

Two weeks ago, we put our house up for sale. Being asked to compose the Scrolls this week, I find myself contemplating the relationship between meeting the needs of others in our congregation and maximizing real estate investment and stock market returns. I may do very well in the stock market this year, but will I have met any of the needs I have encountered in my relationships at FBC?

As I write this, I wonder if we would be more generous with our time and money if we were facing some of the circumstances the early church was facing. Would we view our material assets differently if Glen and Scott, like Peter and John, had just been hauled before authorities responsible for Christ’s death, knowing that it is a betting proposition that persecution and not, ripe old age, would hasten their own demise?

This week, we learn that the unity of the early church went far beyond feelings and thoughts – it reached even their pocket books. I invite you to prayerfully explore this week’s study with me as God seeks to further transform our sense of real estate and needs into a further manifestation of true Real Estate – His Kingdom in our midst.

**Monday – True Oneness**

1. Please read Acts 4:32-37. What does it mean to you that the believers were “one in heart and mind?”
2. How did this “oneness” impact their treatment of one another?

**Making it Personal** – Have you ever experienced oneness of the kind described here in Acts 4? If so, how did it impact your treatment of other Christians and their treatment of you?

**Tuesday – Needs and Love**

*“We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative.... They sold their possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme.”* John Calvin (1509-1564)

1. Please read Acts 4:32-37. What kinds of needs do you suppose some members of the early church might have faced?
2. Please read 1 John 3:16-24. What is a *need* and what is not one as John seems to use the word in these passages?

**Making it Personal** – Have you been able to help meet some tangible needs in the lives of others at FBC? Thank God for the opportunity to do so. Who in the congregation at FBC is facing unmet needs at present? Is the Lord inviting you to help address some of those needs?

**Wednesday – Joy and Giving**

*“The best fruits are plucked for each by some hand that is not his own.”* CS Lewis - Perelandra

1. Please read Acts 4:32-37. Though the word “joy” does not specifically appear in this passage, what kind of joy do you think the early church was experiencing?
2. Please read I Thessalonians 2:6-9 and 17-20. While Paul does not explicitly refer to selling material possessions to meet the needs of others, he does speak holistically of such dedication – in effect, including all of himself, not merely his possessions, in dedication to the church. What kind of joy and love did Paul experience for the Thessalonian believers?

**Worth Thinking About** – What role does giving and thanksgiving have in the experience of joy in God?

**Thursday – Barnabas: Son of Encouragement**

*“Gift giving is a thermometer of the soul. It reveals what we think we possess, and whether we can love.”*

R. Paul Stevens – Everyday Christianity

1. Please read Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 11:22-24. What kind of a man was Barnabas according to these passages?
2. Why might Barnabas, a citizen of Cyprus, buy a field in Jerusalem in the first place? In other words, what might have been his business, investment plans, or personal plans?
3. How did Barnabas’ use of this investment affect others?
4. How did Barnabas’ investment choice define his identity in the church?

**Friday – Ananias and Sapphira**

**hy-poc-ri-sy n.:** The practice of professing beliefs, feelings, or virtues that one does not hold or possess; falseness.”

1. Please read Acts 5:1-11. As positive an example as Barnabas was, Ananias and Sapphira take us in the other direction. Why do you think their offenses were considered to be so serious?
2. Whom did Ananias lie to?
3. It seems that Ananias suffered from hypocrisy. Read Matthew 23:28. What did Jesus seem to think and feel about hypocrisy?

**Making it Personal** – Is there an area in your life in which you know you are saying one thing and doing another? Confess it to Christ and perhaps to a brother or sister in Christ. May God redeem that area in your life.

**For the Weekend:** Please read Acts 4:32-37, one last time, reflecting on the things you have learned this week. Take some time to consider the role that power and grace played in the life of the early church. Pray for FBC, that we too would know the power and grace of God in our congregation.