

The Church - Acts Chapter 5

Message to Conversation Guide

Key Texts

Acts 4:32-37

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. 34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), 37 **sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.** NIV

Acts 5:1-11

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge **he kept back part of the money for himself**, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that **you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.**"

5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. NIV

Discussion Questions

1. According to the **Acts 4:36a** what was Barnabas' real name? Why was he given the name Barnabas by the Apostles? What does that name mean? What does that tell you about his character? If your friends were giving you a nick name what do you think it would be?
2. There evidently were all economic classes in the early church - Barnabas was well off and perhaps others were poor because they had lost work or their jobs due to their commitment of Christ. Read the verse below and discuss the economic impact persecution had on some early followers of Jesus.

Heb 10:32-34

*32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 **You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property**, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. NIV*

3. Probably Barnabas' gift was celebrated and well known in the early church. It was his generous gift that probably inspired Ananias and Sapphira to give money from the proceeds of the property that was sold. Discuss how their sin was not that they didn't give all the money but that they left the impression that the money given represented all the profits of the land sale.
4. Have you ever felt like a hero when everyone told you did something great? Maybe you made a play that made your team win the game or you did something nice that everyone noticed and they praised you for your good deed. Share with the group any memory you have of doing something good that brought you positive attention. How did that positive attention make you feel and would you like to feel or experience that again?
5. What are some ways that we are image conscious in today's modern world? How does our FaceBook and Twitter posts sometime betray our desire to make ourselves look better than we really are?
6. Why do you believe God has such a high premium on integrity and honesty? How are authentic was the early church compared to the modern church?
7. What are some ways that we can promote transparency and integrity in our daily lives and in the life of the modern church?