

Introduction: Pg. ____

Jesus. Son of God Born. Lived. Died. Rose. Left. And when he left, he left his mission in the hands of his followers. Amazingly, this group of men and women became the most successful start-up company the world has ever known. Their influence would soon span the globe. What was their secret?

If we were to walk the streets of Jerusalem in those days, we would see how lived together in complete harmony. They lives synced up! (No issues of the cloud not working, you feel me?). They files were constantly dropped on every platform! There were very few conflicted copies in the early church. :)

To be in harmony means we have to be prepared to sacrifice the spotlight. What does a drummer look like in a symphony? No Metallica killer solos. It's a big, round tempone drum. Thump. Thump. Thump. Dididididid-dummmmm. That's it. But you put that drum, with those strings, and those woodwinds and horns, all following the conductors magic wand, and you have symphonic delight. That's how it works in the church.

The were on Mission in Community: **PIC: MISSION in COMMUNITY**

The secret to their harmony was not their own ability. They were empowered by God to do this, because when he left them, he didn't really leave. God the Father and God the Son, sent the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit to be with them and to enable them to do all that Jesus instructed them to do.

- Acts 1:8 says, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in (here, there, and everywhere). Geographical impetus. YES. Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** Spiritual impetus: Jerusalem & Judea (where they want to kill you); Samaria (where you hate them); and the ends of the earth (where you've never been).

FCF: If we are being honest, the kind of life Jesus invites us to live startles our individualistic tendencies:

- What? Help? I got this.
- Share my needs, my time, my resources, my joys, my sorrows, my concerns, my life? Well, I'm a lil' busy for that.

But the first followers of Jesus operated with a *“We not Me”* mindset. They were family. They shared the same spiritual blood. The group, not the individual, held priority. They understood when Jesus died, he died, not only to make right our relationship with God, but to also reshape how we relate to one another.

T: This morning we are going to think about what it looks like to share . . .

“One: Life Together” Acts 1:1-4-32

As we cover highlights from the first four chapters of Acts, we are going to zoom in on the summary statement found in 2:42-47. My hope is that our church will emulate what we find and . . .

The Point: Live life together with a WE OVER Me mindset.

What would it look like to share life together as Jesus' church? *Acts 2:42-47* tells us. (This is my dream church. I hope you agree.)

- 2:42: THEY (singular or plural? - Alright.) devoted THEMSELVES (singular or plural? - Alright.) to . . .
- These actions of devotion were acts of plurality. They were moving in harmony on this. There was no dissonance.

- Devoted refers “steadfast and singleminded fidelity to a certain course of action.”

T: What were they given to? Let me give you *five* encouragements from their example of devotion. #1 ...

I. Be devoted to the word of Christ - TOGETHER (2:1-42).

- The first action in the list is the “apostle’s teaching.”
- The word apostle means “sent one.” Who were they sent by? Jesus. The content of their teaching matched the content of his teaching. His marching orders were foundational to everything for their lives. They learned his words, and they lived his words.
- We see Peter and the apostles together, proclaiming the good news about Jesus in Acts 2:1-41.
- The truth of God’s Word unified them; gave them direction, and made the strong.
- Just as players in an orchestra won’t be in sync unless they look to their conductor, so the church won’t be in sync unless we look to Christ.

- And they did this together as ONE
- I think sometimes we feel like we’re only really being “super spiritual” when we’re studying the Word on our own. I mean, that’s great. We should devour the Word on our own but ...
- Let me commend a new practice: find time to get in the Word with friends.
- Here’s an encouragement: Start small! Ain’t nothing wrong with it!

- Let me break this down for you ... And give you a framework: this is amazing!
- I was hanging with a friend Friday and I encouraged him to go read 10 verses with his spouse. Here’s how this works (starting small):
 - **Read** the 10 Verses (in this case only 207 words). It will take you about 75 seconds. If you read it twice we are up to 2 and a half minutes.
 - **Discuss:** Pick a question and discuss for 2 minutes (one minute a piece): (Take the 4 arrows)
 - **What did this passage mean to its original audience in God’s Story?**
 - **What does this passage tell us about the triune God?**
 - **What does this passage tell us about man?**
 - **What does this passage demand of me today in God’s Story?**
 - **Pray:** Ask God to help your friend put the truth into practice.
- This is why spend a portion of most every Community Group considering what the Word of God says and how we can help one another be devoted to it. When we get together in community, I see Christ in you, and I’m motivated to live for Christ and then you see Christ in me, and you’re motivated to live for Christ. We are all a work in progress.

Though we are very social, a church is not a social club. We are a community of Christ. So let me ask us to consider:

- When you get together with others, do you talk about what God is teaching you, how God is changing you, the ways you’ve seen God work in and around you?
- When you get together with others, do you bring the Word to bear upon the events, joys, and frustrations of your day?
- In all of our relating, how often is the Word of Christ entering our relationships?

