

# Acts 4:32-5:11

## July 6, 2025



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### MAIN POINT

The early church cultivated a radically generous community, where believers collectively shared and gave to the church to take care of others as they had needs.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What have been your takeaways from our study of Acts so far?**

**Could someone recap what we studied last week?**

Last week, we read about Peter and John being questioned in front of the Sanhedrin. Though the religious leaders were amazed at the bold teaching of these uneducated and untrained men, they didn't want them to continue to teach in Jesus's name, so they threatened them. Peter and John, however, said they couldn't stop acting as Jesus's witnesses. They went home, and the community of believers prayed for boldness to continue sharing the gospel. We ended last week reading that God answered their



prayer with an immediate yes. The people were filled with boldness as they shared the good news! This week, we'll see what happened with the community of believers following the infusion of the Holy Spirit in Acts 4:31.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 4:32-35.

**What does it mean for a church to be “of one heart and mind” (v.32)?**

**How would you describe the actions of the church in this passage?**

**What would this look like for us today? How should our church and group take care of those in need in our community?**

In Acts 4, we get a front-row look at how the early church put Jesus's command to love our neighbor into action (Matthew 22:36-40).

Acts 4:32 describes unity among the group. The New Testament consistently emphasizes the importance of unity among believers (1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Colossians 3:14). Luke recorded that all the believers “were of one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32). Specifically, they were united around the truth about Jesus.

One way the church displayed this unity was through radical generosity. They weren't selfish with their possessions; they shared and gave as others had needs, and because of that “there was not a needy person among them” (v.34). The result of this radical generosity wasn't just that no one was needy, the church was also thriving! Verse 33 says the apostles were giving testimony in the name of Jesus with “great power.” They were living out Jesus's command from Acts 1:8.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 4:36–5:11.

**What did Luke describe Barnabas doing at the end of Acts 4? How might this have inspired Ananias and Sapphira's actions?**

**Contrast Barnabas's generosity with Ananias and Sapphira's actions in Acts 5. What was the difference, and why were Ananias and Sapphira's actions sinful?**

**What did Peter identify as the root problem behind the couple's sin?**

In our previous passage, all the believers were taking care of their community through the selling of land and houses and donating the proceeds to the church. In Acts 4:36-37,



we see a specific example of this through Joseph, who was also called Barnabas. (This was the same Barnabas who would travel with Paul and act as a missionary for the church later in Acts.)

It is possible that Barnabas's generosity inspired Ananias and Sapphira to sell property and give money to the church, but instead of being motivated by generosity, they were motivated by envy and pride. Their problem wasn't that they only gave some of the proceeds to the poor, their problem was their heart posture. They wanted their gift to look as impressive and generous as Barnabas's, so they lied about it.

This is hypocrisy: deliberate deception as an attempt to present a "spiritual" façade, not unlike the behavior of the religious leaders in the Gospels. Hypocrisy like this is still a problem among believers today.

After Ananias sold the property—an event Luke specified his wife, Sapphira, knew about — “he kept back part of the proceeds” and brought some to the church. Peter called him out, saying he had not just lied to the people of the church but also to the Holy Spirit, who gave Peter discernment to see what was going on. Peter said this was done under Satan's influence (v.3). We get the sense from Peter's words that it would have been acceptable for the couple to only give part of the proceeds to the church. What was not okay was that they lied about their actions to appear praiseworthy. Ananias's hypocrisy cost him his life (v.5).

Three hours later, Sapphira, who knew of Ananias's deception, also lied before both the church and the Holy Spirit when she said the land was sold for the amount of money Ananias had presented to the apostles. Sapphira paid with her life, too. The church responded appropriately with reverent fear of God (vv.5,11). Yet, as we will see in the passages that follow, these events did not stifle the growth of the church but actually spurred it on further.

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**How could we grow in taking care of needs in our church and community?**

**Think about Ananias and Sapphira's story. How are we tempted to act in hypocrisy in the church today?**

**How might we seek a heart posture like Barnabas's instead of like Ananias and Sapphira's?**

**How is sharing the gospel with others a necessary act of generosity?**



## **PRAYER**

*Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.*

Praise God for the gifts He has given each of us. Ask that He would help your group be good stewards and become more radically generous like Barnabas. Ask Him to help your group turn away from any envy and pride in your hearts and instead love each other in a manner that honors Him.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.*

**July 13, 2025 --- Acts 5:12-42**

## **COMMENTARY**

**Acts 4:32–5:11**

**4:32–35** As long as there was complete unanimity of purpose and intention among them, the early Christians shared their possessions freely, such that there was not a needy person among them. They were able to do this not because of their own strength, but because great grace was on all of them. Therefore, the generosity was above all a work of God. Yet trouble was coming (5:1–11).

**4:36–37** Joseph (aka Barnabas) led by example, selling his field and donating all the proceeds to the church. Such charitable acts inspired others to do good but also incited some to seek acclaim.

**5:1–2** Not everyone shared in Joseph's liberality. Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property but kept back part of the sale price despite claiming otherwise (v. 8).

**5:3–4** Ananias and Sapphira assumed they were merely lying to men (the apostles), but in reality they had lied to the Holy Spirit who is ever-present in the church. Peter's wording indicates that the Holy Spirit is God. Peter's question (wasn't it at your disposal?) implies that Ananias and Sapphira would have been justified to sell the land and give only a portion to the church. Their sin lay in their deception and their desire to win praise.

**5:5–9** The deception of Ananias and Sapphira, and in particular Sapphira's lie to Peter, was a test of the Spirit of the Lord. This is a powerful indication of the Spirit's role in the church and church leadership; Peter was a mere man, but he was God's man to lead this fellowship of believers.

**5:11** On fear as a response to the workings of God, see v. 5; 2:43; 9:31; 19:17.

