

Sharing All Things

Teaching Tips

September 13, 2015

Bible Study Guide 2

Words You Should Know

A. **Lacked** ([Acts 4:34](#)) *endeos* (Gk.)—To be in need, destitute.



B. **Consolation** (v. 36) *paraklesis* (Gk.)—help, encouragement, comfort.

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Be Generous. Most people are glad to share what they have with those in need. What enables people to give up what is theirs for the good of someone else? The early followers of Jesus shared everything with one another, and although some did not cooperate and were punished as a result, there was not a needy person among them.

A. Pray for your students and lesson clarity.

B. Read the lesson Scripture in multiple translations.

C. Complete the companion lesson in the *Precepts For Living*® Personal Study Guide.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Open with prayer.

B. Read Aim for Change.

C. Tell the class to read the In Focus story silently, then discuss it.

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Have volunteers read the Focal Verses.

B. Use The People, Places, and Times; Background; Search the Scriptures; At-A-Glance; In Depth; and More Light on the Text.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. Divide the class into groups to discuss the Discuss the Meaning, Lesson in Our Society, and Make It Happen sections. Tell the students to select a representative to share their thoughts with the class.

B. Connect these sections to the Aim for Change and the Keep in Mind verse.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Summarize the lesson.

B. Close in prayer.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Sharing All Things

Song: “You Can’t Beat God Giving”

Devotional Guide: [Isaiah 1:15–18](#)



Bible Background • [ACTS 4:32–5:11](#)



Printed Text • [ACTS 4:34–5:10](#) | **Devotional Reading •** [ISAIAH 1:15–18](#)



By the end of the lesson, we will: UNDERSTAND the sacrifices and rewards of the early Christians’ willingness to share their possessions with others; EXAMINE our motivation for making sacrificial offerings; and DRAFT a list of statements that would motivate others to contribute freely to a community project.



Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: UNDERSTAND the sacrifices and rewards of the early Christians’ willingness to share their possessions with others; EXAMINE our motivation for making sacrificial offerings; and DRAFT a list of statements that would motivate others to contribute freely to a community project.

In Focus

Anita had a wonderful time at church and was grateful to God for all of the things that He had blessed her with. As she was leaving service, one of her fellow choir members, Sheila, asked her for a ride home. As she and her two children got in the car, Sheila explained that since she was laid off, she hadn’t been able to afford to get the car fixed. She asked Anita to drop her and her two little ones off at her mom’s house; they were going to eat dinner over there tonight. She shared with Anita how tight the budget had been and how she had to be creative in order to stretch the groceries. Sheila was grateful that God always made a way for her to provide for her children. She thanked Anita for the ride as she and the children got out of the car. Anita was just about to pull off, but before she did, she called Sheila to come back. When Sheila returned to the car, Anita reached into her purse and gave Sheila all of her bonus money. She told Sheila, “I hope this helps you get the car fixed.”

Just like the early church, today believers in Christ have a support system since they share all things in common, including material wealth. How can we practically live out this reality with our fellow believers?

Keep in Mind

“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold” ([Acts 4:34](#)).



Focal Verses

KJV

Acts 4:34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,



35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

NLT

Acts 4:34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them



35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

36 For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus.

37 He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

5:1 But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property.

2 He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the

rest.

3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.

4 The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!”

5 As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified.

6 Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 Peter asked her, “Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?” “Yes,” she replied, “that was the price.”

9 And Peter said, “How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too.”

10 Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

The People, Places, and Times

Barnabas. Barnabas means “son of encouragement” in Aramaic. This was the name given by the apostles to Joses, a Levite from Cyprus. Barnabas was an early convert to Christianity. His character and faith soon brought him into a position of leadership in the church. When Paul was first converted, many of the believers were afraid to accept him. Barnabas eased their fears by speaking to the church on behalf of the apostles. Barnabas was one of Paul’s companions during the early part of his ministry.

Levite. The Levites were the priestly tribe of Israel. All of Israel’s priests are descended from this tribe. However, there is a fundamental difference between priests and Levites. All priests come from the tribe of Levi; however, not all Levites can become priests, who must be descendants of Aaron. Priests are consecrated and were the only ones that could minister at the altar and enter into the holy places. Levites were purified and were set aside to help the priests in performing their duties.