If Christ is not the center, whatever apparent community we enjoy will lack substance & depth.

T: Let’s be devoted to the Word - TOGETHER. #2

II. Be devoted to sharing life - TOGETHER (2:42; 4:32)

- The second action in the list is “fellowship.”
- This word really refers to sharing things in common.

- It is why we talk about life together. There was a strong sense of connection “to, between and for” one another.
- “The term was often used of the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage” - Bock
- In short, they were sharing life at all levels.
- We see this as we keep reading . . .

Verse 42 also says they were devoted to “the breaking of bread.”

- At minimum, this refers to sharing meals together . . . There is a strong possibility this also refers to partaking of the Lord’s Supper together, which we will have the privilege of enjoying together here this morning.
- To share a meal in the first century was a sign of acceptance, of intimacy. This is why the religious leaders were outraged (though they should have rejoiced) when Jesus sat down to eat with prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.
- Last Sunday: INVITED by our tear down team to go to lunch with them. James and Ellery, and Ken and Will and Alex and Scott and Haley (reppin’ the ladies). You know what happened, in a very small but significant way, our relationships were strengthened through that shared experience.
- Try it out. See if you don’t grow closer with someone.
 - Go grab a meal together
 - Can you cook? Great. Have someone over.
 - You can’t cook? Pick something up. Make a PB&J.
 - OR if you can cook, teach someone who can’t cook to cook.
 - OR if you can’t cook, get together with someone else who can’t cook and learn.
 - The point is: share a meal and spend some time together.

Verse 44 & 45 tell us that they also shared material possessions (*read 44-45*)

- As family, when they saw a brother or sister in need, they helped them out.
- Though this was voluntary and did not mean that they forsook all possessions, they were clearly generous, especially to those in greatest need.
- They sacrificed what belonged to them, and they were happy about it.
- This is hard for us, because materialism and comfort is the air we breathe as “rich Americans.”
- But look at *Acts 4:32*
- You know Jesus is in the house when our concern for “we” trumps our concern for “me.”

Are you living in community?

- I was hanging at Assembly Row on Thursday night before I went to pick up Kevin Sanders at the airport, and I made my way down to JP Licks, just for a coffee, no ice cream with jimmies - this time, and because it was a beautiful night, I went out to the patio area with those sweet low-riding rocking chairs and I watched people, most people at least, enjoy community.
- They were smiling, laughing, seated close to each other. I saw a couple of brothers out there on dates with their ladies (you know what I’m saying?). To their credit, they were leaned in, listening intently as they were saying whatever it was they were saying. I don’t know, I had my headphones in. It was all non-verbals. The point is: you can tell when people want to be together.
- Man, that’s gotta be us. And, by God’s grace, it is. If you’re new to RHC, I can tell you; we don’t love each other perfectly; we can be selfish, but I see people spreading smiles when we get together, I see people caring for one another. I see people rejoicing together, sharing burdens together, living as ONE. When I do this (shake that 1 at em), you know what I’m saying. We what? We ONE!

Are you living in community?

- Who knows the challenges you face? Who knows about your progress at work or family milestones? Who knows you well enough to say: you’re going to hard. Slow down. You’re going to burn out. Who

knows you well enough that you can trust them to say: Bro, like me in other areas of my life, you need to get with the program, OR man, you are doing great, keep that up!

Time (together) + Intentionality (together) = Transformation (to be like Christ).

III. Be devoted to prayer – TOGETHER (2:42; 1:14; 4:23-31).

Case Study #1 - Acts 1:1-14

- Prayers (do we pray together?)
- One Accord - devoting themselves to prayer, TOGETHER (1:12-14)
- Could have been doing a lot of things . . . (Imagination . . .) looking out for persecution, scheming for how they could work their way out the city . . . Weeping because they missed their friend and Savior
- Their hearts were locked together. Their motivations and desires and loves were all aimed in the same direction.
- One Accord = They were acting as one.
- Prayer alone? Yes!
- Prayer assembled? Yes!

Case Study #2 - Acts 3:1-4:31

- As the church spread the Word, they met opposition. We can expect it. We follow the one who was crucified. Hello!
- Peter healed a man who could not walk since he was born. Over 40 years! As the people gathered around, Peter sees an opportunity to preach Christ, which is exactly what he does, but then he gets arrested for it!
- Look at 4:7-12.
- Look at 4:18-19
- And they let them go. NOW, watch what happens in vv. 23-31.
- PRAYER to the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, BOLD prayer to the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, and the Sovereign Lord shakes walls and empowers them by his Spirit to keep proclaiming Christ.

What were they doing in chapter 1? Praying.

