

ST. ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson Plan for Thursday – February 14, 2013
Resource Book – Kerygma Series – *“into the world”*
Chapter 5 – *“Challenges from Within and Without”*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To carry on our conversation about the Book of Acts while continuing growth in fellowship with other participants.
2. To state what the stories of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira tell us about the attitude toward money in the early church.
3. To describe their understanding of why and how church members today should share their resources.
4. To cite the reasons the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin opposed the work of the apostles.
5. To consider the qualifications and responsibilities of the diaconal ministers selected in Acts 6 and relate these to their work today.

OPENING ACT OF WORSHIP *(to be distributed at class time)*

GROUP EXERCISE

Consider the following statements:

Being broke feels....

Being generous feels....

Paying bills feels....

Discovering I have lost money feels....

Being asked for money feels....

Encountering God’s generosity makes me feel....

RESOURCE 5A

Using the following categories

I would never.....

I would be unlikely to....

I absolutely would....

Rate yourself on the statements below:

1.consider getting rid of all I have and traveling unburdened by possessions for a year to anywhere in the world I wished.
2. ...give all the money I had in my pocket to someone who needed it, even if I were a few days away from payday.
3.find a way to ask a member of my church if everything was okay financially if I thought there might be a problem.
4.work for a year for a mission without pay, trusting that God would provide for my needs.

EXPLORING THE SCRIPTURE *(small groups)*

Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32-35

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Read Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35. Compare and contrast these two passages. Respond to the following questions:

1. Why did the early Christians share their resources?
2. What other characteristics of their life together are mentioned in the text?
3. How is their sharing related to these other qualities?
4. In what ways does *our congregation* encourage members to share their resources?

THE CHALLENGE OF POSSESSIONS

Acts 4:36-5:11

³⁶There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). ³⁷He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property; ²with his wife’s knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. ³“Ananias,” Peter asked, “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God!” ⁵Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it. ⁶The young men came and wrapped up his body, then carried him out and buried him. ⁷After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you and your husband sold the land for such and such a price.” And she said, “Yes, that was the price.” ⁹Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹And great fear seized the whole church and all who heard of these things.

Read Acts 4:36-5:11

Answer the following question from the perspective of Barnabas and then from the perspective of Ananias and Sapphira:

1. What reasons did you have for handling your finances the way you did in this story?

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

List the reasons given from the perspectives of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira (from small group activity).

1. What are most common reasons given?
2. How do these responses relate to Barnabas' or Ananias and Sapphira's beliefs about God and the church?
3. What options did Ananias and Sapphira have? *(See "True or False?" in the resource guide.*
4. What did their actions reveal about them?
5. What are your impressions of the story? Is the outcome too severe? In what way did Ananias and Sapphira's deceit threaten the life of the church?
6. What about the church today? How does our congregation raise funds to support its life and mission? What do our practices imply about our church's understanding of money?

GROUP CHALLENGE *(to be distributed in class)*

AGAIN HEALING AND, AGAIN, OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Acts 5:17-42

¹⁷Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, ¹⁸arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, ²⁰“Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.” ²¹When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and went on with their teaching. When the high priest and those with him arrived, they called together the council and the whole body of the elders of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²²But when the temple police went there, they did not find them in the prison; so they returned and reported, ²³“We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” ²⁴Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were perplexed about them, wondering what might be going on. ²⁵Then someone arrived and announced, “Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”

²⁶Then the captain went with the temple police and brought them, but without violence, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. ²⁷When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man’s blood on us.” ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” ³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. ³⁵Then he said to them, “Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. ³⁷After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!” They were convinced by him, ⁴⁰and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹As they

left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. ⁴²And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

PRESENTATION OF 3 REPORTS ON SADDUCEES, PHARISEES AND SANHEDRIN

1. Why would these groups oppose the apostles in this situation?
2. Are there any questions on these reports?
3. Are the responses of these sects appropriate?

Acts 6:1-7

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. ²And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, ⁴while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." ⁵What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

1. What is the reason the seven new "helpers" are appointed to assist the apostles?
2. What credentials are most important in their selection?
3. How would you describe the work they are to do?
4. Which group or groups in our congregation are responsible for similar work? What are their credentials and how are they selected?

CLOSING PRAYER (*Prayer of Ignatius of Loyola*)

Take. Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me.

NEXT WEEK – THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2013 – 10:30 AM OGRAM HALL

1. Read Resource Book – Chapter 6 – “*Stephen, Front and Center*”
2. In Scripture read: Acts 6:8-8:3