And there's what we talked about last week, a reenactment of Sinai. Signs and wonders and loud noises and tongues of fire. And what was happening at Pentecost earlier in Acts chapter 2? Was God birthing a charismatic movement? No. God was bringing in a new covenant. Do you remember the parallels we looked at last week? Track with me in your mind.

Israel rescued from Egypt through the Passover lamb. Forty days later, say 40. Forty days later, they get to Sinai. Moses ascends up on the mountain. Ten days later, so 40 and 10 is Pente. Fifty days later, Moses comes down with the law and Israel enters into covenant with God. Do you remember that?

And that's what Pentecost celebrated in the Jewish calendar. And what happens in Acts chapter 2? Jesus has just been crucified as the Passover lamb. He spends how many days with the disciples?

Forty days. And then what happens 10 days later? The Spirit comes down after what? Jesus ascends from the mountain. And the Spirit comes down. And the Spirit comes down 10 days later. Forty and 10 is 50.

[9 : 57] Pentecost. And now God is entering into a covenant with us for salvation has come. That's what's happening here. That's what's happening here. God has entered into covenant with Israel at Sinai. Pentecost celebrated that moment of Sinai. And this moment in Acts chapter 2, the new covenant of God is coming in.

Salvation has now come. And to show us that this new covenant, this mission of salvation to the ends of the earth is going to go to the ends of the earth, as Jesus said in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, you're going to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. As a picture of that, as a first fruit of that, they speak in tongues. That is, they speak all the actual languages represented there from all the nations. It's a sign as to where this mission is going. It's going everywhere. It's going to all peoples, all languages, all groups to the ends of the earth. And we here in America are really grateful for that. Amen? Aren't you glad it got to you? And so what would you expect to happen now that this new covenant has come down? Now that the salvation of God has come down, we can enter into relationship with God now. What happens is 3,000 people are saved. And they express that faith publicly through baptism. In other words, the new covenant has come, the church is born, the mission of making disciples of all nations has now been launched. And how do these 3,000 plus people respond?

They just go back home like nothing ever happened. Like the end of a concert or a ball game. It was a great show. It was an awesome thing to experience. But now we'll just go on about our lives. Oh, no. Oh, no, no, no, no. They, are you listening? Are now devoted to the things of God.

Their life has been forever changed. And you see it in their devotion. You see it in their commitment and loyalty to the things of God. Verse 42 again. And they, say it loudly, devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers. In other words, God is birthing a community. They, they don't just leave after the big show and go on about their lives. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. They are now devoted to something. Their life now has a purpose to something. They are now driven by something. They now belong to the community of God. And they're all in. They are all consumed in this work and this mission that God has called them to. Luke uses a word here we're familiar with. The Greek word, many of you know it, is koinonia. In fact, if any of you know a Greek word, that's probably the one you know. Koinonia. It means what? Say it. I figured you'd know that.

Three of you knew that. It means fellowship, right? We use that word all the time. Like, come on out. We're going to have a great time of? You don't say koinonia unless you're like a Greek jerk, right?

[13 : 46] Come on out. We're going to have some koinonia. What are you talking about? No, you say, come on out. We're going to have a great time of fellowship. The problem is we've dumbled that word down.

We've turned fellowship in the modern church into this idea, like having a cup of coffee with somebody or maybe a church potluck or, you know, kind of a small group at your home or having some Christian friends. That's kind of what we think about when we think of koinonia. But of course, that's not at all what the biblical word means, or at least it's not deep enough. And it's certainly like, just read the text. It's not at all what Luke has in mind here. Luke here is not saying, and they really became buddies. I mean, they just opened up about their feelings and had good talks. No. In fact, let me prove that biblical fellowship, this thing they were devoted to, was far deeper than that. You see it not only here in this specific text, but then I want to show you how that word koinonia, fellowship, is used elsewhere in the New Testament. But first, I mean, just look right here what this fellowship was all about. Verse 44, and all who believed were together and had all things in common. And most of us skip verse 45. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. Now, it is clear. You do not need a PhD in theology to understand that the fellowship that they are devoted to, in verse 42, is deeper than friendship. It is a sacrificial, joyful partnership in the mission of God. Luke is saying so much more than they had close relationships. He's saying that when it came to one another, they were devoted. There was devotion to the fellowship and this mission, they were devoted to the things of God. And they joyfully did it because they've been transformed by this new covenant. They've experienced the salvation of God, and that's made them devoted to the things of God. Not just here in this passage, but think also in the New Testament how that word koinonia, fellowship, is used. It's not, by the way, always translated fellowship, but it's the same word, koinonia. I'll give you four examples because I want to prove my point specifically. Look at Romans 15, 26 on the screen. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some koinonia. That's the word that's used there for contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. This is 2 Corinthians 8, verse 2 and following. Listen closely. In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty, think Edmund, have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part, for they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord. There wasn't any guilt sermons. There wasn't any twisting any arm. No, they did it on their own accord, begging us. We didn't beg them. They begged us earnestly for the favor of taking part, that is, koinonia, in the relief of the saints. 2 Corinthians 9, 18. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission from your confession of the gospel of Christ and the generosity of your koinonia, your contribution for them and others. Last one,

