Sharing All Things
Acts 4:34 - 5:10
SS Lesson for 09/13/2015

Devotional Scripture: 2 Cor 8:1-15

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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson teaches us to recognize that giving and Sharing All Things are essential parts of the Christian life. The study's aim is to develop an attitude of giving and sharing whenever possible. The study's application is to establish a practice of giving and sharing with those in need.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Acts 4:34

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Luke had two reasons for including this passage here. For one thing he used it to introduce Barnabas to his readers. A common technique of Luke was to introduce a character quickly in a minor role and then later bring him on stage in a major role. This he did with Barnabas. Luke’s second purpose in these verses was to show how Barnabas and the rest of the church contrasted with Ananias and Sapphira (chap. 5). The generosity of the church and especially Barnabas differed markedly from the selfishness of that husband-wife team. The believers were unified not only spiritually (one in heart and mind) but also materially (cf. 2:44-45 and comments there). Their selling of their goods was voluntary and the distribution was according to need. The Lord answered their prayer for boldness (4:29) for the apostles kept on testifying of Christ’s resurrection. Grace (v. 33) is one of numerous times that word occurs in Acts (e.g., 6:8; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3; 26; 15:11, 40; 18:27; 20:24, 32; etc.). Joseph was nicknamed Barnabas which means Son of Encouragement, evidently because of his character and ability to encourage those who were downhearted. How could a Levite own property as Barnabas did? Were not Levites prohibited from owning property? (Num. 18:20, 24) The answer may be that whereas the Levites were not to hold land in Israel, they could own land elsewhere. Apparently Barnabas, being from the island of Cyprus, owned land there. It is also possible that his wife owned land in Israel and that they together sold it. Most probably the restriction in Numbers 18:20, 24 was no longer observed, as seen in the case of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1:1; 32:6-15).

This story is reminiscent of Achan in Joshua 7 (cf. Num. 15:32-36; 16:1-35). The sin of Ananias and his wife Sapphira is explained in verses 3-4, 9. They could have retained the proceeds from their sale of property, of course, but in collusion with each other they had lied, saying they had given all the money when actually they had only a part of the money. The phrase the apostles’ feet is the same as in 4:35, 37 and throws Ananias’ action into bold contrast with Barnabas’ action. In response Peter accused Ananias by saying, Satan has... filled your heart. The verb translated “filled” is eplērōsen, from plēroō, which here has the idea of control or influence. The same verb is used in the command, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Ananias, a believer, was influenced by Satan, not the Spirit! The fact that Peter asked, How is it...? implies that Satan had gained control because Ananias had not dealt with some previous sin in his life. Peter referred to Ananias’ lying “to the Holy Spirit” (v. 3); now Peter referred to his lying to God. This is an affirmation of the Holy Spirit’s deity. The fact that believers had the right to keep their money shows that this was not Christian socialism. It was a free-will arrangement for the support of the church, used only temporarily because evidently the early church expected Christ to come in their generation. When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. As Peter wrote later, judgment begins “with the family of God” (1 Peter 4:17). This is a case of “sin that leads to death” (1 John 5:16). This discipline was severe because it was an example, as Achan was an example to Israel (cf. 1 Cor. 10:6).

5:7-10. Then Sapphira, not aware of her husband’s sudden death, also lied about the amount they got for the land. Peter accused Sapphira of agreeing with Ananias to test the Spirit of the Lord. “To test the
Holy Spirit” is to see how much one can get away with before He judges; it means to presume on Him, to see if He will perform His Word, or to stretch Him to the limits of judgment (cf. Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7). As a result of the discipline of this couple, all the believers and unbelievers who heard about it felt great fear, a consequence already stated in verse 5 and repeated here for emphasis (cf. 19:17). The purpose of this account in the narrative is manifold: (1) It revealed God’s displeasure with sin, particularly dishonesty, in His body, the church. (2) It marked the church off as distinct from Israel, for such discipline was not seen in Israel. The word church (used here for the first time in Acts) refers to the universal church here and in 9:31 and 20:28, and to local congregations in 11:26 and 13:1. (3) It indicated God was at work in this new group.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

