

Theme: Deep delight in God is not primarily cultivated through isolated spiritual practices but through the devoted corporate worship described in Acts 2:42, where the gathered church receives the means of grace that fuel and sustain our personal walk with God.

I. Into the Wild - The Tragedy of Isolation

- A. We read it while in Alaska - Christopher McCandless
- B. A young man who seeks increasing isolation, creates the alias of Alexander Supertramp goes into the Alaskan wilderness - and dies
- C. Most of us would never think of doing that - but many try to do it spiritually!
- D. Many approach their walk with God like this - me and Jesus! But Acts 2:42 is about something far different!

II. Early Christian Worship Gatherings

- A. Luke is describing early Christian worship gatherings
And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42
 - 1. 'Apostles teaching' rather than 'reading Scripture'
 - a. Ultimately, this points to our need to feed upon Scripture, but Luke specifically references this as the public teaching of the Word by the Apostles.
 - b. Almost none of them would have owned a Bible - this did not happen until the 1500 and 1600's!
 - 2. Fellowship - you can NOT do this in private!
 - 3. 'Breaking of bread' is the Lord's Table for Luke, and this can NOT be done in private.
 - 4. 'THE prayers', not just 'prayer'.
 - a. Some translations say 'prayer,' but the Greek is definite and plural - the prayers.

- b. This is not primarily a reference to private prayer, but rather the prayers of the gathered Church.
- 5. The context is clearly corporate, not individual
And all who believed were **together...** ⁴⁶ And day by day, **attending the temple together** ... Acts 2:44, 46
 - a. There is an emphasis on 'together' in the passage
 - b. Luke specifically says they were going to the Temple together.
 - c. They probably gathered in the Temple precincts for their public worship at first, being devoted to the practices listed in v42.
- 6. Luke is not intending this primarily as a description of the private activities of the early believers, but rather as a description of the pattern of Christian worship.

- B. The key components of Christian worship
And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42
 - 1. Luke lists 4 key components of Christian worship
 - a. The Word - the Apostles' teaching
 - b. Fellowship with other believers - fellowship
 - c. The Lord's Table - the breaking of bread
 - d. Corporate prayers - the prayers
 - 2. We know that Scripture and prayers were sung as well as spoken
Let **the word of Christ** dwell in you richly, **teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but **be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart**, Ephesians 5:18-19

- a. Very similar passages - 'Let the Word dwell richly' is changed to 'be filled with the Spirit.'
 1. This highlights the tight link between the Spirit and the Word!
 2. To be full of the Word IS being filled with the Spirit!
 - b. The pronouns are plural - "y'all" - this is corporate
 - c. The Word & the Spirit fill us through worship in song!
 - d. In our singing, we not only praise God - we teach the Word to one another!
 - e. The songs include direct Scripture (psalms) and also songs that are based upon the great truths taught in Scripture (hymns and spiritual songs).
3. We know early church gatherings after New Testament times followed this format!

And on the day called **Sunday**, all who live in cities or in the country **gather together to one place**, and **the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read**, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, **the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things**. Then we all rise together and **pray**, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, **bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings**, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and **there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given**, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. (Justin Martyr - Rome)

"[they] **meet on a fixed day** before dawn and **sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god**, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but **not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery**, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to **assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food.**" (Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan - Turkey)

Tertullian Apology chapter 39 - meetings consisted of reading and teaching from Scripture, singing (both Scripture and other songs), fellowship and conversation, giving of money, the Lord's Supper, and prayers. (Tertullian - Africa)

- a. Note the similarity of these to one another and to Acts 2:42 and other Scriptures!
 - b. They met on Sunday to hear the Word read and taught, for fellowship, to eat the Lord's Supper, to sing, and to pray.
 - c. These writings cover about 100 years and a wide geographic area - this was the universal practice of early churches!
4. Acts 2:42 and other writings of the New Testament, along with the writings from the early centuries of the church, make it clear that they gathered each week on Sunday for singing, reading and teaching Scripture, fellowship, the Lord's Table, and prayer - as we do at BRCC!