Philippians 4, 15. You Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into koinonia. Partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only. Faith family, come in right here because, listen, I use this word loosely.

We all use that word fellowship loosely, but when we define fellowship as just deep relationships, I mean, it was such a good fellowship, like he really opened up and shared, and we had coffee because you can't have fellowship without coffee, right?

When we dumb fellowship down to that, we're missing its biblical meaning. Listen, you, are you listening? You have not, and I have not experienced Christian fellowship until it has cost you something.

[18 : 40] Let me say that again. It's a great place for an amen, but I'm not surprised no one would amen that, right? You have not experienced Christian fellowship until it has cost you something. Fellowship. Fellowship, biblically defined, is sacrificial partnership in the mission of God, that we are devoted to one another and the mission to the point that it hurts.

And these early Christians had no problem selling their possessions and taking care of anybody who was in need because they were in fellowship with one another.

Most of you have probably seen the movie Miracle because for some strange reason, y'all like hockey. I don't understand it, but I guess I get it. I didn't grow up around hockey, but anyways, it's a good movie.

And if you've seen it, you know it's about the 1980 Olympics and the U.S. hockey team. And if you've not seen the movie, you probably should see the movie because it is a gripping story, certainly in the sports world. And you'll remember one scene where Herb Brooks realizes he's the coach of the USA team and he realizes that his team's not all in. In fact, you'll remember that his issue is that they are playing for the name on the back of the jersey. They're playing for themselves.

This is all consumed in what they want. And you remember after one game, after it finishes, he makes them go back on the ice and they practice over and over and over again until they can hardly move because he wants them to play for something greater than the name on the back of the jersey.

[20 : 25] Take a look. Hey. Hey. Again.

Again. Again. Herb.

Come on, Craig. Go to what? Again. Again. Michael Ruzzioni.

We're through Massachusetts. Who do you play for?

I play for the United States of America. America. That's all, gentlemen.

[21 : 34] And of course, what's the point there? If they're going to be a team, they're going to have to learn that it requires a sacrifice for something greater than themselves.

If we're going to understand biblical and Christian fellowship, we're going to have to realize that it comes with a sacrifice for something greater than our lives.

We are devoted to something bigger than us. And that's why, unlike those hockey players, they didn't have to be run in the ground and do it begrudgingly.

You're going to see that these Christians later on in this passage did it with joy, with generosity, praising God, because they got to be a part not of Team USA, but something greater than that.

The mission of God. And so they were devoted to the fellowship, to one another, and the mission that God has called them to.

[22 : 44] And Luke tells us here not just that they were devoted to this, but he tells us what they were devoted to. So look back again at these verses in verse 42. We'll see some of the specifics.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. Let's bring the mic down just a little bit. And all came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. They're selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as they had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Now, honestly, each one of these things requires its own sermon. And I probably could slow down in this series and do a sermon on each one.

But I'm just going to kind of give you four main buckets of we've already seen that these early Christians were devoted to one another, devoted to the mission of God.

[23 : 52] But what specifically were they devoted to in terms of their being together, in terms of their devotion to one another? I'm going to give you four. And I think all of these are important.

And I want you to use this as kind of an inventory of your own devotion to the things of God. Number one, they were devoted to the word. That is obvious from verse 42.

Keep in mind these 3,000 plus people that were saved at Pentecost are brand new Christians. And so they, like a new baby, cannot get enough to eat.

I mean, if you put it out there, they're going to slop it up. They are starving. They are hungering for the word. They are desiring the apostolic witness and teaching. They can't learn enough.

They can't be taught enough. They want to know the things of God. Do you? I really hope you haven't lost your appetite. Because you have gone from an infancy stage to maybe adulthood.

[24 : 56] Oh, we are to be devoted to the scriptures, devoted to the teaching of the word. Now, this word teaching is actually what we get our word for, for doctrine.

And so we see that these early Christians were devoted to the teaching of the scripture. And I've talked about this. Like when you come in on the weekend, I want you to come starving. I want you to come hungry.

