

Are you familiar with a “capstone” project? Several high schools and colleges have them. A student’s capstone project is typically their final assignment before they graduate. It is a project that demonstrates their competency and proficiency as a graduating student. A well-organized capstone project calls on a student to draw from their entire education experience. It really brings all their coursework and training together.

If you are joining us this week, welcome! We are in our last week of a series called [Together Church](#). Throughout this series, we have been exploring seven guardrails that help us stay the course as a disciple-making first church. To date, we have covered the first six guardrails. [Here’s the first six guardrails...](#)

[Abide in Christ](#)

[Reach the Lost](#)

[Connect the Unconnected](#)

[Chase the Strays](#)

[Develop People to Spiritual Maturity](#)

[Identify, Equip, and Release New Leaders](#)

We call these the seven guardrails or the seven essentials. We need all of them to develop the culture of love and discipleship Jesus has called us to create together. These seven essentials help us stay the course as a disciple-making first church.

This morning, we will cover our seventh and final guardrail. The seventh and final guardrail that helps us stay the course as a disciple-making first church is this...

“We will work as a team.”

This is not the last guardrail because it is least important. On the contrary, this guardrail serves as the “capstone” for the seven essentials. It is a guardrail that brings together all the other guardrails. It is a common thread that runs through every guardrail before it. It is a binding agent that helps hold all the guardrails together.

The first six guardrails were never meant to be practiced in isolation. Church is a team sport! Disciple-making is a team sport. Following Jesus is a team sport. For us to stay the course as a disciple-making first church, we must work together as a team.

As I prayed about the word the Lord wanted me to share with you this morning, the Spirit led me to the example of the first disciples of Jesus and the first church in the book of Acts. Their story stands as a lasting witness to every generation of the church that has followed them. If you are taking notes, I want you to be able to start this message by writing down the specific word the Lord asked me to share with you this morning. Are you ready to write it down? Here’s what God asked me to tell our church today...

“As our devotion to God deepens, so will our devotion to one another.”

This was certainly true in the lives of Jesus’ first disciples and in the earliest days of the first church...

If you have your Bible today, open to [Acts 2:42](#).

Body

Jesus is the ultimate team player. As God, Jesus could literally do everything Himself. Through His oneness with the Father and the Spirit, there is nothing He *NEEDS* us to do. Still, instead of doing all God's works Himself, Jesus chose to recruit a team of disciples and to work through them.

As Pastor Jerry shared with us last week on Father's Day, it is not God's nature to keep His life to Himself. It is His nature to reproduce the life of God in us! Aren't you grateful? Where would we be without the life of God in us?

So, Jesus recruited a team and was the ultimate team player. Rather than do all the work Himself, Jesus invited His disciples to get out of the seats and into the game.

Jesus spent three years deeply engaged in this work. He helped His disciples catch a culture of love, a culture of living by faith, and a culture of disciple-making by the way He lived.

In other words, Jesus showed His disciples what the life of God looks like when it is lived out in the flesh. Jesus is God in human flesh! Jesus put on a three-year clinic to provide His disciples – and us – with that example. When we look at the life of Jesus, we are witnessing exactly what it looks like for God's life to be lived out in a human being.

After three years of investment, Jesus completed the work the Father had required Him to do in that season with those

disciples. In the garden, just before He died, Jesus prayed to the Father, and He prayed these words...

John 17:4

4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Jesus prayed these words on the night before He died. When Jesus said He had finished the work the Father gave Him to do, He wasn't talking about the work of going to the cross. That hadn't happened yet. He was talking about the work of disciple-making the Father assigned for Him to do. He had finished that work, and now it was time for Him to accomplish His work of redemption and salvation through His death and resurrection.

After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples to wait for the arrival of the Holy Spirit before they began to do His work. Jesus knew His disciples had witnessed the life of God in Him – now they needed the life of God to be born in them. They would never be able to do His work without first receiving His life.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, 120 faithful disciples who had caught the culture of love and disciple-making from Jesus gathered in an upper room to pray. Suddenly, they heard a sound that was like the sound of a mighty rushing wind. The Holy Spirit entered that place and filled them!

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a

sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The life of God was LITERALLY reproduced in them. Their old lives ended, and their new life in God began. They were the first disciples of Jesus to be born again of the Spirit of God.

Their old, sin-filled nature was replaced with the nature of God. What is the nature of God? To reproduce His life in others! So, what is the first thing they did? They went out of that upper room, hit the streets, and started sharing the life of God they had just received through Jesus with anyone who would listen.

Acts 2:5-8

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

God did a miracle as they shared. Jerusalem was a large city and a melting pot of many other people and cultures. As the born-again believers shared the life of God with others, the various people groups all heard them speaking in their own native language! (English and Spanish example.)

As you can imagine, a public miracle like this quickly drew a crowd. Peter, a disciple of Jesus who was now filled with the Holy Spirit, saw the crowd forming and knew exactly what to do. He had witnessed Jesus perform miracles and draw crowds before. Jesus would always preach the Word of God to the crowds that gathered. So, Peter stood up and boldly proclaimed the gospel to the crowd.