III. Applying the Word

A. Have I embraced the idolatry of hyper-individualism?

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

1. We live in a hyper-individualistic culture that idolizes the individual over the group, and the private over the public.
2. But Acts 2:42, and Scripture as a whole, focuses on the group and the public as the foundation, with the individual and the private as the overflow.
3. The monastic tradition also gave a hyper-individualistic, reclusive view of the spiritual disciplines, which treated them as a retreat from the public and often focused on individual communion with God rather than corporate worship.
4. This is evident when one reads many great books on the spiritual disciplines - the dominant focus is on PRIVATE practices rather than the means of grace in the context of gathered, public worship.
5. As we will see, there is a call for us to engage with God via the Word and prayer in our daily life, but the foundation is a life built upon the means of grace experienced in the weekly gathering of the local church for worship.
6. The New Testament knows NOTHING of a privatized, "me and Jesus" spirituality - it is always in the context of being part of a local church that one thrives and grows spiritually, and that the Holy Spirit fills me and works in my life.
7. Do I have a biblical view of the ESSENTIAL nature of gathering with GOD's people in person for corporate worship?

8. Have I embraced the idol of our age so that I view participation in corporate worship as an optional add-on to my private walk with Jesus, or do I have the biblical understanding that the corporate gathering is the foundation and my personal walk is the overflow?

9. Am I devoted to corporate worship as described in Acts 2:42?

B. Practical tips for being devoted to worship

1. DEVOTED - Make gathering with the church each week a high priority - be devoted to it!
 - a. In Acts 2:42, they don't just happen to gather - they are DEVOTED to it.
 - b. This will REQUIRE pushing back against our culture
 1. Many kids' sports leagues conflict with gatherings for worship; they must be refused.
 2. Other activities will vie for us to do them and miss gathering with the church - we must be DEVOTED!
 3. This was my practice from the earliest days of my conversion - and I have NEVER regretted it!
 - c. There are times we can not - required work, sickness, travel - and this is why we have the livestream and podcast!
 - d. But these things can NEVER replace physically gathering with God's people to receive from our gracious God.
 - e. This is not legalism - it is DEVOTION!
2. PREPARE before the worship meeting begins
 - a. Example - eating bad food before working out
 - b. Arrive well before the meeting begins so you do not miss any part of it or feel rushed as you come in.

- c. Take a Sabbath break from news, TV, books, or music other than Scripture and worship music on Sunday morning so your heart is prepared to encounter God in the gathering.
 - d. Avoid staying up late on Saturday if possible, so you do not sleep late or wake up tired.
 - e. This is not legalism - it is DEVOTION!
3. MAKE time for the Spirit's work - don't rush in & out
- a. A rushed soul & mind will not hear the Spirit's voice
 - b. Fellowship is one of the aspects of corporate worship - and not just the 5-minute break!
 - c. You will be amazed at how not being rushed will allow you to receive from every means of grace in a way you can not otherwise.
 - d. As I often say at the end of After Hours - come early, get a cup of coffee, and then stay late for fellowship - you will be glad you did!
4. EXPECT God to meet you and actually work in the means of grace as we gather!
- a. It is easy to go through the motions of ritual and not expect God to work as He has promised.
 - b. We need to come EXPECTING God to work in us from when we walk through the front door until we drive off the property - through song, prayer, Word, Table, and fellowship!
 - c. The previous tips of PREPARE and MAKE time will help us to stir up the expectation that God will work.
 - d. As I often say at the end of After Hours - come early, get a cup of coffee, and then stay late for fellowship - you will be glad you did!

C. The Table of Grace

- 1. This is an essential part of worship in Acts 2:42
- 2. This is a central means of grace/spiritual discipline
- 3. Come, expecting the Spirit to feed and strengthen you here!

Devoted - Worship

Acts 2:42
 April 19, 2026
 Communion
 1 Peter 5:8-10

Teaching keywords: Means of Grace; Worship; Christian Life; Church; Baptism and Filling with the Spirit

The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26