Background

The generosity described in this lesson is a continuation of the giving described in [Acts 2:44–45](#): “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” The Gospel message of Jesus’ extravagant love had a significant impact on the early church. The reality of Jesus’ tremendous sacrifice inspired them to sacrifice for the benefit of others. They were not comfortable seeing their brothers and sisters in Christ go without. This conviction led them to do more than just pray for their brothers and sisters; it prompted them to take personal action. In this lesson, we see that the spirit of generosity is still needed in the church.

At-A-Glance

1. Unreserved Generosity ([Acts 4:34–37](#))
2. Consequences of Deception (5:1–10)

In Depth

1. Unreserved Generosity ([Acts 4:34–37](#))

In the Old Testament, we see that God is consistently concerned with the plight of those less fortunate. Israel was chastised many times because they had failed to take care of those unable to take care of themselves: widows, orphans, and the poor. God makes clear that Israel is responsible for taking care of one another ([Deuteronomy 15:4](#)). He also commands Israel to bring all the tithes and offerings to the house of God so that there would be provision there ([Malachi 3:10](#)). This was so the poor would know that they could come to the temple and find food.

As a response to the generosity Jesus showed them, the early church provided for all so that no one “lacked.” Their possessions and goods were shared in common and given to anyone who was in need. This was remarkable in first century Palestine, as most of the population lived in poverty. The early church provided the context to live out Jesus’ command to “sell your possessions and give to the poor” ([Matthew 19:21](#); [Luke 12:33, NIV](#)). The community of the new covenant shared everything.

2. Consequences of Deception (5:1–10)

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is puzzling. The generosity displayed by the early church was completely spontaneous. No one was commanded to sell their property and give the money to the apostles. People chose to do it because it was their heart’s desire to make sure their brothers and sisters in Christ were well cared for. The field was Ananias and Sapphira’s to do with as they pleased. It would stand to reason that if they decided to give the apostles part of the money and keep part of the money for themselves, that would have been perfectly acceptable.

What prompted them to lie to the apostles? Maybe they wanted to appear generous so they could become leaders in the church. Maybe they wanted to be seen giving a lot of money like the rich people in [Mark 12:41–43](#). Whatever their reason, what happened to them serves as a strong reminder that the façade we put up to impress others is not able to stand in the presence of the Holy Spirit. God is a discerner of the heart, thoughts, and intents of people. It is impossible to lie to Him; He knows us and whether what we do is sincere or for show and appearance. God will reward us according to our intentions, so make sure that all that you do is done with a pure heart and not a hidden agenda.

Search the Scriptures

1. What was Barnabas’ birth name ([Acts 4:36](#))?
2. Was Ananias free to do what he wanted with the money after selling his land (5:4)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. The community of the early church provided for all who lacked. What do you think prevents us from sharing what we have to provide for those in need?
2. As Christians, integrity must be part of our character. What can we do to cultivate integrity both individually and collectively?

Lesson in Our Society

Today it seems like people are quick to cast the church and Christians in a negative light. Pastors of large congregations are criticized for their congregations being too large. Pastors of small congregations are criticized for their congregations not growing. This is all the more reason for us to make sure that we are sincere in all that we do. Engaging in pointless arguments will not do anything to advance the cause of Christianity. However, displays of sincere compassion, generosity, and concern will silence any critic.

Make It Happen

We at times get stuck thinking that making periodic contributions to the “Benevolence Fund” is all that we need to do in terms of helping others. While making contributions is a great thing, this lesson emphasizes the whole community’s responsibility to care for all those in need. Together with the class, plan a project in which you can pool your resources together to sacrificially help someone in need.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do.

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

More Light on the Text

Acts 4:35–5:10

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

The first phrase in this verse echoes the words of [Deuteronomy 15:4](#): “There shall be no poor among you.” In this way, Luke (who wrote Acts to follow his Gospel) paints a picture of the early church as a new Israel. This would have appealed to those in the Jewish community, as they could see the church fulfilling the role of the ideal community in the age to come. This community was attractive to those Jews living in poverty at this time. This sharing of all things was also a reflection of Greek ideals of communal ownership, which can be found in the writings of Plato and his idea of a New Republic. Aristotle, as well, held ideas about communal ownership, but more in the context of friendship. The Roman Stoic philosopher Cicero was a proponent for private property, but also saw how communal ownership would benefit the larger republic. The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo also espoused aspects of communal living. This idea of communal ownership and being of one mind and soul would have appealed to the Gentiles of the Greek-speaking world, the primary audience for the books of Luke and Acts.

