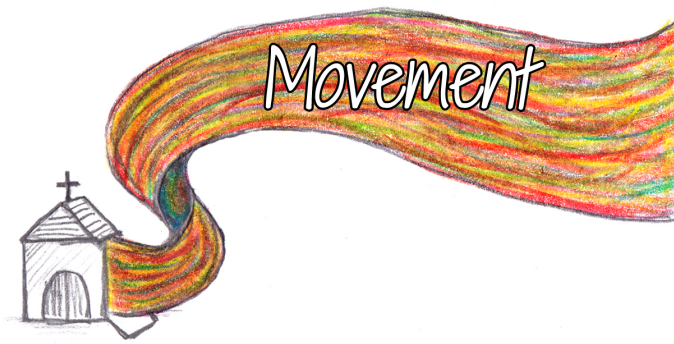


onechurch

bigIdea small group discussion



God wants to grow our faith. He wants to grow our faith as individuals. God knows that the way we most please Him is by having a big faith (Hebrews 11:6). When we have a big faith in a Big God, God will do start to do big things with us and through us—just like He did in the story of Barnabas

But God also wants us to grow our faith as a church. When a church has unity and generosity, synergy happens, and the dreams become big. Small prayers are transformed into big prayers. And when we pray big prayers, we know God shows off in a big way!

BIG IDEA: Faith gives us the ability to move from consumers to contributors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There are many moments in life that require us to be all in—marriage, kids, mortgages, car payments, skydiving, etc. What experiences have you had that required a full-on commitment, one for which you had to be all in? What happens if we only go halfway with these kinds of commitments?
2. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Acts 4:32-35.* What are some marks of a truly great church?
3. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read John 17:20-22.* What did Jesus pray for? Do you think most believers and most churches exemplify His prayer? Why or why not?
4. At what point and with what group have you sensed the most unity: Athletic team? Army unit? Fraternity? Bible Study? Your family? Do you think it's easier to find unity in groups inside or outside the church? Why?

In Acts, we see the new church trying to learn how to really live the mission left them by Jesus. Jesus has gone back to heaven and left his disciples on earth to raise up "His church." In this discussion, we will focus on two polar opposite stories of people in this church. First we will look at Barnabas.

5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Acts 4:32-37.* What inspires you about this story?

The generosity of Barnabas often seems impossible to us "ordinary" people who don't have large amounts of wealth or resources. But again, we don't know whether he was a rich man who had money to spare, making this an easy donation, or whether this was all he had. Either way, he was all in.

6. If you had all the money you wanted, what would you do with it?
7. In what ways did you see your family being generous when you were a kid? How did their generosity or lack thereof impact who you are today?
8. Why is it easier to give when we have plenty than when we have little? Why should we be generous anyway?

The second story we hear in the scriptures comes immediately after this incident with Barnabas. Here Paul tells the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who had a bit of a different take on what it meant to be all in.

9. Vastly different, right? What are your initial reactions to this story, even if you have heard/read it before?
10. We can conclude from this story that generosity is important to God. Why do you think being generous is

so important to God? How does being generous impact our journey with Jesus? With others?

11. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Acts 5:1-11.* God's judgment in this situation may appear severe.
12. Why do you think it was necessary? What was the result?
13. What do you learn about the character of God from this story?
14. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Why do you think people are so inclined to lie?
15. In what ways does this type of deceit play out among Christians and in the Church?

Here's the difference between these two stories: Barnabas gave what he had with joy. We've probably all heard the verse that says, "God loves a cheerful giver." This is a prime example—Barnabas used his money to be generous to the church, giving away everything for the mission of Jesus. His example encouraged the believers in Acts, and should encourage us as well. Ananias and Sapphira, however, may have given a generous amount of money to the church, but their spirits craved recognition and accolades, and they lied when asked if they had given all, which had dire consequences. They were not all in, they were "half in."

16. How do you feel that you hold yourself back when it comes to being all in on your spiritual journey?
17. Why is faith a necessary part to being all in?

GOING DEEPER

1. Compare verses 32-35 with Acts 2:42-47. What qualities marked the Jerusalem Church?
2. Were Ananias and Sapphira required to sell the land and bring all of the money to the church? Why or why not? What was their sin?
3. What would Ananias and Sapphira gain by lying about the money they received?
4. What do you think motivated Ananias and Sapphira to do what they did? (See Acts 4:36-37).
5. How does comparing ourselves to others rob us of joy and get us into trouble?
6. Given that we all do bad things, why do you think God punished Ananias and Sapphira so severely? How might 'great fear' be useful to God at this point?
7. How would the incident of Ananias and Sapphira lead to the response of people in Acts 5:13-14? What words might outsiders use to describe this church?

THINK ABOUT IT

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith this way: "*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" Many times faith feels like an abstract concept—how can we be certain of what we cannot see? This is the challenge faith presents. We must believe that our actions have an effect, which echoes into eternity. Our generosity can change the spiritual landscape of our cities, states, country, and the world. God is faithful to us, and He calls us to return that faith to Him. This requires us to believe that if we are generous to God, He will not let us down. He is always all in when it comes to us; the question is how can we in turn be all in to His mission? Why do you think Jesus places so much emphasis on faith throughout the New Testament?

MOVING FORWARD

Ask everyone to think about one person with whom they can share their struggles and confess their sins, as it says in James 5:16. Pray as a group that God would provide the right person and that He will equip each of you to be the same kind of person to someone else. Challenge everyone in the group to get serious about sin in their lives. As a group, ask God to search your hearts this week and reveal anything that is displeasing to Him.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

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. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. Acts 4:32, 34-35