Peter's sermon is in [Acts 2:14-36](#). In his sermon, Peter shared with the people [the truth about the scriptures, the truth about Jesus, and the truth about their own condition apart from God](#). Peter shared with them their need for Jesus.

When he finished sharing, the Holy Spirit moved on the crowd, and they were cut to the heart. Here's what the scripture says...

[Acts 2:37](#)

[37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"](#)

When they asked Peter what they should do, Peter knew the example and instructions of Jesus. So, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter responded...

[Acts 2:38](#)

[38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all](#)

who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

He told them to **repent. That means to turn from your sin. That means to leave your old life behind and to embrace the life of God. That means living for Jesus rather than living for yourself.**

He told them to be **baptized. This was not an option for the first church. The response of baptism was a necessary response for all who received the life of God through faith in Jesus. It was an act of obedience they could not refused because the life of God was now abiding in them.**

He told them they would **receive the Holy Spirit. The promise of God was for anyone and everyone God would call. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone who is saved by Jesus is born again as a new creation in Christ. Our old self dies, and we are reborn into a new life in God.**

When Peter finished preaching the gospel, the scripture says that thousands responded in obedience. 3000 souls were added to the church **THAT DAY!!!**

This was the first real test for the church. In a day, they grew from **120 to 3120!**

That **original 120 was a **pretty awesome group of people**. They had all walked with Jesus personally at some point in His ministry, many of them for several years. They all had received the sign of the Spirit in the upper room with**

tongues of fire appearing above their heads. If there ever was a perfect church, THIS was the perfect church!

There's an old saying... "If you find the perfect church, don't join it! You'll ruin it."

The first church was experiencing their first major test. Would this group of 120 disciples be able to help 3000 new converts catch the culture of love, the culture of faith, and the culture of disciple-making Jesus had shared with them for the past three years? Or would they be consumed by the sheer volume of the new people added to their number?

Ask any organizational expert... if you want to maintain the culture in an organization or group, don't add to it too quickly! You need time to onboard new people and help them catch the culture of your organization.

Yet the work of the Holy Spirit was to add 3000 on the first day! That's a 1-25 ratio. Not only that, but within the next few days, at least 5000 more would be added to the church! From a human perspective, this was church culture suicide.

But God did another miracle. He held His church together. Not by their might or power, but by His Spirit. The culture of love, faith, and disciple-making Jesus shared with them was not lost. God used these new converts to add to the culture Jesus had started. The 120 were not consumed by the 8000+, but the 8000+ caught the culture from the 120! What a miracle!

How did this happen?

We've already said it, but I'll say it again. The credit goes to God! He is the one who holds His church together. He is the one who did this miracle for the early church. Often times there is a stigma that church members have that keeps them from wanting their church to grow too quickly. They are afraid they will lose good things they enjoy. This wasn't a factor in the movement of the Spirit in this first church! He added rapidly to their number. I pray we will become the kind of church that God desires to add rapidly to our number. I pray that we will follow Jesus and share the culture of love, faith, and disciple-making that He wants us to share. I pray that God will add to our number all the time, and that we will help others catch the culture. There were **120 of them... there are about 120 of us! Lord, let it be done!**

The credit belongs to the work of God to hold them together. But how did the early church stay the course as a disciple-making first church? What was their part in maintaining the culture? Their part was to work together as a team... and that's exactly what we see the church doing in the opening chapter of Acts.

How did the first church work together as a team?

(share about the first church from the heart)

Simply put, the first church worked together as a team. That was their part. That's how they cooperated with the Holy Spirit and stayed the course in spite of so many new converts being added regularly.

To be a disciple-making first church, we must work together as a team.

But how do we do that in our context? How can we summarize what was happening in the first church and apply it directly to what God desires for our church?

Let's return to our word from the Lord this morning...

“As our devotion to God deepens, so will our devotion to one another.”

There is a key verse that shows us how they were devoted to God and devoted to one another...

Acts 2:42

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

That word “devoted” is a serious word. How many things are we *really* DEVOTED to?

- **Family**
- **Work? But many would take a new job.**
- **House? But many would move.**
- **School? But that is only a season of our lives.**

There are things we devote our lives to, but true devotion is reserved for the most important things in our lives. **Few things really capture our true devotion.**

But they were devoted to God, and that devotion produced in them a devotion to one another!

- **Devoted to the apostles' doctrine (Word of God)**

- **Devoted to fellowship (sadly, more like potluck – illustration with a volunteer)**
- **Devoted to prayer (emboldened to stay the course)**
- **Devoted to the breaking of bread...**

Did that mean they ate together? Certainly.

Is that all “breaking bread” meant to the first church?

Certainly not.

The breaking of bread represented the table of communion, or **the Lord’s Supper. And they were **DEVOTED** to it.**

Devotion to the communion was a reminder and indicator of their deep devotion to God. The communion was packed with significance for the early church. It reminded them of the devotion of God to them through the work of Jesus to atone for their sins and give them new life in God. It reminded them of their devotion to God that overflowed from the work of Jesus in their lives. It reminded them of their devotion to one another because of the oneness and unity that was theirs in Christ.