It was the late 1970s, and my small-town church of about 80 people was facing a big challenge: major repairs were needed to the roof of the educational building. The cost was to be $4,000 (about $15,000 in today’s money). That was a hefty burden for that church, located as it was in an area with a somewhat depressed economy. The church board, with some reluctance, decided on a Tuesday night to move forward with the project. The concern was where we would get the money, but we stepped out on faith. The next night at Bible study, a dear saint came up to me and asked if I could stop by her house the next afternoon. So on Thursday I did. That’s when she told me that she had just sold some family land and wanted to give 10 percent to the church. She wondered if there was a special project that needed funding. She had received $40,000 for the sale of the land, and 10 percent of that was the exact amount needed for our project. Is it mere coincidence that such things happen? No! These are “God incidents,” when he blesses his faithful people to be a blessing in turn. The old adage, “You can’t outgive God” is proven true time and again. This is a lesson I learned early in my ministry life. As he sees faithfulness in those he blesses, he turns right around and blesses them anew.

The number of disciples had been steadily increasing since the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:47; 4:4). Threats from the Jewish authorities (see last week’s lesson) did not deter the preaching of the gospel; the apostles knew their higher calling to be obedience to the command of God. As a result of their faithful witness, God blessed the Jerusalem church with unity (Acts 4:32). Satan had been unsuccessful in using outside opposition to stop the spread of the gospel message (4:1-31), so he changed strategies: he attempted to use something positive that was happening within the church to derail its growth and influence.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Generous Giving (Acts 4:34-37)

34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,
35 and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,
37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.
Needs identified (34)

**Identify other's troubles**

**Identify lack of direction (Matt 20:6)**

6 About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

**Identify need to know God (Acts 17:22-23)**

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

**Identify and help carry other's burdens (Gal 6:2)**

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**Identify and help the oppressed and share with the poor (Isa 58:6-7)**

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

**Identify and bear with the failings of the weak (Rom 15:1)**

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

**Identify and help those who need it (1 Thes 5:14)**

14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

**Identify through compassion for others**

**God has compassion on me so we can have compassion on others (2 Cor 1:3-4)**

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

**As one of God's chosen people, we should have compassion (Col 3:12)**

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

**We are commanded to be kind and compassionate (Eph 4:32)**

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Showing compassion confirms we have wisdom from God (James 3:17)**

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

**As a member of the body of Jesus, we should be sympathetic and compassionate (1 Pet 3:8)**

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

**Compassion is one of the building blocks of maturity in the faith (2 Pet 1:5-8)**

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7
and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Needs met (35)**

*Needs met through fear of the Lord (Ps 34:9)*
9 Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.

*Needs met through walking righteously (Isa 33:15-16)*
15 He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil — 16 this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him.

*Needs met through provisions by God (Jer 17:8)*
8 He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

*Needs met through God’s glorious riches (Phil 4:19)*
19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

*Needs met through God’s deliverance and protection (Ps 41:1-3)*
41 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. 2 The Lord will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. 3 The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.

*Needs met through God’s favor (Ps 84:11)*
11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

*Needs met through God’s grace (2 Cor 9:8)*
8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

**Encouragement given (36)**

*Encouragement by providing spiritual needs (1 Thess 3:10)*
10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

*Encouragement by praying for one another (Col 4:12).*
12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

*Encouragement by helping the weak and timid (1 Thess 5:14)*
14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
Encouragement because God encourages us so that we can encourage others (2 Thess 2:16-17).
16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Encouragement so that none are hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Heb 3:13).
13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Resources administered (37)

Resources administered of all that is needed (2 Cor 9:8)
8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Resources administered to do good works (Eph 2:10)
10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Resources administered to be generous (2 Cor 9:11)
11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Resources administered that come from God's hands (1 Chron 29:14)
14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Selfish Giving (Acts 5:1-10)
1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.
2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.
3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?
4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."
5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.
6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.
7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."
9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."
10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.
Deceit planned (1-2)

*Deceit planned that sometimes will backfire and cause harm (Est 5:14)*

14 His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.

*Deceit planned even though there is a warning (Mic 2:1)*

2 Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.

