

The Believers Share Their Possessions

Ice-Breaker

1. When you were growing up, what kinds of things did you trade or swap with friends?
2. Are you more giving with your time, money or things?

Scripture Passage

Acts 4:32-37

³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Bible Study

1. What do you think their church meant to the believers in this story?
 - () It was really important to them.
 - () It was all they had.
 - () It felt like family or even closer.
 - () other: _____
2. Why did the early church do such a good job of looking after each other?
 - () They were totally committed.
 - () They knew each other's needs.
 - () It was a natural outpouring of God's grace.
 - () other: _____
3. What would you call the way these first Christians shared their possessions with each other?
 - () radical
 - () cultish
 - () generous
 - () beautiful
 - () exciting
 - () other: _____
4. If you had been invited to join this community, what would your initial reaction have been?
 - () This sounds too much like socialism to me.
 - () This sounds like heaven where do I sign up?!
 - () I have some things that I refuse to sell for anyone!
 - () I might try it for a while.
 - () It's fine for others, but not for me.
 - () other: _____

5. Where does most of the caregiving take place in your church?

- in our Sunday services
- in small groups
- through our pastor(s)
- through our Sunday school
- other:_____

6. What does church mean to you?

- the Sunday thing to do
- social club
- brothers and sisters in the family of God
- one more activity to fit in
- where my closest friends are
- a place I can go for help with the everyday needs of life
- just a building
- other:_____

7. If you were in need, to whom would you go?

- my mom or dad
- a brother or sister
- a friend
- a banker
- my pastor / church
- my in-laws
- the government
- my small group
- I'm not sure.
- other:_____

Reference Notes

4:32 Compare with 2:44-45. This sharing was done freely as an expression of love for one another; it may be intended as another sign of the Spirit at work (v. 31).

4:33 *much grace was upon them all.* That is, upon all the believers, not just the apostles. The mutual caring and help (vv. 34-35) was an indication of God's grace in their midst.

4:34 *no needy persons among them.* While this was the ideal for Old Testament Israel (Deuteronomy 15:4), the generosity of the Christians allowed it to actually be experienced (see Luke 12:32-34; 18:18-30; 19:1-10). One of Paul's major expressions of Gentile solidarity with Jewish Christians was taking up a collection among the Gentile churches to be given to the needy in Jerusalem (Acts 11:28-30; 24:17; Romans 15:26-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 2:10).

4:35 *put it at the apostles' feet.* A way of referring to the transfer of the rights of ownership much as we might say two people "shook hands on the deal" when actually they signed papers. The apostles were given the responsibility of distributing the resources such that all the needs of the people were met.

Caring Time

How can this group pray for you and help you with your needs?