

10.15.20 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: Devoted to Fellowship

Scripture Reading: [Acts 2: 42](#)

Reflection: Pastor Evan

Since I agreed to write this devotional on the second phrase in “The Church’s Rule of Life” I have been reading the Gospel of Luke in light of what he wrote in the acts of the Holy Spirit. (You remember that he wrote his gospel and the Acts as a two part history of the life and work of Jesus, correct?)

Luke’s presentation of Jesus’ sermon given on a level place ([Luke 6:17](#)), after a night of prayer on a mountainside is shorter than Matthew’s account of a Sermon on the Mount, but the topics relate to each other, understandably. The Sermon on the Plain was given to “his disciples” ([Luke 6:20](#)). It was and still is meant to be the rule of life for those who name Jesus as Lord and as Savior. It describes how we will devote ourselves to each other in the new earth when Jesus returns.

On Sunday, Oct. 4 Pastor Doug defined “devoted”. It means having a humble spirit (“What does this mean?”) and being a disciple of Jesus (“What shall we do?”). It means recognizing that to live in Christ is not only to be liked by others, but also to live for Jesus with others. It is to earn their respect for whose we are and how we live in obedience, submission, and service to one another for the glory of God’s name.

To be devoted to Christ-like fellowship is to create a community where the following is the norm, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you ([Luke 6: 27, 28](#)).” It means to “Forgive, and your will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you ([Luke 6: 37, 38](#)).” It means we allow the Holy Spirit to identify the plank in our own eye before trying to remove the speck in someone else’s eye (and even removing that speck in the love of Jesus Christ, not your own standard of speck removing).

I believe that the “Rule of the Church” requires us to devote ourselves constantly to the well-being of all others. When we allow the apostles’ teaching (also presented in Acts 2, under the Spirit’s power) to consume us and to be devoted within us, when we wait and pray for the Spirit’s empowerment of what the Sermon on the Plain (and Mount) teaches, asking what the Spirit wants us to do, then our fellowship will be dramatically different than what it often looks like today. Consume the Gospel, be wholeheartedly devoted to it, do what brings honor to Jesus who gave himself wholeheartedly and “whole-bodily” for others and for you.

Live and serve seeking God-honoring respect for whose you are and for who you are.

Tim Tebow was a highly successful college football player. He won college football’s award as the best all-around player (the annual Heisman Award) as a sophomore. More importantly, he is a Christian and a son of missionary parents. On his blog (found at <https://timtebow.com/>) he wrote recently,

“Millennials might be the last generation to remember life before the like button. What was invented as a simple and harmless, animated thumbs-up feature for Facebook in 2008 now controls the life of many.

Imagine if we lived in a time where we didn’t have “Like” buttons, but instead, we had “Respect” buttons. Would you rather have 110 Likes or 34 Respects? Do you hand out respect the same way you hand out Thumbs Up or Hearts?

We live in a day and age where people live to be liked on social media. We've become conditioned to fear criticism because everything is about being "liked". If it's not "likes", it's "followers", and if it's not "followers" it's "shares". It's human nature to seek validation and acceptance because it gives us a sense of belonging and community. However, we have to pause and ask ourselves which communities are we joining, and what do we have to do to get there?

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines, a "Like" is *an electronic registration of one's approval of something, such as an online post or comment for others to see.* In simple terms when you like something, it means you simply feel some attraction to it or you find pleasure in it. On the contrary, "Respect" is defined as *a consideration worthy of high regard or esteem.* This means for someone to earn your respect, they have to try a little harder, and vice versa.

Like most people, I was at a place in my life where I wanted to get likes, but I knew that the likes were fleeting. This has been one of the hardest lessons for me to learn as I am naturally a people pleaser. The likes would come after a big win or a talk where I said something that people wanted to hear. Soon I realized I don't want to be someone that gets "likes." Instead of "likes", I would rather get respect.

To earn a "Like" or "Heart" all you need to do is give people something they can identify with, something that will spark a memory, cause a laugh, or tug at a heartstring. Earning respect is much harder. You need to work for it. You need to portray integrity, skill, talent, expertise, craftsmanship, athleticism, hustle, grind, tenacity, or grit. Respect is so much deeper than a like, than saying the right thing that people want to hear. Yes, you may get criticized. For me, I then remember that I at least tried to stand for something in my life. It might not have been something that's always been popular or even everyone believed in, but at least I tried to stand with it, with a firm conviction and belief that I was trying to do the right thing for God and for people. And hopefully my actions would be able to back that up.

Regardless of what you decide to share with the world, let's make a team effort to not seek to be liked, but to seek to be respected. Let's start a movement where instead of simply clicking a button, we share a compliment, thoughts, or prayers."

The Church is to be the fellowship of people who not only respect one another, but also are respected by others because of the obvious display of obedience, love, sacrifice, forgiveness, and repentance (to name a few). When we devote ourselves to THE fellowship, God gets the glory for the sake of his Son's name.

Prayer:

Our Father in Heaven, being in real fellowship is hard enough, but being devoted to that fellowship is harder yet. I fail and I live among people who fail like me. Strengthen me to be devoted to the Body of Christ along with being devoted to the gospel teaching and preaching, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. May my life be one of fellowship with you, with myself, with others, and with your creation so that righteousness may reign. AMEN

Action Item for the Day/Week:

Identify one person with whom you should be in devoted fellowship, but you know you are not. Correct the situation.

Song for today:

[Lord Jesus, I long to be Perfectly Whole](#)