

Acts 4:34-35 NLT - 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

If we truly are one body, and we see a sister or brother hurting, we will do whatever we can to help them. In this beautifully disrupted community of Acts, there were no needy people because their needs were met through selfless generosity. What objections would you expect if that sort of generosity were suggested today? How would you answer those objections?

Acts 5:4 NLT - 4 The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

In the next chapter we see what happened when Ananias and Sapphira tried to appear generous but acted deceitfully. What is the danger to a community of believers if their generosity is not genuine?

WRAP-UP

God doesn't need our money; He wants our hearts. The body of Christ is intended to be unified and open-handed in providing for the needs of all. This kind of generosity that aligns the Holy Spirit's direction and purpose brings joy to the giver as well as the receiver. But our motive should not be to gain anything for ourselves. Only God's Spirit in you can change your perspective and your heart to become a beautiful disruption in this world.

MEMORY VERSE

The believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.

- Acts 4:32 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge – Pray that God will reveal any areas where you need to repent, to grow or to express gratitude?

Kingdom Generosity **Characteristics of a Beautifully Disruptive Community** Beautiful Disruption #3

INTRODUCTION

The young church described in the book of Acts demonstrated unusual generosity. It went beyond gifts from those who had abundant resources and those who gave only to be noticed. This generosity was birthed from a common faith and a perspective that defied the social norms and perceptions. It was open-handed generosity by those who recognized themselves as stewards, not owners. A generosity that reflected the character of the one who held nothing back but gave Himself for them- Jesus. It was a characteristic of a beautifully disrupted community.

Ice Breaker

What is one notable act of generosity you have witnessed?

Key Passage

Acts 4:32-37 NLT - 32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. 33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. 36 For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. 37 He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Kingdom Perspective

Unity has always been a central part of God's plan for His people. This was Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:21. The prophet Ezekiel had declared that God would bring that about as He placed His Spirit in them. And in the book of Acts, we see the believers were indeed united in heart

and mind. As the Holy Spirit resided in them their desires, their purpose and priorities were aligned with God.

John 17:21 NLT - 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

Ezekiel 11:19 NLT - 19 And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart,

Acts 4:32 NLT - 32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.

What was the first way we see this unity changed the believer's perspective (Acts 4:32)? What does ownership or possession represent in our culture? How does the current culture view people who have no possessions?

We have been taught that our value is tied to how much we own. To have wealth and possessions is equated with having power and respect. But that is not what God tells us. We are heirs of God's Kingdom, beloved of the Father. We have exchanged our lives for Christ's.

1 Timothy 6:17-18 NLT - 17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.

Romans 10:9 NLT - 9 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Matthew 6:24 NLT - 24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Where does Paul tell Timothy to look for the source of all that we need? What then should we do with the money God entrusts to us? Our salvation is based on accepting Jesus as our Lord--the one we serve, who

has the ultimate authority in our lives. This means we hold nothing back but recognize that all we have belongs to Him. We don't offer Him our excess or leftovers, but our first fruits, our best. The choices we make reveal who we are serving. What warning does Jesus give about allowing money to become our master? What are some of the choices we are faced with that cause us to choose between serving God or money?

Acts 20:35 NLT - 35 And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

When we see ourselves as stewards of God and receive all we need as His gracious gift, then we can take joy in acting as a conduit of blessing to others. You don't have to be rich to be generous. Generosity is more than giving money. It is giving of ourselves. When the family of God is united, we share in the joys and sorrows of others. We give others our time, our prayers, and our practical help.

When have you had great joy in being able to give to others? Think about the people in your immediate circle of influence--family, friends, and neighbors. Now make a list of some of the ways you can be generous to them?

2. A Testimony of Jesus' Resurrection and God's Grace

Why would anyone give away what they owned? What could compel them to make such a radical shift in their perspective? It was the witness of those who were with Jesus that changed them. Acts 4:33 says they gave a powerful testimony of Jesus' resurrection and God's blessing was upon them. These men had been with Jesus and seen him after He was raised from the dead. They shared what they knew to be true from their personal experience. And God graciously poured out his favor on them. Evidence of God's power and grace were clear.

The more we spend time in the presence of God the more impact we have when we share Jesus with others. What has God been speaking to you recently? Has He given you hope, peace, encouragement in the face of adversity? Have you felt the blessing of God's love and care? Take some time to reflect on the ways He has touched your life.

3. A Beautifully Disrupted Community

The church of Acts disrupted the social system of their day. Jesus' followers opened their hands and hearts to the family of God without regard for what they would receive in return.