*Deceit planned always causes dissension (Prov 6:14)*

14 who plots evil with deceit in his heart — he always stirs up dissension.

*Those who plan deceit will not dwell in God's house (Ps 101:7)*

7 No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.

Deceit comes from Satan (3-4)

*Satan started his deception in the garden (Gen 3:13)*

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

*Satan deceives so that man will disobey God (1 Chron 21:1)*

21 Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.

*Satan prowls around looking for someone to deceive (1 Peter 5:8)*

8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

*Satan is the father of deception (John 8:44)*

44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

We must keep vows to God (5-10)

*When making a vow, we must keep it (Eccl 5:4)*

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

*We must never be slow about fulfilling our vows to God (Deut 23:21)*

21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.

*We must keep our oaths even when it hurts (Ps 15:2-4)*

2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts,
Never hastily or rashly give a vow (Prov 20:25)

It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Acts 4:32-5:11 is brimming with implications and applications for Christians today. We will conclude by calling attention to some areas of application.

First, our text contains much instruction regarding giving:

Giving is a by-product and outgrowth of Christian unity. Our text begins with Luke’s description of the church at Jerusalem as being of “one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32). Sharing flows from unity, and it also enhances unity (Acts 11:27-30; 2 Corinthians 9:11-15; Philippians 1:3-5). I have pointed out elsewhere that the term “fellowship” is frequently used in reference to sharing financially with others. Our text helps us to understand why “fellowship” is often financial. Fellowship is partnership. Our union in Christ makes us all partners, so we should naturally (rather, supernaturally) desire to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Giving need not be restricted to cash on hand. Our text makes it very clear that we should consider all our possessions as potential resources for giving to those in need. All too often we tend to think of our giving only in terms of what is left at the end of the month. Our text in Acts should correct this kind of thinking. All our possessions are potential resources to meet the needs of others. We may have an extra car, for instance, which we can give, loan, or sell to help a brother or sister in need. Sharing should not be limited to material possessions. We should also be liberal in giving our time, our energies, and our spiritual gifts to those whose needs we can meet.

Giving is a form of encouragement. Barnabas sold his property and gave the proceeds to the apostles to meet the needs of others. Luke is careful to inform us that Barnabas was known as the “son of encouragement.” How often a gift to one in need can be an encouragement to them. I have personally been encouraged by the gifts of others, and I have seen others who have been greatly encouraged in an hour of need by a timely gift, given in Jesus’ name. It says, “God cares about you, and so do we.”

Christians can give for the wrong reasons. Jesus warns us about giving for the wrong reasons in Matthew 6:1-4:

Organizations, individuals, and even churches can solicit funds by appealing to wrong motivations. It is sad to say that there are all too many who appeal for funds or donations by appealing to motives which are unbiblical. Sometimes giving becomes a kind of competition to see who can give the most (and receive praise from men for doing so). Sometimes people are prompted to give by the promise of getting something in return (which might even be a plaque, displayed in a prominent place – hardly preventing your left hand from knowing what the right is doing). The unscrupulous may solicit contributions from people (including the very poor) by promising that God will reward them many fold with riches. We should be very careful not to cause a brother to stumble by tempting him with improper motivations for giving.