What is striking about the Christians’ sharing all their goods in common is that it was a voluntary practice. The iterative imperfect tense is used in vv. 34b–35. This tense indicates that the community members used to sell their property and share the wealth as a regular practice. There is evidence that the Qumran communities near the Dead Sea around the time of Christ practiced the surrender of property. There is a similar generosity of spirit and on-going commitment to communal needs here in Acts.

Laying the money at the apostles’ feet was an act of submission—not to the apostles as mere men, but to Christ. The twelve represented Christ on earth. The act of the believers laying the money at their feet was symbolic of submitting their wealth to Christ. This was not worship of the apostles but a symbolic statement. The apostles actually turned over the responsibility of distributing the proceeds to the seven deacons once this duty distracted them from their main task of prayer and preaching the Word ([Acts 6:1–7](#)).

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Barnabas’ given name was Joses or Joseph. The apostles who spoke Aramaic nicknamed Joses “Barnabas,” meaning “son of prophecy,” from the Aramaic *bar* meaning “son of” and *nabu* meaning “prophecy.” Some have given the nickname a slightly different meaning, translating it as “son of refreshment.” Based on his intimate knowledge of the man, Luke translated the Aramaic into Greek as *huios parakleseos*, which is translated variously as “son of consolation/exhortation/encouragement.” Parakleseos comes from the same root as the word Jesus used in His

promise to send the Holy Spirit: “And I will pray to the Father and He will give you another Comforter [*parakletos*], that He may abide with you forever” ([John 14:16](#)). Luke uses these exact words to indicate that the Holy Spirit had distinguished Himself in Barnabas. It is interesting to note that the main function of prophecy (from which we get part of the compound of Barnabas’ name) is to build up, encourage, and comfort ([1 Corinthians 14:3](#)). Whenever we see Barnabas in the pages of the New Testament, he is building up, encouraging, and comforting others to be their best for Jesus.

Although Barnabas is a well-known apostle in the New Testament, nothing is known of his life before he makes his initial appearance in Acts. The great missionary came from a Jewish-Cypriot family, but he had family in Jerusalem, including the Apostle John Mark ([Colossians 4:10](#)). In our scriptural introduction to Barnabas, he has sold some property and given all the proceeds to the apostles to distribute to the church as they saw fit.

Barnabas was a descendant of the tribe of Levi. The Levites came into prominence in connection with Moses and Aaron. After Aaron led the Israelites into apostasy with the golden calf, the children of Levi avenged the Lord’s honor by punishing the wrongdoers ([Exodus 32:25–28](#)). The Levites served as priests in the sanctuary and distributed tithes to the needy. They also taught and interpreted the Law ([Deuteronomy 10:8–9](#), [Numbers 3:5–9](#)). Levites as a tribe did not have a specific territory of Israel ([Numbers 18:20](#)), but were scattered throughout numerous cities and towns ([Numbers 35:1–8](#)). Thus it was not a violation for Barnabas to have property. Some have argued that the property he sold was either land in his hometown of Cyprus or was his burial plot, but it more than likely was his ancestral residence somewhere near Jerusalem.

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Nothing is known about Ananias and his wife Sapphira outside of their sin. It is a sad reminder that sometimes we may be known for all the bad we have done and not the good. The name Ananias means “one whom God has graciously given” and it stands in stark contrast to the stinginess of his actions in this narrative. His actions also stand in stark contrast to the actions of Barnabas, who gave all of the money from the sale of his land to the church. This was in direct contradiction of the work of faith being done in the hearts of those early believers. They truly believed everything was to be shared by all; apparently Ananias and his wife Sapphira did not.

