

November 22, 2020

“Responsive Love”
Lesson 4 of Unit

Acts 4:32-37, 5:1-11

Intro

The book of Acts was written by Luke to record the story of the 1st Century church. In understanding what Christ intended for his church to be like then, it helps us in understanding what the church should be like today.

The church’s primary mission then was to share the gospel, but we know from reading Acts that at times the apostles were ridiculed and persecuted, that there were doubters and scoffers, and that there were numerous inside issues: membership issues, division of duties issues, and even dishonesty in dealing with finances.

These situations could easily have led to discouragement; it would be very natural for some to feel this way. Yet in tough times, God has faithful servants whose actions encourage others and who hold fast to the path that Christ set before his follower.

Read Acts 4:32-37

1. From vs. 32, what does it mean for Christians to be “one in heart and mind”? How does this “oneness” show itself? How might this idea be carried out in today’s world?
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2. In vs. 33-34a, what are the apostles doing, and how does the church’s means of living appear to those not a part of that community? In what way is God’s grace manifested here?
3. Vs. 34b-35 gives the specifics to the general idea in vs. 33-34a. How were people’s needs taken care of here? Look at Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35, Acts 6:1-6, and I Timothy 5:3-16; the way that people’s needs are met is modified in each of these examples. What might that be saying to our church body about meeting needs?

4. What does the name Barnabas (a nickname actually!) mean? What quality might we say he has based on his actions in vs. 37? What qualities does he show in Acts 9:27 and Acts 11:24?

Read Acts 5:1-11

5. Briefly summarize the actions of Ananias and Sapphira in 5:1-2.

6. What was the crime, the fraud, committed by Ananias and Sapphira in vs. 3-4, according to Peter? What is the greater crime that Peter tells Ananias they have committed? How might this second action be something we should reflect on ourselves?

7. What happens to Ananias in vs. 5? What reasons can you offer for this being the way God chose to deal with this situation?

8. What kind of fear is the vs.5b referring to? Who might be included in the “all” that heard of this event? What does the hasty way the body is removed in vs. 6 suggest to you?

9. How is the gap of three hours mentioned in vs. 7 significant? Why does Luke specifically mention that Sapphira did not know what had happened earlier (vs. 3-6)?

10. What is Peter’s reason for his question in vs. 8? In what way(s) has Sapphira “test(ed)” the Spirit of the Lord in her actions?

11. What point (or points) is being made by vs. 10 that the young men had just come back from burying Ananias, and buried Sapphira next to him?

12. What similarities and differences do you see between Barnabas and his actions, and Ananias and Sapphira and their actions?

Application: Since none of us are God, we don't always fully understand or even perceive how or why the Spirit is working in the church the way He is. One thing with week's lesson makes clear is that faith and fraud can't co-exist. Dishonesty in the church is destructive, and it must be dealt with quickly and likely severely. An answer to this potential problem is to daily "give up our lives", to yield our hearts and minds to the Spirit, so that all our words and actions are from Him, and not from any potentially selfish human motive.

Prayer: Father God, please help us continually yield up our human pride and self-seeking, so that we can act in ways that best honor You. We seek not just to be honest in our actions, but also to be encouragers of our brothers and sisters in the faith. We ask for Your strength and guidance in this effort. In Jesus' name, Amen.