Healthy Church Life
Acts 2:42-47

Today we come to our 9th / final habit of our Member's Covenant. And this last habit is different than others. What do you mean?

Think of this habit as the *unifying* habit or *centering* habit. The habit that *integrates* all the other habits. It's like an **exercise studio** with all the different stations… a bike / a bench / yoga mat / dumbbell rack… the place where all the exercises come together. The 9th commitment is how we pull all the habits into **one unifying practice**—what we might call a "healthy church life."

> #9 **Actively participate in healthy church life—by engaging in**…
>
> …each of the other habits:
>
> **Devotion to Jesus**
> **Gathering for worship**
> **Walking together in love**
> **Pursuing peace with one another**
> **Giving—faithfully and generously**
> **Serving God and his people**
> **Sharing the gospel with others**
> **Making disciples and planting churches**

In other words, the best way to follow Jesus *as a disciple* is to practice these habits *with other disciples*. That's what church is—exercise studio for Xn life.

> **Here is the thing:** the more you—as an *individual*—love God with all your heart, soul, mind / practice repentance and grace / the more you walk in humility and kindness… the healthier this church becomes.
>
> Then *this new* church culture pulls all of us into the center—with increasing health and godliness and faithfulness. So, I'm not on a Peleton, by myself in the basement videoing in... *There is a beautiful interplay and dependence between an individual and the body of Christ.*

My favorite NT passage that captures *this vision of church life* is **Acts 2:42-47**. It has 5 of our 9 habits explicitly embedded in it. A good way to reinforce the series:

1. Devote ourselves to Jesus (v 42)
2. Gather with the church (vv 42, 46)
3. Walk together in love (vv 44, 46)
4. Give generously (vv 45-46)
5. Share the gospel with others (vv 37-41)

1. Devote ourselves to Jesus (v 42)

They **devoted** themselves to the Apostles teaching. Which is another way of saying the teachings of Jesus. It's a way of saying *devote yourself* to JX as a person—**him** we proclaim/**him** we preach! **Jesus Christ is Lord!**

> The Apostles invite us to worship Jesus Christ as Lord—along with God the Father, by the Spirit—just as they did! To submit to him as God!
>
> They call us to devote ourselves to Jesus not to themselves as Apostles. I love the way Jesse said that last Sunday… the Apostles were making disciples of Jesus—not disciples of Peter or Paul or James….
>
> > Yes, Paul says imitate me… but only as I imitate Christ!

Devotion to Jesus is our first habit in our Members' Covenant—right!?! If we don't get this right, we shouldn't think of ourselves as Christians.

If you are a new believer or considering Christianity for the first time, this is the place to start. Submit to Jesus Christ … humble yourself through repentance/ faith. Devote yourself to Jesus Christ… each morning. "Lord Jesus, I…"

2. Gather with the church (vv 42, 46)

> Read **v 42**… some key elements of gathered worship: *fellowship*, (the breaking of bread) *communion*, (the) *prayers*.
>
> Read **v 46**… **attending the temple together**
>
> Read v. 47… **praising God:** I read this as praising God at the **Temple** (v 46) *and* in their **homes** (v 46)… and wherever.

Also, it is instructive that Luke (author of Acts) situates Christian worship among the watching world; **having favor with all the people**—apparently many **outsiders** became interested in the gospel.

> **Illus** "Their worship and praise of God (is)… not in an isolated, private club… Their reputation with outsiders also is good." (D Bock, 154).

Luke is trying to make the point that their Christian worship "impacts their witness" (Bock). **v 47—and the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved.**

So, I think we want to be careful, in Christian worship, not to overstate our separation from the world around us.

> *There should always be an element of witness/openness/invitation when Christians gather for worship.*

Appl I want you to know that as we build our Sunday worship services, week in and week out, we keep this in mind. *Our worship is not to impress the world or to the cater to the world… but we do believe the Spirit of God uses his people and his Word and the power of a glad and generous community to beautify the gospel among those who are looking for life / hope in broken, hate filled world.*

3. Walk together in love (vv 44-46)

Just take a moment and look for the **together** language of this passage.