Sapphira was named as an accomplice in this act of selfishness and dishonesty. The Bible does not say that she actually sold the land or kept back the proceeds. It does say that she had knowledge of what Ananias did. She is guilty because she knowingly went along with it. The word in the King James is “privy” (Gk. *sunorao*, **soon-ah-RAH-oh**). It is a compound verb using the Greek words for “together with” and “to see or know.” She was not an innocent party but knew what was going on and considered it in her best interest to keep some of the money as well.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Peter as one of the apostles confronts Ananias. It is not clear how Peter found out, but we can assume the Holy Spirit revealed Ananias’ sin to him. Two things come to mind as we look at Peter’s words of confrontation. First he says that Satan, not the Holy Spirit, had filled Ananias’ heart. The direct influence of Satan himself prompted Ananias to keep some of the money and lie to the apostles and the rest of the church.

Peter then goes right to the heart of the matter. The land was Ananias’ property before it was sold. The money was his when he sold the land. It made no sense to lie to the church. Ultimately Ananias did not lie to the church, but to God. He had broken the trust of the community through his selfish and deceptive act. The word for “kept back” can also mean “to pilfer or embezzle.” Once Ananias pledged to give the proceeds to the church, it was the Lord’s property; to keep some was embezzlement. His act was a sin not just against the community but against God. The word for “conceived” (Gk. *tithemi*, **TI-thay-mee**) also means “set” or “appointed” and indicates the premeditation on the part of

Ananias. This was not a knee-jerk reaction, but a planned scheme to deceive the church.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

Immediately Ananias is judged, convicted, and executed. We do not know what caused Ananias' death. One thing we know for sure is that this judgment was God's judgment. Immediately the result is that "great fear came upon all who heard it"—not an ordinary fear but a "great fear." Here we see the effect of Ananias' death and the possible reason for Luke including this incident in the narrative. Luke wanted to show the hand of God in forming the community and protecting its purity.

For the young men to immediately wrap him up and carry him out without ceremony showed that this was divine judgment. In first century Palestine, only the burials of criminals and those who committed suicide were done with this much urgency. The young men were back within a matter of three hours.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

Next, Peter confronts Sapphira. She had walked in not knowing what had happened. Luke does not state where this meeting took place and who was present. All he wants the reader to focus on is the seriousness of the couple's deception. Peter questions her on the price of the sale. It doesn't state how much it was and whether it was for good reason—any amount was enough to warrant the judgment of the Lord. Peter in his question gives Sapphira a chance to repent of her wrongdoing. To her demise, she does not repent but continues with the lie.

Peter's reaction is similar to what he said to Ananias: It was not to men that she had lied, but to God. Ananias and Sapphira had both agreed (Gk. *sumphoneo*, **sum-foe-NEH-oh**), which literally means to "sound together" indicating they both were on one accord, indicating their planning to lie to the community. This was not a mere reaction, but a formulated, well thought out plan to deceive the community. Peter then lets Sapphira know she will meet the same fate as her husband.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Sapphira fell down dead in the same way her husband did. The same young men who had carried Ananias out to be buried also carried her out. They were together in their sin, and now they lay together in death. It is interesting to note that Luke mentions the sin and fate of Sapphira as well as her husband. Throughout the books of Luke and Acts, women are given an equal amount of attention as men. It is the same in this case, although Sapphira's actions are far from praiseworthy. Still, it shows Luke's focus on the value of women as equal agents and recipients in God's economy.

Again we hear that "a great fear" comes on not only the whole church but also everyone who heard about these things. Here we see Luke writing not only from a spiritual perspective, but also as an apologist for the church. He is showing his audience that the early church community was the real thing. It was in fact God's community empowered by the Spirit and tasked to continue the ministry of the crucified and resurrected Messiah.

Say It Correctly

Privy. **PRI**-vee.

Cyprus. **SAI**-pris.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Rescuing the Weak
([Psalm 82](#))



TUESDAY

Living Blamelessly
([Psalm 26](#))



WEDNESDAY

Sharing Generously
([1 Timothy 5:11–19](#))



THURSDAY

Sharing with All
([Isaiah 1:15–18](#))



FRIDAY

Sharing Troubles
([Philippians 4:1–14](#))



SATURDAY

Sharing Out of Abundance
([Luke 3:10–16](#))



SUNDAY

Sharing All Things
([Acts 4:34–5:10](#))

