

ACTS: Launch – “The Cost of Unity” (Acts 4:32-5:11)

For the week of November 8, 2015

Testimony

Have a volunteer share their testimony (5-10 minutes).

Opening Question: Before looking at this week’s passage, answer and discuss in your group this question: What makes a unified body of believers? List at least four characteristics:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What is your specific responsibility in providing for unity in a church family? How are you doing?

Tell the Story

Summarize or tell the story of Acts 4:32–5:11. Then read the passage. Discuss any missing details from the telling of the story. Finally, rebuild the story as a group.

What does unity in the church look like? (4:32-37)

The church is shown as a picture of unity in Acts 4:32-37.

- What characterized this large group of believers (v. 32)?
- What was the purpose of this unified group (v. 33)?

- How was this oneness expressed (v. 34)?
- Why were there no needy people (vv. 34-35)?
- Why was Barnabas cited as an example (vv. 36-37)?

Our unity comes from our understanding that we are one in Christ. If I’m one with you, then your needs should be as important to me as my own. When that mindset is present, generosity abounds. Generosity can be seen in your time, talent, and/or possessions.

- True or false? We are called to be generous in every aspect of our lives. Discuss in your group.
- How is generosity seen in your life? Give an example on how you have shown generosity. Likewise, do you have an example of how someone was generous to you?
- If you are in a discipling relationship with someone, how could you show generosity?

What blocks unity in a church? (5:1-11)

- Previously (Acts 2) we looked at the coming of the Holy Spirit. One of the questions from that study stated "...although God did a great work through the power of the Spirit, there were still some who mocked and refused to believe." In Acts 5 we see that Ananias violated his own integrity, making a mockery of the Spirit's work in him. More serious than a common lie, the promising work of grace in Ananias was being thwarted, bringing shame and reproach to the entire fellowship. What would Ananias and Sapphira gain by lying about the money they received and gave to the church? Discuss in what ways their deception could have damaged the unity of the early church.

- Agree or disagree with the following statement: "This was an exceptional case of instant judgment. That doesn't mean it was unjust. Quite the opposite. This is what should happen to us every time we sin. The fact that it doesn't is grace." Discuss in your group.
- Sins of self-centeredness and unbelief are significant barriers to our unity. So how can we possibly hope to achieve the kind of unity that is essential to the mission of the church? Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and discuss how God's grace can provide unity.

Prayer

"Lord, help us to be transparent, authentic Christ followers. May we not compromise our witness for you. May our lives be a testimony of your love. Forgive us Father, may we not grieve the Holy Spirit, may we live as you have called us to live, walking in the power and grace of your love and your glory."

Final Thought

May the generosity of Christ, as we look to him, assure us that we are secure in him and can reach out in generosity to others. And as we do so, the world is going to look in and see these kind of generous relationships in the church and they will be in great awe of the great grace that is upon us, which will give us great power to point them to the One who is the source of that grace.