Harvester Christian Church

Life Groups | **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY**

ACTS | Powered By The Spirit

**WEEK 5– ACTS 4:32-5:11**

Periodically in the book of Acts Luke provides summary statements in regard to how the church was progressing. We get another such statement in this week’s reading, this time focused on the ways in which believers were caring for one another’s needs. After providing this summary, Luke gives two examples of people giving to help the needy: One a shining example of true generosity, and the other a cautionary tale of deceit and hypocrisy. This week we are discussing **Spirit Powered Integrity**. Pray for wisdom and then read Acts 4:32-5:11.

**The Church at its Best (4:32-35)**

Luke gives us a snapshot of a church that was unified, caring, unselfish, Jesus-focused, and generous. Let’s take a look at why those things matter.

* Jesus prayed that all believers would be unified. What does he say would result? (John 17:20-23)
* In Acts 4:32, believers who were “one in heart and mind” were sharing their possessions with one another. When Paul later encouraged believers to be “one in spirit and purpose,” what behaviors did he imply would follow? (Philippians 2:1-4)
* Why is it important that Christ-followers really live out His teachings the way the first church did? (I Peter 2:12)
* What effect do you think it has on people outside the church when they see us loving and caring for one another?

**An Example of Sacrificial Generosity (4:36-37)**

Joseph from Cyprus sold a property and brought the money to the apostles. This is the first mention of a man who becomes an important person in the book of Acts and is also mentioned multiple times elsewhere in the New Testament.

* What was his nickname?
* What did his nickname mean?
* How is he later described by Luke? (Acts 11:22-24)
* Whose travel companion and partner in ministry did he later become? ([Acts 13:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2013:2))
* What was the reason that Saul/Paul and Barnabas later parted ways? ([Acts 15:36-39](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2015:36-Acts%2015:39))

**An Example of Deceit and Hypocrisy (5:1-11)**

Chapter 5 begins with the sad story of a married couple who seem do a good thing (give money to help the needy) but are found to be practicing deceit. We may not understand why their punishment was so immediate and harsh, but we can learn from their mistakes.

* What specific things did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong?
* “What made you think of doing such a thing?” This question that Peter asked Ananias is not answered in the passage. What do you think their motives might have been?
* Why is it futile to try to deceive God? (Psalm 139:1-4)
* We are told to stop lying to one another. (Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9) Why does it matter that we put off falsehood in our dealings with other people?
* Scripture also teaches that we sometimes even deceive ourselves. What are some of the ways in which we do that? (Matthew 7:1-5, James 1:22-25)

**Discussion Questions**

It has been said that a victory shared is a victory multiplied and a burden shared is a burden divided. We saw this week that the early church was committed to carrying each other’s burdens by giving to the needy. Can you share about a time when someone helped carry one of your burdens? Don’t limit your answers to financial burdens.

It appears that Ananias and Sapphira fell into the trap of trying to look better than they were. What do you think would result if we learned to care less about appearances and were more honest about our own lives, doubts, struggles, etc.?

In some senses the story of Ananias and Sapphira is an example of doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Can you identify a time in which you did a good thing but with a questionable motive?

Our reading this week twice indicated that great fear seized all who heard about what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. In what ways, if any, might a little fear of God be a healthy thing?