I want your stomachs growling. And I'm going to do the best that I can by God's help in me to serve it up hot and fresh. All right? So you come hungry.

And I'm going to do the best that I can to unpack the apostolic teaching, not because I'm an apostle, but because the apostles wrote this. And I want to feed you. But I want you to be hungry for the word, even if you're 80 years old.

Because I don't ever want myself or do I want you or this family to lose our devotion to the teachings, the doctrines, the apostolic witness of the gospel.

[26 : 00] And maybe the conviction that falls up on you tonight is you've lost your appetite. That hunger for the word has been lacking.

And I don't know what the reasons for that might be, but I do pray that God would renew that appetite for the truth and that you would devote yourself to the study of God's word.

Amen? Second, they were devoted to worship. They were devoted to worship. In verse 42, we see not only the apostles' teaching, but the breaking of bread.

That's likely meals together in their homes. It can be the Lord's Supper to the prayers in verse 42. In verse 46 and 47, they attended the temple together day by day.

They received their food with glad and generous hearts. In other words, they made gathering together for worship a priority. They would eat together. They would go to the temple together day by day.

[27 : 04] They would pray together. In other words, and specifically in this context, it's important to understand that given the Roman persecution that's about to come upon them because they have just been baptized, and everybody knows that they're a follower of Jesus, and they're going to pay the price for that, they knew they couldn't get through this alone.

And so they made worship together a priority. And this is why you hear me talk a lot. Listen, listen, none of this come out of legalism. We don't sit there at the front door and be like, name please, check.

Oh, you haven't been here in a while. We don't do that, right? Because we don't want you to feel guilty about this. But our encouragement to you is, listen, you're not out to be out there living this alone.

Our congregational and corporate worship times of gathering together and hearing the apostolic teaching of God's Word is important to your soul.

And they knew this. We're not going to survive the persecution that's coming if we do this by ourselves. We must be together in worship. And so worship became a central part of their devotion.

- [28 : 17] Number three, they were devoted in sharing their wealth. And by wealth, I don't mean that they were filthy rich. It's just whatever wealth they had, they joyfully and gladly sacrificed it for whatever the needs were, whether it was within the body or for the mission.

And so you see, for instance, like Edmund, they're willing to sell their stuff and even give the shirt on their back to help support one another in the mission of God. Now, I have seen so many people take this passage politically and try to twist it around to mean something else.

Let me be clear. This is not socialism. This is not welfare. There are no guilt-based sermons happening here. There's no government legislation mandating that they do this.

This is simply what's happening. People getting cut to the heart by the generosity of the gospel that leads to a generous life for the mission. That's what's happening here.

You want to know what's going down here? Here's what's going down. People are being gripped by the gospel, and so they are willing to share with one another that the mission continues.

- [29 : 29] Nobody said you had to do this, and nobody's twisting their arm, and nobody's going Old Testament and saying, well, do you tithe or whatever? However, they're just cut to the heart by the gospel of God to the point that they are devoted to whatever it takes to make sure the mission moves forward.

And this is a characteristic of the early church. Listen to how it's described in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 32. Recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with suffering, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, sometimes being partners with those so treated.

For you had compassion on those in prison. Watch. And you joyfully, talk about weird. Here's weird. You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and abiding one.

Is it any reason why so many of us have never really experienced biblical fellowship? These Christians joyfully accepted the plundering of their property to associate with the people of God and the mission of God.

Why? We have a better possession than homes. We have a better possession than Wells Fargo. Whatever is given for the mission of God isn't loss.

- [31 : 08] It's always gain. And so these people sacrificially devoted themselves in the sharing of their wealth. Lastly, number four is they were devoted to witnessing.

Devoted to witnessing. It's clearly implied in verse 47, where it says, the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. In other words, more and more people were coming to faith in Jesus and joining in on this fellowship thing.

They wanted to be a part of this Christian community. In other words, they took seriously what Jesus said in Acts 1. You will be my witnesses.

And they were. And what was happening in their presence together was spilling over into the community. So I mentioned that these were kind of the four buckets.

These were things I wanted you to evaluate. So let's just put the list back up here just quickly. I want you to look at these. Devoted to the word. Devoted to worship. Devoted to sharing their wealth. Devoted in witnessing.

- [32 : 16] Like, I want you to look at that list and ask yourself, like, what are you by God's grace strongest in right now? When it comes to your devotion to the people of God, it comes to your devotion to the things of God.

