

SHINE Devotional

Week 15 – Lesson 1



Who Owns Your Stuff?

Scripture reading Acts 4:32

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

The heart of the Gospel message is giving. This early church was surrounded by confusion and crisis. There were homeless Christians all over Jerusalem. People were walking away from their own traditions to a new way of life. The new church had begun. Religious leaders were falsely accusing the leaders of the new movement of heresy and sedition against the Roman government. Yet, early Christians prayed for the power of God and gave of themselves to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ. People sold their possessions in order to meet the basic needs of others.

Several points need to be made.

1. God is not against you having possessions. There is no way that these believers could have given if they did not possess in the first place.
2. God wants you to realize everything you own really belongs to God. You should not hold on to your possessions with a tight fist. They are given to you so you can meet your own needs, the needs of your family, and the needs of others.
3. God wants believers to be givers. He will often place us in a position where we see the needs of others so that we will give generously from that which He has given to us.

During this Coronavirus pandemic, don't let Satan fill your heart with fear and take away the joy that giving brings. Reflect Christ by giving to others and you as a believer will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 15 – Lesson 2



God's Power Flows Through the Church That Gives

Scripture reading Acts 4:33

“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”

It is very interesting to note that as the church sacrificially gave of themselves to God first and then to meet the needs of others, God's power flowed through them. They had prayed that God's power would be made known and that He would stretch forth His hand, *“By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus”* (Acts 4:30). That was exactly what took place. People were being healed. Miracles were being done. People were getting saved. Why? Because this church gave themselves to God. They also gave of their possessions to meet the needs of other believers. Giving is an act of faith that comes from the heart. The early church members gave of their possessions, and God's power worked through them to meet needs that finances could not meet. God wants us to give, too.

We must surrender ourselves in totality to Him, and then He can do through us that which we would never be able to do ourselves. In this critical time in our nation's history, I encourage you to give yourself to God. Ask God to help you see the needs in others. Then allow God to lead you to meet the needs of others through what He has given you. As His church let us determine to reflect the giving heart of God in this unusual time. When we do, we, as His church, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 15 – Lesson 3



God's Love Compels Us to Give

Scripture reading Acts 4:34-37

“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

Barnabus was a man who lived some three hundred miles away from Jerusalem in the country of Cyprus. He was a practicing Jew. He had to have been a man of means in order to make the journey. He had made the trip to Jerusalem in order to observe the feast of Pentecost. Luke tells us he was a Levite, so he was of the priestly family. His name, *Barnabus*, means consolation or encouragement. He had a home in Cyprus and yet obviously he had land in Jerusalem or around the city. This was most likely his ancestral home and therefore he would have been tied to it emotionally as well as financially. The selling of his home there in Jerusalem, would have left him without a place to stay and most likely caused some contention within his extended family. Yet, out of love and to encourage the new believers, he was willing to sacrifice this possession in order to be an encouragement to other new believers. He was not the only one who had done this. Acts 4:34 tells us, *“for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold.”*

When the love of God flows through the local church, people begin to see the needs of others rather than their own needs. This love in action will cause that church to SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 15 – Lesson 4



God Reveals the Hypocrite

Scripture reading Acts 5:1-6

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ...And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost...And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.”

Throughout the history of the church there have been people who have attempted to use the work of God, or the notoriety that comes with ministry, for their own prophet or recognition. God made it very clear to the New Testament church that He was not pleased with hypocrites. The first hypocrite we note in the early church was Judas, one of the twelve disciples. He followed Jesus for his own reasons. The next hypocrite we see is named Ananias. Many Christian were selling their possessions in order to meet the needs of the ministry and the new believers who were stranded in Jerusalem at the time. Ananias saw what was taking place and wanted to be recognized as a generous giver involved in this new movement. He plotted with his wife to sell a piece of property. I suspect that he wanted to get rid of the land before this time and pretended to sell it so he could give. In all actuality, he wanted to sell so he could prosper from this sale. There are four things we know here.

1. He was more concerned about himself than others.
2. He did not recognize the local church as the body of Jesus Christ.
3. He was a liar who desired to use God’s name for his gain.
4. He was a hypocrite who lied to Peter, the Holy Spirit and thereby, to God.

God judged him severely. We learn one major truth here about giving. God desires us to give out of a pure heart trusting Him. God does not want us to give grudgingly (2 Corinthians 9:7).

One reason I love Liberty Baptist Church is because over the forty-two years we have been in existence I have watched people faithfully give. I have watched God bless people as they give. When a church is a giving church, it is a church that will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 15 – Lesson 5



Never Follow Your Authority into Sin

Scripture reading Acts 5:7-10

“And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.”

There are at least four areas of authority that are outlined in Scripture.

1. Civil authority.
2. Spiritual authority.
3. Spousal authority.
4. Parental authority.

God wants every believer to be in submission to authority. However, we learn from this passage of Scripture that God never wants the believer to follow their authority into sin and deception. In this passage of Scripture, we see a plot between Ananias and his wife Sapphira to sell a portion of land and pretend that they were giving the entire amount to the work of God. It must be noted that God did not demand that they do this. God was not upset with them because they only gave a portion of what they received. It is not wrong for a believer to have possessions or to use his possessions in any way he sees fit. The problem was not in the amount of the gift, the problem was in the hypocrisy (lie). Ananias agreed with his wife that they would lie to the leaders of the church and thereby lie to God. Sapphira was given a choice. Would she follow her authority into sin, or would she tell the truth when she was confronted? God held her accountable for her sin.

Every individual is responsible to God. It is important that the believer take responsibility for their own action.

When you as a believer take responsibility for your actions and refuse to follow the world into disobedience you will avoid the judgement of God and walk in His blessings. You, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 15 – Lesson 6



Fear the Lord

Scripture reading Acts 5:11

“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”

What a controversy must have been stirred when the death of Ananias and Sapphira was reported in Jerusalem at the birth of this new church. I can imagine the talk of those who did not believe. “What kind of God would kill a man and his wife because they did not give enough money to the church?” “Who wants to serve a God like that? It doesn’t seem very loving to me.” The world has no understanding of who God is and what He demands of His church. The early church was created by God to represent Him. God wants the local church today to represent Him. God wanted, “*great fear*” to come upon those who were observing this new institution. Because of a lack of fear, Ananias and Sapphira were willing to lie to God. We need to have a fearful respect for who God is. The Bible tells us that “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*” (Proverbs 9:10). “*The fear of the Lord prolongeth days*” (Proverbs 10:27). “*In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence*” (Proverbs 14:26). “*The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life*” (Proverbs 14:27). The Bible continues and tells us that “*the fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom*” (Proverbs 15:33). The fear of God causes us to live right, walk in wisdom, and obey authority. The fear of the Lord brings honor to Him. God wants you and I as believers to fear Him. Yes, we are to love, obey, thank, and praise Him, but we will do all these things more effectively if we fear Him. I loved my father with my whole heart and there were times I did what my father wanted me to do because I loved him. However, many times I did what my father told me to do because I had a fearful respect for the belt that he wore around his waist.

If a local church is going to SHINE for Jesus Christ, it must be a loving church, a church that is willing to sacrifice, a church that walks in obedience to His commands, and a church that fears Him.