

3 - THE REBEL ALLIANCE

Acts 2:42-47

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EPISODE III: THE REBEL ALLIANCE

On the Day of Pentecost 3,000 people were baptized and the church was launched in the city of Jerusalem. These were exciting times for the followers of THE WAY.

But they were also uncertain times.

What would this new life in Jesus look like?

How would this group of rebels make an impact on the community around them?

Would they unite to overcome The Empire?

Have you ever been in a situation where you thought, “Now what?” What is going to happen next? I don’t know what to do.

Growing up I loved reading the “Choose your own Adventure” books. These books gave you an option to choose the next step for the character in the book you were reading about. For example, the book would say turn to page 47 if you want to get on the airplane, or turn to page 43 if you want to take the boat.

Following Christ has a “choose your own adventure” feel to it. Think about the process you go through. You believe Jesus is God’s Son, that He died on the cross for your sins and came back to life. You confess your faith in Jesus and are baptized... but now what?

What is going to happen next? What will my next step be?

I think this is a question every follower of Jesus should wrestle with and answer.

Last week we saw in the first 41 verses of Acts chapter 2 that the Apostles were given the promised Holy Spirit and they experienced an incredible Day of Pentecost! Peter addressed the crowd and told them what they were experiencing was a fulfillment of prophecy, and even though they had put Jesus to death, there was a way for them to be saved. And 3,000 people responded to the message that day and were baptized into Christ. The church in Jerusalem launches with an incredible day.

Yet, I wonder if the Apostles and the people thought to themselves, “Now what?” What do we do now? What steps should we take?

Acts 2:42-47 show us what they did once they began to follow Jesus. These verses give us a glimpse of what we should do now that we follow Jesus. Or, if you are not a follower of Jesus but you're debating about it, you don't have to do this, but you can see what is expected of someone who follows Christ and decide for yourself.

So, let's jump into the text and see what happens next.

Acts 2:42 - ["They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."](#)

They were **devoted** - meaning they continually focused on these aspects of Christian living - as part of the new life they had found in Christ. They were persistent in these things.

If we are going to be the church God uses to make a difference in The Valley and our surrounding area, then we must become a devoted church.

God uses devoted people to build His church.

To be devoted is to be faithful... loyal... committed.
Notice what they were devoted to...

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING

When the 3,000 people were baptized into Christ, they didn't just go home and continue to live the way they had always lived. Instead, they devoted themselves to learning how Jesus would want them to live.

And what better teachers for this crowd than the apostles! The apostles had spent 3 years with Jesus learning who He was and what it looked like to follow Him. So these brand new Christians get to learn from the guys who learned straight from Jesus.

The good news is, thanks to guys like Luke who investigated and wrote down what happened, we have the Apostles' teaching preserved for us today. That's what the Bible is, specifically the New Testament of the Bible.

To be used by God to build His church means we must also be devoted to the Apostles' teaching. This is why we place a premium on God's Word here at Restoration. The Word is the foundation for living the Christian life. It's how we discover and understand God's will. We need to know this Word so we can live this Word. It is relevant to our lives today.

When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he couldn't get a cell phone signal, so he walked to the closest place he could find to use the phone, which turned out to be a bar. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, who was drunk and looking rough at the bar. His clothes looked worn out and his friend just looked awful.

*"What happened to you, Frank?" asked the preacher. "You used to be rich."
Frank told a sad story of bad investments which had led to his downfall.*

"Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer."

Some time later, the preacher spotted Frank in town wearing a brand new expensive suit, wearing a Rolex watch and just stepping out of a new Mercedes.

"Frank." said the preacher, "I am glad to see things really turned around for you!"

"Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer -- Chapter 11."

Now I hope that you aren't using the Bible as a guidebook like that guy. But we need to be a community of believers that know God's Word. What we have here is the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us, ["For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."](#)

The times in my life when I have gotten myself into the most trouble are the times when I have neglected putting God's Word into my life regularly.

Romans 12:2 teaches us this lesson: ["Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."](#)

The way we renew our mind is through God's Word. We receive messages every day from the world which are opposite of the way God wants us to live. It is only through listening to God's Word and renewing our minds that we will be able to discover His will for life. If we don't get into the Word, we become just like everyone else in the world.

Don't miss out on the Word of life. The early church began by being devoted to the Word, we should be as well.

God uses devoted people to build His church. People who are devoted to the Apostles' teaching and...

FELLOWSHIP

Acts 2:42 - ["They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."](#)

We've started having some refreshments in the theater lobby before church begins on Sunday morning. The food is here at 9:30am. We began this in December for two reasons.

1 - we wanted to show our volunteers how much we appreciate them for all they do to make Restoration happen each week.

2 - because we hoped more people would get here early for church! I know I can be the most guilty of arriving late, but the people who get here early for church are visitors. We wanted to

encourage some of our core people to get here a little early, enjoy some cookies or coffee in the lobby, and be here to welcome people as they come in to check out our church. So... if you want to enjoy some coffee next Sunday morning, come on over at 9:30.

I realize when we throw the word "Fellowship" out in church we often think of a fellowship meal, or enjoying some event together. But the Greek word which is translated "fellowship" in this verse means so much more than simply meeting together and eating. It is a fellowship, a closeness, a sharing, a bond, a feeling of togetherness, a feeling of belonging to each other in the family of God.

When my mom passed away unexpectedly a couple years ago, during the visitation several of you made the trip to Bedford to be there with me and my family. You brought food for our family. You shared with us in our time of grief... and you'll never know how much it truly meant to me for you to be there that day.

You see, that's the fellowship Luke is writing about when he says the church was devoted to fellowship.

