

The Church in the New Testament

(Sunday AM — Church Campus)

Week 10: Devotion to Apostolic Teaching and Practice

Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Throughout the New Testament, the early church is described as a community anchored to the teaching and practice of the apostles. This was not an accident. Jesus Himself had promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). The apostles were not merely first-generation Christians with opinions; they were authorized messengers of Christ who delivered binding, inspired instruction for the church.

In Acts 2:42, the first description of the church after Pentecost begins with devotion to “the apostles’ teaching.” This was not optional or supplementary. It was foundational. Paul later commended the Corinthians for holding to “the traditions” he had delivered to them (1 Corinthians 11:2), and he commanded the Thessalonians to “stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

The word “traditions” in these passages does not refer to human customs or denominational practices. It refers to the inspired, apostolic instruction that the church received from Christ through His appointed messengers. This lesson examines what it means for the church today to remain devoted to apostolic teaching—in worship, in doctrine, in practice, and in the way we organize and conduct the life of the congregation.

Group Discussion: Why is it important to distinguish between apostolic traditions—inspired teaching delivered by Christ’s authorized messengers—and human traditions that have developed over centuries? How can we tell the difference?

Personal Reflection: Is your spiritual life and the congregation’s practice shaped primarily by the New Testament, or have other influences—culture, convenience, or denominational habit—quietly become more influential? What would a return to apostolic teaching look like for you personally?

Read Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Study Questions

1. In Acts 2:42, the first mark of the early church is devotion to “the apostles’ teaching.” Why was apostolic teaching placed first, and what does this reveal about the foundation of the church?

2. What does it mean to be “devoted” to a body of teaching? How is devotion different from casual familiarity or occasional agreement?
3. In 1 Corinthians 11:2, Paul commends the church for holding to “the traditions” he delivered. What are these traditions, and why does Paul use such strong language about maintaining them?
4. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Paul commands believers to “stand firm and hold to the traditions” taught “either by our spoken word or by our letter.” What does this verse teach about the authority of apostolic instruction?
5. How should we understand the relationship between the apostles’ teaching and the New Testament Scriptures? Are they the same, and if so, what does that mean for the church today?
6. The early church also devoted itself to “fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). How do these practices connect to apostolic teaching, and why should they be understood as more than casual social gatherings?
7. Why is the pattern of New Testament worship—singing, praying, teaching, the Lord’s Supper, and giving—significant? What happens when congregations depart from this pattern?
8. Some argue that the New Testament provides no binding pattern for the church and that each generation should adapt its practices freely. How does this passage challenge that view?

9. How does devotion to apostolic teaching protect the church from doctrinal error, moral compromise, and cultural drift?

10. Looking at these three passages together, what does it mean for a congregation today to be truly devoted to apostolic teaching and practice, and what are the consequences of abandoning that devotion?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages:

John 16:12–15 — The Holy Spirit guiding the apostles into all truth

Jude 3–4 — Contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints

2 Timothy 1:13–14 — Holding to the pattern of sound words