

As we study in the book of Acts we learn lessons on how the church should function, and how its members should behave. Today we have an example of their generosity in giving.

I. They Gave Because They Had Something in Common (4:32)

1. The church is unified in Jesus

- a) They were of one heart and one soul. This was because they all belonged to Jesus, and in Jesus there is unity.

📖 *Turn to Ephesians 4:1-6 “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

📖 *1 Corinthians 1:10 “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”*

- b) When we each draw closer to Jesus we automatically draw nearer to one another.

- Sadly many people are quarreling, gossiping, and backbiting their brothers and sisters.
 - (i) **THE PREACHER AND THE WORSHIP LEADER** There was a church where the preacher and the worship leader were not getting along. This began to spill over into the worship service. One week the preacher preached on commitment and how we would dedicate ourselves to the service of God. The worship leader then led the song, "I Shall Not Be Moved." The next Sunday the preacher preached on tithing and how we should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The worship leader then led the song, "Jesus Paid It All." The next Sunday, the preacher preached on gossiping and how we should watch our tongues. The worship leader then led the song "I Love to Tell the Story." The preacher became very disgusted over the situation, and the next Sunday he told the congregation he was considering resigning. The worship leader then led the song, "Oh Why Not Tonight?" As it came to pass, the preacher resigned and the next week informed the church that it was Jesus that led him there and it was Jesus that was taking him away. The worship director then led the song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."
 - (ii) “Discord and division are not appropriate for Christians. For wolves to worry the lambs is no wonder, but for one lamb to worry another, this is unnatural and monstrous.” –Thomas Brooks

II. Their Giving was a Matter of Grace (4:33)

1. Grace for preaching, Grace for salvation, and grace for giving

- a) Our giving must be because of grace. Otherwise, we will never give generously, and we will be miserable in our giving.

- b) Many try to make giving a matter of the law. But grace is a much more powerful motivation!

📖 *2 Corinthians 9:5 “Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”*

📖 *Philemon 14 “But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.”*

- (i) **Three levels of giving** 1. You have to (law) 2. You ought to (obligation) 3. You want to (grace)

- Giving in the Bible is called a “grace”
 - 📖 *2 Corinthians 8:1-2* “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.”
 - 📖 *2 Corinthians 8:6-7* “So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us — see that you abound in this grace also.”

III. They Gave through the Church (4:34-37)

1. Here the pattern for giving is seen. The Church is God’s venue for giving.
 - a) We can give on an individual basis too, but the majority of our giving should be done through the church. The leadership of the church then distributes to those who have needs (35)
 - Often the leadership of the church is much more aware of the needs of the body. They are also able to investigate false needs.
 - This model fails when the leadership distributes to their “needy” pockets.
 - b) This principle of giving is also seen in the Old Testament
 - 📖 *Malachi 3:10* “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,"Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.”

IV. Their Giving had to be Motivated by God not Greed (5:1-11)

1. Ananias and Sapphira wanted recognition for their giving
 - a) This was their primary motivation: public recognition and greed.
 - They had just seen what Barnabas did. Barnabas was selfless, these were selfish!
 - Their sin was trying to appear generous and Godly, when actually they were not.
 - (i) “We’d all like a reputation for generosity, and we’d all like to buy it cheap”
 - (ii) Their real intention was not donation, but glorification...of themselves!
 - b) This hypocrisy and greed was dealt with severely. This is to teach us how God feels about “selfish giving”
 - (i) “if God acted in the same way today that he did in the 5th chapter of Acts, you’d have to have a morgue in the basement of every church & a mortician on the pastoral staff.” – Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse
2. What is your motivation?
 - a) God cares more about why we give than how much we give.
 - Let us not forget that the Holy Spirit is part of every decision and action that we make.

May God make us a generous church, motivated by God’s grace and our desire to meet the needs of a hurting world.