

Acts 4:32-5:11

Generosity and Integrity

Learning Objectives

- Define and understand generosity in the context of God's grace and meeting the needs of the Church.
- Understand the connection between generosity and integrity.
- Consider the impact integrity has on our church community as a whole and our individual relationship with God.

Pray for your time together as a group.

? Has there ever been a time when you've been impacted by someone's generosity?

Read Out Loud: Previously in Acts

Last week we discussed Peter and John's boldness in the face of great adversity from Jewish leaders. They set an example of how we should respond through faith when we face opposition and hard circumstances.

Read Out Loud: Acts 4:32-5:11 (NIV)

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who 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.

5:1 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 just to human beings 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 some 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 conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! 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.

Generosity in Action: Eliminating Need in the Church



Based on the examples in this passage, how would you define generosity?

Possible Answers: Giving freely, surrendering resources to meet needs of others, something that we do by and as a reflection of God’s grace, something done by an individual for the benefit of the whole Church, etc.



How does generosity of some have the ability to impact the church as a whole?

Possible Answers: In this passage the early church was able to eliminate need among its members entirely. How great would it be to know that because of the generosity of the church as a whole that there are no people living with unmet needs!



Verse 33 credits God’s grace with eliminating need in the Christian community. What does this tell us about the source of generosity?

Possible Answers: We are able to be more generous when we understand the grace we have in Jesus. It also implies that we need Jesus in order to demonstrate generosity - it’s not something that comes from us.



(Optional) How might understanding grace lead us to generosity?

Possible Answers: If we understand that all we have comes to us through God and not necessarily because we deserve it or are entitled to it, we are able to give it up more easily. Giving earthly possessions is also easier when we consider how much more we have in the eternal gift of salvation that we are only given by grace.



When giving the early Church literally “put it at the apostles’ feet,” (v. 35 & 2). What do you think it looks like to “put it at the apostles’ feet” in today’s context?

(Optional/Rephrase) What is the connection between generosity and surrender (v.35)?

Possible Answers: It means surrendering things completely when we give. We may want to control how our gifts are used, but sometimes generosity requires that we allow others better suited to identify need to determine how our gifts are used. If we try to control the use of our gifts too much it may be indicative of a self-focused approach to giving rather than focusing on giving in order to glorify God.

? What does the early church's example tell us about our responsibility to the poor, orphaned widowed, and those in need?

Possible Answers: There is a community approach to meeting needs. That the church and it's members have the ability to meet the needs of those in their community.

? At Hope we often talk about giving in the context of the 3 Ts: time, treasure, and tickers (hearts).

What are ways we can be generous with our time, treasure and tickers?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary, but some examples are volunteering with ministries, tithing, giving to special fundraisers, helping with scholarships to events, praying for specific needs of others, spending time with someone who is lonely, struggling, or just needs a friend, etc. Leaders should have some answers ready to go for themselves to start this conversation.

Generosity Gone Sour-Giving with Integrity

? How did Ananias and Sapphira miss the point of generosity?

Possible Answers: Their giving was more about appearances than genuine surrender to God. They wanted to look like they were giving more than they were

? What does Ananias and Sapphira's example tell us about our potential motivations toward generosity?

Possible Answers: Trying to appear generous because it's the thing to do or because it's looked upon favorably is not okay. We need to address our hearts before God when it comes to giving.

? Ananias and Sapphira lacked integrity with their generosity. What are other areas of church life where we could potentially fall into lacking integrity?

Possible Answers: Not being willing to share sin/struggle, trying to look like we have it all together all the time, coming to church to be seen rather than to worship, volunteering so we'll look like "good church members," etc.

? How does a lack of integrity have the potential of hurting the church community as a whole?

Possible Answers: When we do things in the church for appearances rather than out of authenticity. It encourages a culture of fakeness and discourages reliance on God. If we want God to be active in the Church as a whole we need to start by allowing him to be active in our own lives. We also could potentially hurt others if they find out we're lying and it may discourage them from trusting other church members and trusting God.

? Peter tells Ananias that he has lied to the Holy Spirit. Do you think Ananias equated his lying to Peter and the Church with lying to God? How does our behavior within the Church reflect our heart toward God?

Possible Answers: Ananias probably wasn't even considering that he was lying to the Holy Spirit. He might not have even considered his relationship with God at all as he was giving - he was mostly concerned with appearing to be more generous than he was. He was not depending on God in his generosity (he kept some money back so that he could remain independent). Our heart toward God will always impact our outward behavior - we should strive for dependence on God in everything we do.

For Discussion and Accountability

? How can you better allow God's grace to work through you in the area of generosity?

? Are there any areas of your life where you need to work on your integrity? How can you depend on God more in these areas?