

DEVOTED
“A Roadmap for 2025”
January 5, 2025

INTRO.: As we have done the past few years the elders have talked and prayed about what God would want our theme to be for 2025. Each year we look to have a theme from the Scriptures that applies to our relationship with God and with one another. These two things come from Jesus’ answer to the question posed to him by the religious leaders as they attempted to trap him with a question, which they were sure He couldn’t possibly answer. Their question, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Over the years, the rabbis had supposedly determined that, just as there were 613 separate letters in the Hebrew text of the Ten Commandments, in the book of Numbers, there were also 613 separate laws in The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. They divided these into 248 affirmative laws, one for every part of the human body, and 365 negative laws, one for each day of the year (John MacArthur). They reasoned that there was no way Jesus could possibly single out just one command, and if He tried, they would have more reason to condemn Him. Without hesitation Jesus responded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” So, each year we select a theme that will apply to our relationship with God, first and foremost, and building on that, with our relationship with one another. Last year it was, “Trusting God’s Plan, Purpose, and Design from the book of Genesis. This year the theme is, “*Devoted.*” That is, what does it look like to first be, *Devoted to God,*” and through that relationship, to be, “*Devoted to One Another?*” (blank slide)

Some of you got a small sneak peek at the theme when I posted online the question, “What comes to mind when you hear the word, “devoted.” The following are some of the responses: “all in,” “totally committed,” “steadfast loyalty,” “spouse, marriage, love, giving your all,” “committed to someone or something,” “sacrifice,” “a total focus on something or someone,” “eyes on the prize, not the difficulties of the day,” “my total inability to love God as He deserves and His devotion to me as I don’t deserve,” “faithfully committed,” “parents,” “unyielding allegiance to someone or something,” “committed without hesitation,” “Jonathan’s armor bearer when he and Jonathan went up to fight 20 Philistines themselves,” “gratitude to the Lord,” “life with a compass,” “forever,” “giving it your all,” “focused to the point of sacrifice,” “unwavering commitment,” “dedicated, loyal,” “unconditional commitment,” “willing to serve unconditionally.” As a bonus someone shared a humorous one, “a Jets fan.” Thank you to all who shared their thoughts.

Some places in the Bible where the word in the original language is translated “devote,” “devoted,” or “devotion.”

When David is commanding the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon build the temple:

1 Chronicles 22:17–19 Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon. **18** He said to them, “Is not the LORD your God with you? And has he not granted you rest on every side? For he has handed the inhabitants of the land over to me, and the land is subject to the LORD and to his people. **19** Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD.”

1 Kings 11:4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted (future, middle, indicative: to be devoted to) to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Acts 2:42 They devoted (present, active, participle: to be devoted to) themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted (adjective: loving dearly, being devoted} to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Colossians 4:2 Devote (present, active, imperative: to be devoted to) yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, devote (present, active, imperative: to pay attention to) yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote (present, active, subjunctive: to be intent on, to be careful to) themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

So, what does this look like in our lives? How does this relate in God's relationship to us, our relationship with God, and our relationship with one another? This morning is just going to be a general introduction which will begin our journey over the next several weeks. Today we will look at how **THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH GOD**, which **EMPOWERS MY RESPONSE TO GOD**, and **DIRECTS MY RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS**. We're going to begin by reading 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 where we will see all three of these relationships at work.

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, **10** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Paul is writing this letter to the church at Thessalonica, that is, to followers of Christ, for the church is not a building but a "called out assembly of believers." Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, with a population of over 100,000. Since it was situated on a natural harbor it was a flourishing center of trade and philosophy. There were many religious cults and Christians were suffering a great deal of persecution for their faith. The believers also needed teaching about what happens when a believer dies. The Apostle Paul begins this letter sharing how he is so encouraged by what's happening in their relationship with the Lord.

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.

"we:" Paul, Silas, & Timothy

"give thanks:" this is a present tense

"always:" at all times

"for all of you:"

"mentioning:" constantly bringing them up in prayer

Part of their prayers was the continual mention of the Thessalonian believers. They were so thankful for what God was doing in the lives of these believers. When we consider this idea of "devotion,"

THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH GOD

Paul lists three things in the believers lives for which he is thankful:

I Thessalonians 1:3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

"continually remember:" this is a present tense participle (ongoing)

Paul will now list three things that they continually remember about the Thessalonians. Each one has the same grammatical structure.

"work produced by faith:" work out of faith (work: (ergov) this is where we get the word "energy". The source of this is faith and God is the one who provides faith)

"labor prompted by love:" labor out of love (labor: to the point of exhaustion) (love: this is agape love, God empowered, selfless love)

“*endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*” endurance out of hope (endurance: carries with it the idea of perseverance)

I believe that all three of these are part of what it means to be *devoted*. All three of them have a common source: God! Paul highlights this with his next statement.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5a For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

“*we know.*” this is an ongoing knowledge (perfect tense participle: action in the past with continuing results)

“*loved by God.*” this is an ongoing love (perfect, passive, participle: God is the one loving and it isn’t something they have earned or deserved)

“*chosen you.*” this tells us that God sovereignly works in the hearts. How did Paul recognize that God had chosen them?

