

REVIEW

Anthony opens this session by explaining that Manchester’s cathedral has been a place of devotion since the seventh century. **Describe places in your city or neighbourhood in which you sense an atmosphere of devotion.**

We’ve learned in this series that it’s possible to *discover* God’s love for us and that when we put our trust in Jesus, He *delivers* us from the old life of sin, and we become new creations. The next step we take on the discipleship pathway is to *devote* our lives to Him. **Where would you place yourself on this pathway? If you’re comfortable doing so, share whether you’re in the discovery phase or trusting God for deliverance or growing in devotion.**

People can be devoted to all kinds of things other than Jesus. **If you feel comfortable doing so, share about a time when your focus shifted and you were distracted by – and devoted to – lesser things. How did God convict you and lead you to repentance?**

Jesus asked His first followers, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ (Matthew 16:13) **What were the popular opinions of the day?**

Then Jesus asked them, ‘But what about you? Who do you say I am?’ (Matthew 16:15) **Do you agree that this is the most important question you’ll ever answer? Why, or why not?**

When Peter blurts out, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!’ (Matthew 16:16), Jesus promises that He will build His church (starting with fishermen like Peter), and that all the powers of hell won’t be able to conquer it (Matthew 16:18). **Would you describe your church community as a gathering of delivered, devoted people, coming together to smash down the gates of hell so people can walk free? Why, or why not? In what ways has Jesus continued to build His church where you live?**

Acts 2 gives details of how the believers in the early church devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, and prayer. They were open to the work of the Holy Spirit. They were generous with their possessions and time, meeting regularly. They ate together and sang together. As a result, God added to their number every

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day. They were unstoppable. **What kind of active devotion would make your group of Christian friends unstoppable? Have you ever shied away from visible devotion because you were worried about persecution, or about being laughed at or socially ostracised in some way? What would it look like to courageously show up and be devoted anyway?**

The first followers of Jesus took responsibility for their spiritual growth, devoting *themselves* to the Word, worship, and one another. **How do these three aspects of devotion play out in your life? Do you tend to rely on someone else or on the good vibes at church to stir up your devotion? What would it look like for you to own it – for you to devote yourself?**

Anthony says, ‘The early church devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. They immersed themselves in the story of God... They applied and obeyed the Word. They memorised the miracles... Nothing could stop them praying alone with God in the secret place or corporately as a body, in gatherings large or small – not religiously but relationally and regularly...’ **Share stories about times when corporate or individual devotion has led to miracles in your community. If you don’t have stories to share, consider how God might be stirring your faith and provoking you to devote yourself afresh.**

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BIBLE EXPLORATION

2 Chronicles 7:14 reads, ‘Then if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.’

Read all of chapter 7 to establish the context of this promise. God longs for this same devotion from us today. How is He calling and convicting you, your community, and your nation, to humble yourselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from your wicked ways?

In Luke 16:13, Jesus explains that we can’t be devoted to God and to money. **Discuss what you’re learning about overcoming materialism and making God your heart’s highest priority.**

Read James 1:22–25. **According to James, what is the result of actively devoting ourselves to the truth of God’s Word?**

Read Colossians 3:12–14. **According to Paul, what is the result of actively devoting ourselves to fellow believers?**

LAST WORD

May you be inspired and encouraged to love God with all your heart, and to love others as yourself, intentionally devoting yourself to worship and the Word, to prayer and people. The explosive experience of the early church can be our experience too if we devote ourselves to Jesus and ready ourselves to be developed and deployed by God to do great things for His Kingdom.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Meditate on Philippians 4:8–9: ‘Think on these things, and the God of peace will be with you.’ What would it look like for you to devote yourself, this week, to whatever is true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise?

Write: Write out a modern rendition of Acts 2, describing the devotion of your church community.

Pray: Set a reminder on your phone to make a hard stop for five minutes of prayer, somewhere in your day, and use that time to devote yourself to thanking God for a dozen small, good things that have filled your day.