1 John 1:7 says, "[But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.](#)"

Read through the New Testament and see how many times the Bible tells us to do things together. We are told to pray for one another, encourage one another, rebuke one another, build one another up, confess our sins to one another, love one another, be devoted to one another, greet one another, instruct one another, serve one another, bear with one another, be kind to one another, forgive one another, submit to one another, offer hospitality to one another.

God designed us for community. We are intended to be in fellowship with one another.

Some of my favorite times looking back were the core group meetings we had before we even launched Restoration. Gathering together for supper and Bible study brought a fellowship to our life you can't find in many places. It's so special...

God uses people who are devoted to fellowship, to one another.

We also see the church in Acts was devoted to...

THE BREAKING OF BREAD.

Acts 2:42 - "[They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.](#)"

The breaking of bread... They gathered together to take communion and worship God. They focused their attention on the Lord and what He had done for them in providing salvation.

I place too much emphasis on myself when it comes to our worship service. In planning things out, I think about things like... Will I like the songs that are sung? Will this connect with people? Will people want to come back based on what we do during our worship service?

The focus is in the wrong place. It's on me. It's on what I want or what I think is best. Worship is to be focused on God! Not me! Yes, we want to have quality music and singers and everything to be done with excellence, but not because we deserve the best, it's because God deserves the best!

Psalm 95 reads, "6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; 7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."

When we worship, we humble ourselves, we bow down and submit to God. When we seek to enter into God's presence, we should do so with a sense of awe.

But the second aspect of worship is a sense of joy. Psalm 95 reads, "1 Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song."

In worship we come with a sense of awe, but we also come with a sense of joy. We are so thankful for what God has done for us. Just as the Christians in the book of Acts, we realize this all-powerful God has visited us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Worship should be both awesome and joyful. There ought to be times when we gather together that we can sense the presence of God so much you could hear a pin drop. And there ought to be other times that we can sense the grace of God in our lives so much that we can't help but shout for joy.

Worship is all about telling God how valuable He is. Our goal as a church is to glorify God through our worship. I pray we experience Him every time we gather together. Because when you come into God's presence you can't help but be changed.

God uses devoted people to build His church... people who are devoted to worship.

Finally we see the church was devoted to...

PRAYER.

Acts 2:42 - "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Little Mary, who was the daughter of a radio announcer, was invited to a friend's house for dinner. The hostess asked Mary if she would say grace. Delighted, little Mary cleared her throat and said, "Friends, this food is coming to you through the courtesy of Almighty God."

Where God's presence is felt, where God is moving, you can be sure His people are praying. Prayer is powerful.

James 5:16 says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

I always feel inadequate when it comes to prayer. It's a struggle at times... I think I struggle with prayer because I'm so good at pride. But prayer is the ultimate confession that I cannot do it on my own. I need You God!

If nothing else, I would love for our church to be known as a group of people who love God's Word and pray. We are so humble before Him that we cannot go a day without depending on His Word and His answers to prayers for us to survive.

We use to have people at various times drive by the theater and pray for our Sunday services. I want to ask you to do that again. Any time you drive by here, pause and pray over this place. Ask God to prepare us as we come to worship. To bless those who would sit in these seats. That God's presence would be felt and people would truly be transformed from being here at Restoration.

God uses devoted people to build His church... people who are devoted to prayer.

Now, check out what happens when people are devoted.

They were an Inspiring Church.

Look at verse 43, "[43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.](#)"

Things happening no one could explain except for the presence of God. Their devotion caused God to show up in amazing ways.

That's what I want to be said about Restoration! God is with them! God is moving among them! There is a sense of awe and fear for the Lord. There is a healthy respect of who God is. I pray we will be devoted so we have this same sense of awe. I pray we would be an inspiring church.

We read on in Acts 2 and see they were...

They were a Generous Church.

Verse 44, "[44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.](#)"

These devoted followers of Jesus saw themselves as a family of faith. They were a community of believers. Regardless of their backgrounds, and there would have been many, they found common ground in Jesus.

It doesn't matter what our status is in this world, we are unified by our common bond in Jesus Christ. And when we've been transformed by Jesus and are united with our church family, there is a generosity of heart that takes over.

I know these early days of 2016 have shown us a lot of economic uncertainty. When Walmart is closing hundreds of stores, you know times are tough. This, however, is the best opportunity for God's family to show how counter-cultural we are and be generous to others!

Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

It's a good investment to be generous according to Jesus!

We have been blessed to be a blessing. I pray we will continue to be a generous church.

Because when you're a generous church, you become a...

They were a Joyful Church.

You know what happens when you're generous? You find joy.

Check out Acts 2:46, "**46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts..."

These devoted followers had found life. Real life. They were finally satisfied. They were experiencing what they had waited their entire lives to find. They were a joyful church.

And because they were a devoted church, they became...

They were a Growing Church.

Verse 47, "**46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

I have a dream to see 365 people follow Jesus in a year. That's one person every day.

I don't want this for myself, in fact, I can't do it by myself. But I have learned the only thing we can take with us to Heaven is other people. We can't take our bank account. We cannot take our trophies. We can't even take our Bible. The only thing we can take to Heaven with us is other people.

There are many good things we can do in this life, but I want to do what is best.

There is nothing better than leading people to Jesus and seeing them find hope... life... peace.

I want to be devoted, because I want to glorify God and see Him make an impact on our lives and community.

Are you devoted?

Where are you at today? Where do you need to be devoted?

Maybe it's in the area of the Apostles' teaching?

Maybe it's in the area of Fellowship?

Maybe it's in the area of Worship?

Maybe it's in the area of Prayer?

Today I am challenged, and you have been challenged, to be devoted.

COMMUNION

(Video after prayer)