

“DEVOTED”

BY MIRIAM RYAN

What are you devoted to? The Georgia Bulldogs, the Atlanta Braves, your family, your job, or a favorite hobby? The dictionary defines devoted as “zealous or ardent in attachment, loyalty, or affection.” I am reminded of the wave of excitement in Atlanta after the Braves’ recent World Series win. We were so devoted to our team that we even cancelled school and threw a parade throughout the city to celebrate the victory.

I am grateful to have been raised by parents who were devoted to their children. My Dad took this devotion to the next level by attending every sporting event possible for each of his four children. After being raised by an alcoholic father who was absent throughout his own life, he knew the importance of making his kids feel cared for by being present. I remember one Saturday when I had a cross-country meet that was four hours away from our hometown. My Dad was also the pastor of our church, which held services on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. An expression of devotion that I’ll never forget was his insistence on coming to that meet (even when I told him it was OK to miss). He drove four hours there, stayed for about a total of 30 minutes to enjoy the meet, drove four hours home, and arrived just in time for the service to start that evening.

The church in the book of Acts also demonstrated devotion. Look what Luke (the writer of Acts) says about the things they devoted themselves to in Acts 2:42-47:

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ 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, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

As you begin a New Year, what will you devote yourselves to? How might the early church serve as an inspiration for us as we desire to be zealous for the Lord this year?

Who is he who will devote himself to be close to me? declares the Lord.

(Jeremiah 30:21b)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stands out to you, encourages you or challenges you from Acts 2:42-47?
2. What is something that is easy (or fun) for you to be devoted to? Why do you think this is the case?
3. What is something you want to be more devoted to but is challenging for you? What challenges get in the way of your devotion?
4. What things were the Acts church devoted to in verse 42? Talk about what you think each of these things mean (use your Bible notes to clarify if necessary).
5. As you reflect on this list, which one of these practices do you naturally gravitate toward? In which of these practices would you like to grow in devotion?
6. As you reflect on this list, where do you think our church as a whole displays devotion? Where would you like to see our church grow in its devotion? (Personal Challenge: What if you began to pray for growth in this area in 2022 and asked the Lord how you could become a catalyst for this growth?)
7. What was the result of the believers' devotion? How did it affect the way they lived as a community? How did it influence the way the community viewed them?
8. What is one concrete, tangible, next step you'd like to take to grow in devotion in your own life 2022? How might this group encourage you or help keep you accountable?