

January 3: Fully Devoted

John 4:1-26

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Where ever you are at this morning, whether you in person here at the church or watching online, I want you all to do something with me. Let's all take a nice deep breath. (Inhale)(Exhale). Glad that year is over. 2021 feels good—Feels promising! 2021 doesn't need to do much to be better than 2020 if we are being honest. Yes, there were several positive things that happened in 2020 but I think all of us are looking forward to this new year. As we turned the calendar on Friday to 2021 however, nothing magical happened, the dates changed but they do that every day. The real thing that changed on Friday was our human mindsets. It's a new year, fresh restart, new me. We set new year resolutions, budgets, plans and goals for the year. But how many of us are going to be fully devoted to those resolutions and goals for 2021? How many of us are going into this year a little different? You may be going; "well, we will just see how this year goes". I haven't even made any resolutions yet. With the stress that 2020 gave us, it may be hard to be fully devoted to new things in 2021. Full devotion comes when you truly believe in the reason, cause or movement you are following. Being fully devoted to your resolution may look different this year.

This morning I want to encourage you to be fully devoted to something more than just eating better, being more organized or reading books. The gospel of Jesus Christ, his saving work on the cross should compel us to be fully devoted followers of Jesus. Being devoted to the gospel should always be our goal, no matter what date it is or year, no matter what happens in our lives, devotion to him should still remain. New year's resolutions can be difficult if you do not have a plan. If you don't think through how you are going to lose a few pounds, they are going stay all winter. Just saying we should all be fully devoted followers of Jesus is a great statement, but how though? What are the steps or workout plans for this? We often over emphasize one part of our Christian walk and forget others, we naturally lean towards music or logic and theology. To be a disciple of Jesus, He has called us to do four main things:

the how of discipleship. We are to Study, pray, love, and worship him. These four main pillars of discipleship give us clarity on what being a fully devoted follower of Jesus looks like in 2021 and beyond.

When Jesus calls each of us to follow him, we accept his lordship over our lives. We move past who we were dead in our sin to being made alive in him through the power of the gospel and the living water he offers through the holy spirit. To be a disciple of Jesus we must allow Him to pour into our lives. Much like a pitcher of water pouring into an empty and dry cup. (set up glass). The more we study, pray, love, and worship him, the fuller our cups become. This is how these four concepts work together in our lives. Like four wheels on a car, we must continually do these things in our lives. If one wheel is flat or popped, the car cannot move as well as it normally does. As we walk through what these four pillars look like, I would encourage you to ask yourself, “am I doing well in these categories or is there a wheel I need to put some air in?”

We make it a point around the New Year to offer bibles and reading resources so that those who are looking to restart their devotions or study of God’s word have the tools to do so. Studying God’s word is not just a good thing to do so that we know more theology. We study God’s word, The Bible, to learn more about our creator. How amazing is it that God has worked through human authors to bring us his teachings, his commandments, his thoughts and ways? In John 8:13-14 Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” To be a fully devoted disciple of Jesus you must hold to his teachings, found only in scripture. The world around us wants to be our main teacher, our main influencer. I would stress that the bible must be our first and foremost teacher. If you have been slacking on your study of God’s word, I would urge you to pick up a new resource or Bible reading plan we have available. Studying scripture transforms our minds, it shapes us, gives us answers to the questions we all have in this dire world. Study (Pour water)

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he made himself an example for us to follow. In countless ways. We can follow his examples through studying the gospels. One of the examples Jesus set for us is his consistency to pray. Prayer is a conversation between us and God, how amazing is it that we have the ability to go before the throne of the universe and talk to god. There is no mediator between us and Jesus. You can talk to him any time you want. To have relationships with others, we need to spend time in communication. In a study posted in Psychology today, a researcher found that it takes on average 50 hours of consistent communications to move from acquaintance to casual friend, 90 hours to move to friends and over 200 hours of constant time together to become close friends. Prayer is time spent communicating with God. Learning his voice. John 10:3-4 Jesus tells us that "The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." How well do you know the Lords voice? How much time have you been spending in prayer? Getting away like Jesus. Billy Graham was once asked after all of the crusades and ministry done in his life, what would he have done differently, he responded "I would travel less and prayed more." Prayer. (pour water).

If I was to ask you how do you know if someone is a disciple of Jesus, a common response would be if they love. John 13:34-35 Jesus says "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Love is a crucial part of being fully devoted to Jesus. Yet it is one that we desperately struggle with. Jesus has commanded us to love the lord our God. This means obeying his commands, listening to his will, laying our lives down for the gospel. This is counter-cultural in the me first, my way or the high way, post-modern America we live in today. We love God, when things are going well, we are quick to thank him for the things he has done, but we do need to ask ourselves; am I fully devoted in my love for God? Do I lay my life down in love and reverence of God or do I love myself? The first sin was loving

one's self before God. We do this every day. God has not only created you and I, but has rescued us from our sins, even though we turn away from him, he has prepared a place for us. We love him because he first loved us. Love. (pour water)

The last wheel in being fully devoted to Jesus is worship. We often view worship through the lenses of music and praise. We have worship services, we sing and thank him with our voices. But worship is more than music. It is more than Sunday mornings. Worship at its core is an expression of adoration and reverence for something or someone. We are called to worship the Lord. If worship was confined to music and songs, we would only be able to worship God on Sundays or when we turn on some music. But worship is more than that. Worshiping God as a disciple of Jesus is accepting his command in Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Worshiping Jesus is denying ourselves, picking up our cross and following him. Worship is saying whatever I do, whether in word or deed, I do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Worship is going to work tomorrow morning and living out the gospel to your coworkers, worshiping God is modeling Christlike behavior to your children, worship is singing praise to his goodness and faithfulness. Fully devoted worship of God will change your life. Worship (finish pour)

Study, prayer, love and worship. Our cup is full when we pursue these four simple yet deep pillars of discipleship. But Jesus doesn't want us to stop at a full cup. He has called us to be disciples that make disciples. Often times we think that we take our cup and pour into others. I volunteer at youth group, I pray for the prayer chain, I love my neighbor and I join in worship on Sunday mornings. And we feel like we don't have much left in our cup for our own relationship. Perhaps this is you. You are heading into the new year with a cup that has just been pouring into others. Maybe you need to refill your cup. Perhaps you have closed 2020 with a full cup, and you are looking to pour into others. Before we get into this very common rut of being poured into and pouring into others might I suggest a

different approach. It isn't that we should pour what we have into others, thus losing our own, but instead we should use our full devotion as an overflow into others. This is called the power of and. Two things can be true at the same time. We study God's word for our own understanding and we overflow into others by sharing God's word and what he has taught us to. We pray to the father, we ask, praise, thank him, for our own needs, AND we should also pray for others, overflowing into their lives. Jesus commanded us to love the lord our God AND to overflow that love we have for him into others. Loving them as ourselves. We are to worship God with everything we say and do because he is worthy, AND we can overflow that worship in our lives so that others can see just how worthy he is. As Christians we need to set aside this notion of filling our cup and pouring it into others and understand that we are to overflow into others out of the abundance of full devotion we have for Jesus.

God has called us as individuals to follow him, but he has also called a people to follow him. We are brothers and sisters, as you overflow into my life, I will overflow into yours. We are not alone, we have a great high priest who advocates for us and others who God has placed in our lives. 2021 is going to be a great year. No matter what happens. As you start this year however, take a pit stop, make sure all four tires are full. Study, prayer, love and worship.