The gospel didn’t just come with words but:

“*with power.*” (form of *dunamis*: where we get the word *dynamite*).

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power (*dunamis*) of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

“*with the Holy Spirit.*” The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts a person of sin and the need of a Savior. We need to ask God to work in the minds and hearts of those who have yet to come to faith. We need to ask God to remove the blinders from people’s minds. We need to understand it is a miracle that any person comes to faith.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

“*with conviction.*” (literally: with full assurance and certainty). Praise God that all those who know Christ as Savior and Lord can be assured of their salvation because it is based on what God has done and not man’s efforts.

Romans 8:14–16 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. **15** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” **16** The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

You and I cannot even begin to be devoted to God or one another without God first working in our hearts and changing our lives. It is because of this that the first part of this series will be how God has shown and continues to show His devotion, His love to us. He speaks, gives life, promises, forgives, and hears.

As we speak of devotion, the journey begins with God who:

EMPOWERS MY RESPONSE TO GOD

1 Thessalonians 1:6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

After coming to faith in Christ the Thessalonians became imitators of the Lord.

“*became.*” a point of time in the past. When did this happen? It was a process that began at the moment of salvation. Their decision in coming to faith in Christ changed their lives.

“*imitators.*” where we get the word *mimic*. Their goal became to be like Jesus. When one is devoted to God, they desire to be like Him.

How many people here have attempted to imitate someone you admire? Maybe it was an athlete: like when I saw Dave Wottle run the 800 meters in the 1972 Olympics. He came from last place to win the gold medal. I replayed the race a few months ago. Dave Wottle wore a hat when he raced so I decided I wanted to wear a hat when I ran. I even did the imitation thing early on as a pastor. I began to imitate how one of my favorite pastors preached. I finally figured out I

needed to be myself. When it comes to our faith our goal should be to imitate Jesus, the only one who ever lived a perfect life. We become the best version of ourselves when we imitate Jesus.

Romans 6:3–4 (ESV) — **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

“in spite of severe suffering:” their following Christ was not easy and it won’t be easy today. You may have noticed that there isn’t much applause given for living for Jesus. Some gave the word *unconditional* in their description of the word *devotion*.

“you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit:” this refers specifically to the message of salvation but we could add the entire Word of God.

Are you excited about reading, receiving, and applying the Word of God? I think it would be good for every person to go to a third world country and see the joy that so many believers have even when they have almost nothing. Why is that possible? Because when you have Jesus, you have everything!! If you have everything but don’t have Jesus, you have nothing!! We’ll be talking more about God’s Word next week as we examine the truth, *God speaks*.

As we speak of devotion: the journey begins with God who empowers my response to God and who:

DIRECTS MY RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

1 Thessalonians 1:7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

“model:” type or example (this is the word *typos* which carries the meaning *exact reproduction*) They became an example for other believers to follow. By the way, you cannot be an example for others without first being an imitator of Jesus.

It is also hard to be an example from a distance which reminds me of the need for community. I so appreciated what Nathan Corbeill shared in the New Year’s Eve devotional from Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:24–25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

He challenged me and each one there to not attempt to walk the Christian life alone.

1 Thessalonians 1:8a The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.

“rang out:” sounded forth.

Remember, Thessalonica was a port city and so as they shared the gospel and people came to Christ, the message spread. The Thessalonian believers wanted all to hear of this great eternity and life changing message.

1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10 They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, **10** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Thessalonica was a place known for the worship of many gods which often involved a great deal of immorality. Those Paul is speaking of had their lives radically changed by the gospel. Word got around that they were no longer visiting shrines of prostitution and that there were amazing changes in their lives.

“turned to God from idols:” they were now going in an entirely different direction. It’s the meaning of repentance in the Bible: to turn and head in a different direction. They didn’t just add Jesus to all the other gods they had been worshipping. They most likely took a lot of heat when they stopped frequenting the places where they used to go. They placed all their hope in Jesus and gave their lives to God.

“to serve the living and true God.” this is a present tense for this became their way of life. Not only were they saved from sin and self, they were saved to serve God.

“to wait for his Son from heaven.” this is also a present tense for they lived with eternity in mind.

Do others know you are a believer, through your words and your actions? Jesus changes our relationships with others.

SO WHAT???

People are devoted to many different things. Early on in our marriage I bought a road bike and began riding many miles each week. We had three young boys at the time, and I became too devoted to my bike riding. I eventually sold my road bike and bought mountain bikes for myself, Brenda and the boys. I taught my boys how to ride a bike and I began riding with the boys, which was far better. My realized my boys would never be impressed with how many miles I rode my bike but they would be impacted by the time I spent with them.

*Where is my relationship with God? God gave His Son to provide the opportunity for me to be reconciled with Him. Have I given my life to Him?

*How is my ongoing walk with God? Am I “all in” when it comes to walk with God?

*Is there anything or anyone that has become more important to me than God?

*Will I pray that God will speak to me through this series?