What are they doing in chapter 4? Praying

What happens when they pray? Power!

Sign. Me. Up!

- We show up for some rocking worship and encouraging teaching, and rightfully so. But who's showing up next week if we said, hey, for 90 minutes. Prayer. Straight up, on our knees, on our face, standing up, sitting down, with ONE voice, We're praying.
- You here? Gonna bring a friend?
- In the Christian subculture, we all want to hang around the teachers, the authors, the scholars, the musicians; nobody wants the prayer warriors autograph. Man, put me around the people that pray. They the heroes in my book. Enough of the rant. :)
- Let's be a church that prays intentionally but also prays spontaneously.
 - I got a text this week from a friend before work who really wanted to pray together. Man, let's go. That's awesome. I want to be like him.

I'm calling somebody this week. When 781-866-6095 calls, you better pickup. Tell your boss it's your great grandmotha. We have business to attend to!

T: #4, this will be quick

IV. Be devoted to worship – TOGETHER (2:46)

- They prioritized what they were made for.
- You catch that? We were made, as it says in a new children's Bible I'm reading to my kids called *The Biggest Story*, in God's image, as "little mirrors to reflect his glory."
- In other words, God made us to know him and reflect his greatness in everything we do.
- When we get together with other Christians, whether it is in a large group setting like this (as they did at the temple) or in a smaller setting (as they did from house to house), like we do in our Community Groups, the goal is the same: *we point to God's greatness*.
- We want to magnify, light up, make very very clear, that God is great and deserves our highest praise.
- We are little mirrors, helping people to look up to the true reality.
- You see goodness in me? It came there, from him!
- You see love in me? You want in on that? Look to God!

- As they praised God, we see they experienced "awe" (v. 43) and "gladness." They were both amazed and delighted.
- If God is not amazing to us, if there is not some wonder, some marveling going on, then something is off center
- Stott says: "It is right in public worship to be dignified. It is unforgivable to be dull."
- Because Jesus has been raised from the dead and we share life in him, our lives should be that of perpetual celebration.

T: Finally . . .

V. Be devoted to the word of Christ - TOGETHER and watch God work - TOGETHER

- Wait, I thought that was point 1. Pastor Tanner that was point numero uno. We supposed to be on point numero cinco. That must be a typo in your notes.
 - Somebody's thinking: didn't this guy go to school for this?
- These people, not only learned the word and lived the word, they took that same word and spread it to others.
- This is the WHOLE Book of Acts. They were people on a mission and their mission was to go tell people that Jesus was not dead and he takes people are spiritual dead on the inside and makes them undead.
- **PIC: MISSION in COMMUNITY**
 - Mutuality on a mission in the same direction . . .
- It is hard to keep a church devoted to Jesus and one another from growing.

Look at 2:47

- They experienced the power of God at work in them and through them. Don't you want that? Sign me up! This was the promise. . . .
- The power is cultivated through intimate pursuit of God together in close and meaningful community with one another, while we're out seeking to bring more people into that same power.
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Conclusion: Nahant Beach - kids were digging a huge hole... We kept going... And going... Why are we doing this? We're digging for treasure... Oh... Of course we are!! We all want to know why? Why would I choose to spend my precious time in a group?

We always should want to know "the why behind the what." Here's the why: God has chosen

1. Community is the context for the miracle of transformation.

Get in a GROUP & Experience the Miracle

- That's the why: to experience transformation in community.
- Is that huge? It's not huge. It's a miracle. To be like Christ (2 cor 3:17-18) expound - same image.
- AND what happens when I'm more excited about the miracle in you than the miracle in me? What happens when the majority of the people in a group, jump in the group for the group; more for what they can give than what they can receive.
- We ain't just having group - we having GROUP - we having grizzoup. We ONE up in this piece.

Does this vision not undercut all of our excuses?

- Listen, I know there are plenty of barriers and plenty of excuses to getting involved in community, jumping in a Group at RHC - but it's always worth it!.
 - "It takes work." Yep. Like all satisfying things in life.
 - "I don't like people." You are one! I'm praying for ya. :)
 - "They aren't like me." Welcome to the club. There's something you can learn from them and they can learn from you.
 - "I've been hurt before." Every relationship carries vulnerabilities. To love is to risk.
 - "I've got kids and it's too hard to make it." That's why we've created a Sunday morning group for those with young kids and early bedtimes. Try it out!
 - "I'm too busy." But don't we make time for what we value?
 - Own your calendar. Make it a priority. Even if you can't come every week, or even most weeks because of legit life circumstances - coming some is better than coming none.
- I have never met a person at RHC who said Groups are a waste of time. I've never met a person who would say, "You know, I was stronger spiritually when I did this Jesus thing, on my own."

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Get in a GROUP & Experience the Miracle