

READ: Acts 4:32-5:11

“We all have talents, resources and time. Some of us believe we have earned these things and therefore we are entitled to them. This leads to greed and selfishness stemming from pride and causes fights, quarrels, divisions and anxiety. When we believe that all we have is from God’s gracious hand – gifts given not due to our own work – then we selflessly share what we have for the sake of others leading us to acts of service, sacrifice and love.”--Soma Communities (WA)

ACTION: Do something to help or simply converse with one neighbor on your street.

SHARE: What is challenging about engaging a neighbor? How did they respond? What did the encounter lead to (result in)? How can you have an increased awareness of those who live closest to you?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**I. the GRACE ::** Read Acts 4:32-33

“The relationship between word and deed is...extremely close and "works both ways". On the one hand, the preaching of the Word produces faith which in turn produces good deeds toward people in need, since the gospel of salvation through grace alone humbles us and makes us kind toward the poor. But on the other hand, practical ministry to the material needs of people are evidences which God uses to open the hearts of people to the gospel. So word ministry leads to deed ministry and deed ministry leads to word ministry. Word and deed must never be separated in the Christian life from one another.”

--Evangelism: Studies in the book of Acts, Redeemer Presbyterian Church (NYC)

1. What results (4:32-33) from the followers of Jesus praying, being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking the word of God with boldness (4:31)? What allowed/fueled them to do this (4:33b)?
2. Why is it important that “word and deed” not be separated (quote above)? What happens when they are? Is it easier for you to talk about the power of Jesus or embody the love of Jesus?¹
3. Write down some ways God has been and is being gracious to you? How are others currently being gracious to you by speaking truth and sharing with you (quote at the top of the page)?

II. the GENEROSITY :: Read Acts 4:34-37

“Faith in the gospel restructures our motivations, our self-understanding and identity, our view of the world. Behavioral compliance to rules without a complete change of heart will be superficial and fleeting.”

--Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods

1. Why/how was there “not a needy person among them” (5:34-37)? How did a right understanding of the Gospel lead to this lifestyle (see 2 Corinthians 8:9)?



¹ For further study on word and deed producing faith, see: Romans 10:15-18; James 2:1-23, Acts 4:32-33, 6:6-7; John 13:35, 1 John 3:17-18; Isaiah 1:13-15, 17

2. Read Deuteronomy 15:1-11 and compare to this passage. What are some practical steps to living this out in your community group? Church? Neighborhood? City?

3. What makes it hard for you to be generous? How can the Gospel and being assured of God's love for you help you overcome your fears and live generously?

III. the GAMES :: Read Acts 5:1-11

"They were not so much misers as thieves and - above all - liars. They wanted the credit and the prestige for sacrificial generosity, without the inconvenience of it. So, in order to gain a reputation to which they had no right, they told a brazen lie. Their motive in giving was not to relieve the poor, but to fatten their own ego."
--John Stott, The Message of Acts

1. What was the action (5:1-2, 8) and sin (5:3-4, 9) of Ananias and Sapphira? Why was it so serious and seriously dealt with?

2. Read James 4:1-10. What is the cause of quarrels and fights among people in the church (4:1-6)? How can one overcome deception in the church (4:7-10)?

3. In what ways do you seek to appear pious without the inconvenience of it (quote above)? (think about the way you work, your marriage, giving to the church, being generous to others, etc.)

CONNECTING QUESTIONS

1. How has Jesus sacrificial generosity through his death on the Cross impacted and continue to impact your life? What does it look like for you to share that with others in word and deed?

2. Write down specific material things and talents that God has gifted you with. Who in the church and community could benefit from them? What would you have to sacrifice to be generous to others with them?

Next weeks action to share:

Through normal interactions and conversations you have throughout the week, listen for needs that people you interact with have. Write them down. Pray for them. Ask God how He might meet those needs through you or others.