When it comes to your devotion to the mission of God, what of those things are you most, can you see devotion in? Study of the word or gathering in worship because you're not meant to do this alone and it's important to be with other believers.

And because you have received grace, you want to be gracious in supporting others and the mission and devoted to witnessing. Like, wherever you go, you want to be a fragrance of Christ to those that are perishing and do not know the good news of the gospel.

So where are you strong and where are you weak? Not because I'm trying to guilt anybody. Not because I'm trying to make you feel bad. But I want the Lord, by his spirit, to renew your devotion to him and his mission.

And all of these things are important in our Christian life. Now, you might, if we talked back and forth here, you might say, yeah, pastor, but they experienced all those things because they all came from the same neighborhood.

[33 : 28] And they all went to the same school and they all looked alike. They all talked alike. They all thought alike. They had the same cultural values, the same economic status.

I bet you they were all reformed. No, no, no, no, no. They were probably all dispensational. I bet you they all voted Republican. Oh, no, no, no. They probably all voted Democrat. But whatever the case is, I'm sure these people all came from the same fabric.

Have you forgotten Acts chapter 2 verse 9? Look at it. Acts chapter 2 verse 9. This makes a really major point. I hope you're listening.

If your neighbor's asleep, punch him in the name of Jesus. Verse 9. Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia and Judea and Cappadocia and Pontus and Asia and Phrygia and Pamphylia and Egypt and parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene and visitors of Rome.

They were Jews and proselytites and Cretans and Arabians. And they were all hearing in their own tongues the mighty works of God. In other words, if you remember who the 3,000 that were saved were and where they came from, you will realize this.

[34 : 39] Notice it on the screen. The only thing they had in common was a common faith in Jesus. That's it. They don't even speak the same language. They didn't come from the same hometown.

They didn't go to the same school. They weren't from the same economic status. They did not have anything in common but Christ. And that was enough for fellowship.

That was enough for fellowship. That was enough to be fully devoted together with one another for the things of God.

So don't you walk up to me and talk about race or economic status or where you came from or the South or the North. None of that matters when it comes to our union with Jesus Christ.

Our unity in Jesus is not based on where we came from or the color of our skin. Our unity is based in a crucified man who walked out of the grave.

[35 : 44] He is our fellowship. And he is why we are devoted to the mission of God.

Notice the impact this has. I'm almost done. You know that's like the 30-minute warning. Almost done. Notice the impact this has. Just quickly first is look how this impacted their lives.

And this is the stuff. Listen, I grew up. I grew up in the church culture that would make you feel guilty about this stuff. Like how many times you go to church and how much do you give and how many hours are you spending in the Word?

And it was just all guilt, guilt, guilt, law, law, law. Let me just tell you. Forget all that stuff. That is not about what we are here at Faith Family nor is that what the Scripture is about.

Like look, look, look, look, look. Look, they didn't do these things because mama made them. They didn't do these things because pastor said so. Like look at the impact it had on their life.

- [36 : 42] Look at verse 46 again. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all people.

In other words, the text is saying they are doing this not out of obligation, not out of law, not out of religious tradition.

They're doing this out of glad and generous hearts. And they are praising God. So if for a moment you smell a hint of legalism, know that we oppose that here.

None of this is driven by guilt. It is driven by the gospel. It is driven by the grace these 3,000 people have just experienced by the Holy Spirit coming down.

And it is contagious. It has changed the way they approach life. But it doesn't just impact them.

- [37 : 47] Again, notice the impact it has on outsiders. Quickly, verse 47. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. In other words, this excitement bled into the community, and the Lord added to them.

Now, I love that phrase. I could preach a whole sermon on the phrase, the Lord added to their number. We could add to our number. Next week, the 100th person that walks through the door gets a 55-inch TV.

I bet you attendance would be up. In fact, some of you would be outside counting. 97, 98, 99. I'm next, right? Like, that's, that's, listen, you can, you can grow a church.

But that's not how a church is meant to grow. Who added to them? The Lord added to them. God brought the growth as they were devoted to one another and the things of God.

That's how church works. Jesus said, I will build my church. Now, listen, the last thing Jesus needs me to do is build his church.

- [39 : 03] Can I get an amen? Like, that's maybe the biggest amen of the night right there. Amen. He doesn't need me to build his church. He doesn't need me to add to Faith Family. What he's called us to do is be witnesses with glad and generous hearts.

Joyful in the things of God as we go about our life. And there'll be a fragrance of Christ that those who are perishing will smell and say, I want that. Where can I get that?

Why don't you just come and be a part of the sweet fellowship that we have at Faith Family? It ain't perfect. It ain't perfect at all. But the love of God is there.

