

Acts 4:32 - 5:11 Bible Study

1. Think of some Christians you know who have had a strong and positive impact on your life as a Christian. What was it about them that impacted you?

They don't need to name them, just the things about them that affected them. .

2. a. Read Acts 4:32-37. Compare this passage with Acts 2:42-47. What things are repeated? What does this tell us about the early church? Is there anything emphasised in chapter 4 that is different? (This might help us understand what Luke is saying here).

** Apostolic gospel is central; * Unity of believers*

** Believers shared*

** Emphasis in ch 4 seems to be on the selling of property and sharing with those in need, spotlight on Barnabas – ch 5 will look at another example of selling land, and later we'll hear more about Barnabas.*

- b. How do these passages reflect God's purposes for his people as expressed in Deut 15:1-11?

It seems like a fulfilment of God's purpose to bless his people.

3. What is the significance of v. 33?

Several things; It helps to put the generosity of the believers in context of the work of the gospel and power of God's grace upon them; It shows the determination of the believers to keep proclaiming Christ even after the authorities commanded them not to (4:18-20), it shows the centrality of preaching the resurrection of Jesus – cf 1:22, 2:22, 2:31-32, 3:15, 4:2, 10, 20.

4. Read Acts 5:1-11. In v.2 we're told that Ananias "kept back" some money. This phrase is used in Titus 2:10 but there it is translated "steal". In what way was Ananias "stealing"? Wasn't it his own money?

*See v.4. It **was** his money – but once he committed it to the Lord and in front of God's people and the apostles he made the show of giving the whole amount for the Lord's work, it was no longer "his" money – so what he 'kept back' was 'stolen'.*

5. If it was Satan tempting Ananias to do this, it's likely that Satan will continue to tempt God's people in this way. So, can you think of any way you might 'steal' or be tempted to steal in this way?

A personal eg for me – we set aside money at the start of the month (see 1 Cor 16:1-2) for giving to the work at church and to friends in missionary situations. To then use that money for our own purposes, for me, would be stealing in this sense. This is perhaps more about my conscience than a necessary application, but it is an example.

6. Peter also says that Ananias 'lied' to the Holy Spirit / God. In what way was this a lie?

He was pretending (lying) before everyone that he was more generous than he really was. No one but his wife knew the truth – but God also knew.

7. Why do you think God struck Ananias and his wife dead? Does this mean that God condemned them to hell? See also: 1 cor 11:29-32; Heb 4:12-11; James 5:16; Rev 3:19.

It's as though he was treating the gathering of believers as a purely human thing and that he forgot that God is present in the gathering. Perhaps in this beginning of the Christian church, God needed to make absolutely clear that they are his people and he is in their midst. This is the kind of thing God had done in the Old Testament when Israel was first gathered together as his people at Mt Sinai. See Lev 10:1-3. We're not told of their eternal state, but it seems that they were believers who were disciplined by the Lord (for the sake of the community whom they might otherwise have led into a kind of half-hearted and self-centred version of discipleship.

8. What areas are you tempted to "lie to God" or "test the Spirit of the Lord" (v.9)?

ie ways they are most tempted to put on a show of being someone they are not so that others (Christians or not) will think more of them

9. What do you think is the essence of being a "genuine" Christian?

At heart, it's about being a forgiven sinner because of Jesus' death and resurrection (so 4:33), but how we live can have much healthy variation from one another. If being a 'genuine' Christian means being 'like' Paul, or Peter, or Barnabas, or the person you thought of in Q1, then we're bound to load ourselves up with guilt and disappointment - following Jesus in repentance and faith is the way of grace and joy.