Giving should be with singleness of purpose. Our text helps me to better understand Paul’s instructions in Romans 12:6-8. Translations differ significantly in Romans 12:8. The term rendered “with sincerity” by the NET Bible is rendered “with liberality” in the NKJV. The ESV renders it “in generosity”; the NIV “generously.” The King James Version renders it, “with simplicity,” and this is the translation I prefer. When I looked up the Greek term haplotes in my Greek Lexicon, I found this definition: “Of simple goodness, which gives itself without reserve, ‘without strings attached’, ‘without hidden agendas.’” I believe that “simplicity” or “singleness and sincerity of motive” leads to generosity. It seems clear to me that Ananias and Sapphira had dual (and even opposing) motives for their gift, which led to their hypocrisy. They were seeking to meet the needs of others while at the same time seeking their own carnal need for recognition.
Second, our text challenges the “prosperity gospel,” so popular today. The “Good Life Gospeleers” promise health, wealth, and prosperity to those who are spiritual, and especially those who are “spiritual” (generous) in their giving (to the one making this promise). Our text teaches otherwise. Think of it: this was the early, pristine New Testament church. The church in Jerusalem is made up of Spirit-filled Christians who are bold in proclaiming their faith and generous in their giving. But the fact is that the church has many members who are poor. They are Spirit-filled people, and yet they are poor. The whole church is not rich, as the “prosperity gospel” preachers promise us. God does not make everyone in the church rich; He provides for the essential needs of His people through the sacrificial giving of other saints. The saints who give money lay it at the feet of the apostles, to give to the poor. Thus Peter can honestly say to the beggar in chapter 3, “I have no silver or gold” (Acts 3:6). Piety does not keep us from poverty, nor does it guarantee that we will be rich in this world’s goods. God does care for the poor, and so should His saints. The prosperity He grants us enables us to minister to others, knowing that at some point in time the shoe may be on the other foot (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

Third, our text underscores the necessity and importance of maintaining purity in the local church. The church at Corinth had a member who was living in immorality with his father’s wife. Instead of being grieved and ashamed, and taking disciplinary action, the church was proud of its liberality and did nothing (1 Corinthians 5:1-8). Paul was shocked and horrified by the report of this situation in the Corinthian church. They should have responded by removing this sinner from their midst. Even from a distance, Paul personally exercised church discipline, and urged the church to follow his example. Sin that is tolerated in the church corrupts the church. It must be removed, for the sake of holiness, for the sake of the sinner, for the sake of the gospel, and for the good of the church. I believe that our text in Acts is the first instance of discipline in the early church, and it is meant to teach us the necessity of maintaining purity in the church. If we take the sin of Ananias and Sapphira lightly and are shocked (as some “scholars” are) at the severity of God’s response to their hypocrisy, then it says more about us than about Peter and the church in Jerusalem.

Fourth, we are to learn that purity in the church actually promotes growth. Some (not all, hopefully) “seeker-friendly” churches avoid taking any disciplinary action because they fear that it will dampen the “feel-good” mood they are trying to create. They fear that the church will not grow if it takes a hard line on sin. They are wrong. True growth – growth by evangelism – takes place in the soil of purity, not in the soil of indulgence and indifference (Acts 5:12-15). There are three “grees” in our text: “great power” and “great grace” (Acts 4:33); and “great fear” (Acts 5:5, 11). While the term “great” is not found in verse 14 (above), I think it would be safe to say: Great power, plus great grace, plus great fear, facilitates great growth. Purity does not hinder growth; it promotes it.