And that is what's happening here. There's no strategic plan on how to add a thousand baptisms. I think God just showed you he can do three thousand pretty quickly.

He doesn't need your strategic plan. But he uses people devoted to the things of God.

- [40 : 08] Well, let me say this quickly and then close. The early church did not explode because a few educated, eloquent, paid church leaders told everybody about Jesus.

The church exploded because housewives and doctors and farmers and fishermen were transformed by the gospel, devoted to the fellowship of one another. And that produced a joy they couldn't contain.

And it overflowed into the community where they lived. That's Acts 2. And what would cause such radical cross-cultural devotion to one another into the things of God?

Like, what would it be that you might think would birth this kind of desire? Because let's be honest, it's not normal. I mean, most people after the concert just go home.

But after this mighty work of God, these people are together, devoted to one another for the rest of their lives. Like, what in the world would create this kind of radical fellowship and sacrifice?

[41 : 17] What was the message? I'm almost done. Hang with me. What was the message that cut them to the heart? Here it is. Acts 2. 23.

This is what the apostles proclaimed. And then they were cut to the heart by it. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

And God raised him up, loosing the pains of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. In other words, what was at the heart of this fellowship?

What was it that birthed this devotion? It was the gospel message. As my friend would say, they got bit. They got bit.

They got bit by the gospel. They got bit by the gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified. In other words, think of it this way. The message of a devoted Savior whose devotion led him to personal sacrifice birthed their fellowship.

[42 : 22] They were cut to the heart by a message of a Savior who sacrificed his life for the mission of God that included their salvation.

And so there was no turning back. There was no going home. There was no half-heartedness anymore. John makes a similar argument.

Look at 1 John 3.16. By this we know love. That he, that is Jesus, laid down his life for us.

And based on that example, how do we then live? We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. In light of his sacrifice, what really is our sacrifice?

I mean, is it really a sacrifice in light of all that Christ has done for us? In other words, these early believers simply could not look at the gospel.

[43 : 25] They could not look at the cross and the empty tomb and say, you know what? I'm just going to keep that to myself. My time, my money, my relationships.

You know, I'm just going to go on about my life. No, they were transformed into devoted followers of Jesus. I think about Bob Pierce as I close.

Bob was the founder of World Vision. Many of you are familiar with that organization. Bob died of advanced leukemia. Before he died, he was visiting some friends in Indonesia.

And they were walking through a village. And as they were walking through the village, they came upon this young girl. She was lying on a bamboo mat and she was dying of cancer. Bob wanted to know what was going on with her, what was her story.

And they basically said that she's laying here on this bamboo mat by the river because she wants her last days to be in a place where it's familiar and cool. And Bob reached down and just prayed over her, even though she couldn't understand a word of what he was praying.

[44 : 31] And when he finished praying, she mumbled something and he didn't understand her language. So he turned to his friend and said, what did she say? And he said, she said, if I could only sleep. If I could only sleep.

Her pain was so much she wasn't able to rest. And so Bob reached in his pocket and he took out some sleeping pills that his doctor had given him for his leukemia. And he handed the bottle to his friend and he said, you make sure that she gets a good night's sleep.

For the next 10 nights, Bob had some of the most painful, restless nights of his life. But he gladly and generously sacrificed himself to minister to the things of God.

Faith family, the gospel has cut us to the heart. Let me say that again. The gospel has cut us to the heart.

We are bit. And that gospel calls us to be devoted to the people and mission of God. And it will cost us something. After all, the very thing that brings faith family together in the first place is an act of willing sacrifice.

[45 : 59] Our Savior was fully devoted to the mission of God. So much so he gave everything he had. And when he was finished, he didn't even have a shirt on his back.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this beautiful passage for us this evening. It informs us to so much that our life should be pointed towards and devoted to.

And I have no doubt that there's some level of good, healthy, biblical conviction that there might be some areas that we are lacking.

Oh, God, would you just by your spirit and by your grace just restore that appetite in us. Restore those things in us that we would be as a result of the salvation that we've experienced in Jesus.

We would be not just motivated, but we would be devoted of all of our lives to the things that you've called us to, to the mission you have us on.

[47 : 06] I pray we learn tonight from these early Christians in their life and that we would be encouraged by it in our own lives. As we seek to know you more through your word and be together in worship and sacrifice generously and joyfully for your mission and be the fragrance of Jesus Christ in the world.

So help us. Help us. We need your grace and strength to do this, to do what you've called us to do. But may tonight we find ourselves encouraged by your word.

And we pray this in Jesus' name and God's people said, Amen.