God used the communion to help them stay the course and keep the culture Jesus had established. In a church with incredible diversity, the communion played a vital role in calling them to believe the gospel and to maintain their devotion to God and to one another. Together, they stayed the course.

If we are going to stay the course, we must be a church that is devoted to God. Without that devotion to God, we will never be truly devoted to one another... we will never work

as a team. The will of God for our church is what's at stake. He will be faithful to do His part. Will we do our part?

How should you respond to this message?

Your response today will be through the communion table.

As we prepare to observe the communion together, here are a few things you need to know...

First, the communion is for those who, by faith, have received the life of God through Jesus. It is for those who have repented, been baptized, and been filled with the Holy Spirit. We don't want anyone to leave this place today without a personal relationship with Jesus. If you don't know Jesus personally, we want to lead you to a relationship with Him today. Seth and Alex are standing at the back of the auditorium. If you don't know Jesus, instead of coming to partake of the communion, would you make your way to the back of the auditorium and talk with either one of them?

Second, our church has a strong history in observing the communion, but this is the first time we have observed it this particular way. The way we are observing communion today is not unlike the way the early church fathers led their church to observe it together. Since this is our first time to partake of the communion this way, I will guide us through each step of the way.

Let's begin our invitation through the communion.

Today, many of you have brought the communion elements with you. That means you spent time in preparation for this service today. You had to be intentional about your part. Now, you will present what you have prepared to God.

If you did not bring elements or you did not get the word to bring elements, no worries. We have plenty for you.

The elements you have with you represent the body of Christ and your new life in God through Jesus. The bread and the juice are the body and blood of Jesus. Each one of you are all individually members of His body. Together, you make up the church – the body of Christ.

Our first response today is to offer ourselves up to God by bringing forward the elements and placing them on the communion tables here at the altar. It is a symbolic act of placing our lives at the altar of God together.

Each section has their own table. Scott is going to lead us in a song. As we sing, come forward to the table designated for your section and place the elements on the table together, then return to your seat.

SONG: Scott

Look at the table. Look closely. Do you see it? There you are at the table. Your lives have been presented together to God. Right now, we are laying our lives down at the altar, surrendering ourselves afresh to the Lord. This is a visual of

our unity in our devotion to God. We are saying, “God, our lives belong to You. Use us for Your glory!”

I’m going to ask the deacons and their wives serving us this morning to come forward and begin to prepare the tables.

These deacons will prepare the tables in front of you. You can watch as the deacons take the bread that you have placed at the alter, break it, and place it on a common plate together. As they do this, the bread will be united in such a way that it will be inseparable – we will not be able to distinguish one from the other. So it is with our church! God has united us together in Christ so that we are now one body in Christ – each belonging to one another and to God.

The deacons will do the same for the juice. They will pour juice from every container into one common container. The juice will be mixed together as one. So it is with our church! Through the blood of Jesus, we have been united together in Christ. We are one body!

Scott is going to lead us in another song as the deacons continue to prepare the tables. As they do, remember the body of Jesus that was broken for us. Remember the blood of Jesus that was poured out for our sins. Remember the devotion of God demonstrated through giving up His only Son so that we could be saved. And remember that it is because of this work that we have been united together as His body.

SONG: Scott

Before we come and partake of **the elements, the choir is going to sing a song of invitation over us. It is a song that reminds us all of our need for Jesus. During this song, if you don't know Jesus, go and speak with Seth or Alex. Settle that today! Become part of the body of Christ. If you know the Lord, use this song as an opportunity to prepare your heart to receive the communion.**

CHOIR: Scott

Now it is time to partake of **the communion together. To remind ourselves of the work of Jesus that has united us together in Christ.**

Here's how we will approach the table this morning. Let's maintain a spirit of prayer and worship. Scott will continue to play the piano, and he will lead us at times to sing and at times to reflect in silent prayer.

As that happens, our deacons are going to come and dismiss you row by row to come to the front and receive the elements. Our elders and their wives will be at the tables ready to receive you. When you come to the table, our elders will lead you to partake of the elements right there, and they will speak a blessing over you.

If you are here with your family, we want your family to all observe the communion together. You will all receive and partake of the elements at the same time, and you will all receive the blessing at the same time. Parents, we leave the discretion for your children observing the communion up to

you. Remember, the communion is for those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you worship, as you reflect, and as you come, prepare your heart. Do not observe this communion in vain! You must stir your faith to believe the gospel! You must partake in a spirit of devotion to God and devotion to one another. Church is a team sport. Love culture is a team sport. Disciple-making is a team sport. The communion is something we practice together as a team.

As our deacons dismiss your row, come and partake of the communion together.

WORSHIP & REFLECTION: Scott

Elder Blessing:

May the Lord bless you as you partake of these elements and remember His deep devotion to you (partake).

May the Lord bless you by stirring your faith to deeper devotion to Him.

May your deeper devotion to God produce in you a deeper devotion to one another and to share the life of God with others.

PRAYER: Brandon

FINAL SONG: Scott

Dismiss