Fifth, our text reminds us how much God hates hypocrisy. In the final analysis, our text is not primarily about generosity, but about hypocrisy. God is not trying to scare us into giving. Ananias and Sapphira did not have to sell their property, nor did they need to give any of the proceeds of the sale to the church. They are not disciplined for “holding back” on God; they are disciplined for their hypocrisy – for lying to the church and to the Holy Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira sinned by trying to appear more pious than they were by lying about the amount of their gift. The Gospels of the New Testament contain our Lord’s strong words of rebuke for hypocrites. Somehow, hypocrisy is not taken as seriously by Christians today as it was by our Lord. Perhaps one reason is because all of us are guilty of this sin, and we’d rather focus on the sins of others. But why was hypocrisy the first sin to be dealt with in the early church, and why were the consequences so severe for Ananias and Sapphira? I believe it is because hypocrisy is lying, and lying is contrary to the truth. Our Lord Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). The Spirit of God is the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 16:13). It is He who “guides us into all the truth” (John 16:13). It is the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). We are sanctified by the truth (John 17:17). The church is the “support and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Satan, on the other hand, is a liar, and the “father of lies” (John 8:44). The truth is foundational to everything that relates to the Christian faith. To tolerate lying (hypocrisy) is to undermine the church. It is relatively easy to condemn the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, but let us recognize that we are all hypocrites, and hypocrisy takes many forms. In our text, hypocrisy is seeking to appear more spiritual to others than you really are. One of the most popular excuses unbelievers employ to justify their rejection of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith is: “the church is full of hypocrites.” In truth, it is. The marvel is that God saves hypocrites, just as He saves liars, murderers, and the very worst of mankind (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We would do well to give serious thought to
the ways in which we mask our sins and seek to look more pious than we really are. Let Ananias and Sapphira be a warning to us that God hates hypocrisy.

**Sixth, while the Spirit of God indwells the church, Satan is also at work in the church.** We should not be surprised to find the Spirit of God deeply involved in the church (Ephesians 2:21-22). The Spirit is so much a part of the church that lying to the church is equivalent to lying to the Spirit. What is a bit more surprising is to find Satan actively involved in opposing the truth. He who is the father of lies seeks to promote falsehood in the church (compare 1 Timothy 4:1). While Satan is actively involved in promoting Ananias’ deception (Acts 5:3), it is likewise clear that this sin originated in his own heart (Acts 5:4; James 1:14-15). We must guard our hearts, lest Satan catch us in his evil schemes (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

**Seventh, our text gives us some additional insight into the subject of the submission of the wife to her husband.** It seems clear in our text that a wife’s submission to her husband does not include participation in his sin. Sapphira should have dealt with her husband’s sin as Matthew 18:15-20 instructs. She was in no way obliged to become her husband’s accomplice in this sin. Peter gave Sapphira the opportunity to confess her role in this deception and to tell the truth. When she chose to stand by her husband in his sin, she died (Acts 5:8-9). This expression, “agreed together,” is the translation of a Greek word from which the English word “symphony” is derived. It means to “be of one mind.” Isn’t that ironic? The “unity” of Acts 4:32 resulted in sacrificial giving to the needy. The “unity” of Acts 5:9 is a unity of a very different kind, resulting in sin and death. Here is an illegitimate unity. A wife is not obligated to support her husband in sin. Sapphira dies because she did support her husband’s sin. Satan always has his counterfeits. I was reminded of counterfeit unity (Proverbs 1:11-16). How different this “unity” is from the unity we find in Acts. May God grant us the kind of unity which glorifies Him, and which prompts us to have fellowship with our brothers and sisters by responding sacrificially to their needs.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/subtraction-leads-multiplication-8211-first-instance-church-discipline-acts-432%E2%80%94511)

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

God, the giver of every good gift, desires that those who receive from him be faithful in their stewardship of those gifts. When we hear that word stewardship, we naturally may think of how we manage our finances, give back to God, etc. But biblical stewardship involves something much more foundational: the giving of our hearts to him. When we do, we will be faithful in all other aspects of stewardship (1 Corinthians 4:2). To conduct ourselves with godly sincerity is vital (2 Corinthians 1:12). Today’s text serves as a cautionary tale in that regard.

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. Commitment to God and His church affects how we view not just our possessions but also life itself (Acts 4:34)
2. God has given the church the resources it needs to take care of its own (vs. 35)
3. We should look for ways to give to the church and meet the needs in the family of God (vss. 36-37)
4. Even when trying to do a good deed, it is easy to exaggerate in order to look good in front of people (Acts 5:1-6; cf. Matt. 6:2-4)
5. God wants sincere, wholehearted givers (Acts 5:7-10; cf. Eccles. 5:4-5; Mark 12:41-44)