> v. 44—**read** it; they were doing life **together**, walking together, and sharing all their possessions with one another… (all things in common).
>
> v. 46—attending the temple **together**… literally walking to church together… I wonder what kind of conversations they had about the gospel as they walked together day in and day out? I mean they are trying to figure this out, real time… they Temple is no longer the same Temple to them… even if the Veil of the temple had been repaired at this point. They no longer believed forgiveness came from Temple sacrifices!

I didn't get to preach on this one so I am glad to come back to it!

> **Walk together in love as brothers and sisters**—a family of sinners saved by grace. We delight in each other and bear each other's burdens; we encourage frequently, admonish gently, and receive correction humbly. We value honesty and openness with each other, *resisting the temptation to hide our weaknesses and sins, so that we may experience grace together*.

Illus Earlier this fall… our small group had an amazing group one night. We had been together for about a year when we came back from summer break… and for some reason the Spirit of God visited us that night… and people started confessing sin / getting open and vulnerable / being honest / admitting weakness…it was beautiful! (Trust and honesty and safe place)

4. Give generously (vv 44-46)

Look at the generosity…

v. 44 all things in common
v. 45 selling their possessions/care for…
v. 46 glad and generous hearts

So, here is an important thing to observe about this passage. The word *generosity* here means **financial generosity**. Generous with their money. Not simply generous with their time /energy / skills / gifting. Though surely they…

Can I offer a pastoral caution here?

I think sometimes we Christians rationalize ourselves into thinking we are more generous than we really are. "Well, I don't have money to give financially but I can be generous with my time or my work." And, of course, you should be generous with your time and your energy. But be careful with this…

> If you don't start practicing generosity with money and possessions now, there will never be a good time to start… this is a matter of faith and a way of life… start taking baby steps, *like Carol said in giving video.*

Remember the Macedonian believers… they were "extremely poor" the Bible says… yet they practiced a wealth of generosity! It is the way of the Xn life.

5. Share the gospel with others (vv 37-41)

The fifth habit found in Acts 2 is *sharing* or *speaking* the gospel to others. For this one, we need to back up to v. 37.

> **2:37**… Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart. This is the passage pastor Chip chose a few weeks back when we talked about our responsibility to share the gospel with others.
>
> He didn't choose this text because we are all going to be like the Apostle Peter—willing to stand up and preach at Pentecost… but because it *captures what so well that people have hearts and souls—and that heart full of desire and longing is pulling them in one direction or another.*

*Every single neighbor you speak to / coworker you invite to church… they have a heart and a mind and a soul… they are wrestling with God whether they voice it to you or not… you don't have to be the Apostle Peter to witness****… see vv 40-41.***

So, that's 5 of our 9 habits… let me show you all 9 once more.

Trust the Process

Devote ourselves to Jesus daily
Gather with the church
Walk together in love as brothers and sisters
Pursue peace with every member
Give faithfully, gladly, and generously
Serve the Lord and his church
Share the gospel with others
Make disciples and plant churches
Actively participate in healthy church life!

Closing Illus—trust the process

So, as hard as it is for me to day this… I have to tell you how much I have enjoyed watching *Saban* on ESPN. Saban is about Coach Nick Saban the winningest coach in the history of College football. If you haven't seen it… it's worth watching. If you can stomach the foul language.

The dominant theme of all 6 episodes = **"TRUST the process."**

How do you win **7 national titles**? 6 at **Alabama**…

You create a culture of **relentless process**… every play / every down / every match up. There are so many of clips of him in a players face… barking out "finish" / "finish" … to give 100% on every drill / every practice / in every game.

I like the part where all the greats say it, one after the other…

Julio Jones	trust the process
Mark Ingram	trust the process
Jalen Hurts	trust the process

Near the end of the series (Ep 6?) Coach Saban tells this story. He was playing golf at Augusta National… about to shoot a 79 (two more holes to finish) when his caddy told him—if you bogy these two holes, you'll shoot 79. "Well, that was the kiss of death." Now, what am I focusing on? The score instead of the mechanics of the shot. I double bogeyed both holes! **I didn't…**

So, here is the question… what would it look like for you to trust the process of Christian maturity as God has designed it for us…