

Growing on Purpose Acts 4:32-37

Theme: encourages members to take a personal responsibility for the growth of our church.
The Believers Share Their Possessions

*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.*

Introduction: It thrills me just to think about the ministry growth opportunity this building has to offer. We've witnessed increase in numbers recently (SHOW bulletin). We must grow not only in numbers as we are seeing in weeks past, but also in quality, i.e. stronger, healthier, and more balanced. Strong churches are built on purpose! But how? What are the essential ingredients for a healthy church growth: we can glean at least THREE from this Scripture:#1 is **loving unity**. #2 is **grace of giving** or **generosity**. #3 is **great witness**. A far better focal point than church growth is church health. Size is not the issue. You can be big and healthy or big and flabby. You can be small and healthy or small and wimpy. Big isn't better. Small isn't better. Healthy is better. If a church is healthy, growth is a natural occurrence. I don't have to command my kids to grow. If I provide them with a healthy diet and environment, growth is automatic. In the same way, if you provide your church with a healthy, balanced ingredients, growth will occur naturally.

Grow in God's Power (verses 32-33) provides for loving unity

Confidence in the Living Lord! Not pastor, not any other man, not just a few leaders, not even ourselves, certainly not the physical building, but an ever-increasing belief in His power! The early followers of Jesus were characteristically unselfish in every way. They were radical in thinking and action because 'all believers were one in heart and mind. Husband and wife are to be of **one in heart and mind in any family**. All believers are to be of **one in heart and mind in any church of God**. It can take many costly lessons in order to achieve these goals (loving unity). And even though they were from different background, at different levels of economic status, they shared in this thing we call 'church'.

Apostles' preaching with great power were combined with the loving unity of fellow believers; they made huge sacrifices to meet the needs of the less fortunate. They even sold property to finance the ongoing mission of the Church. They were radical in their giving. They were generous with their stuff. They were liberal with all of their possessions. Isn't a pretty frightening proposition that we should see all of our possessions as not our own, but as vehicles to help and serve somebody else? Are we ready for something this radical? To some Acts 4 sounds a little bit socialism or even communism. That is not the case at all (1) this happened only within a covenant community or a church family. (2) None of it was forced or demanded, it was totally voluntary, out of love, not out of obligations. It was just an attitude that emerged from this body. (3) Having everything in common was a choice of their own! Private ownership of property is clear; they owned it, but they just did not claim it to be their own. Why could they be so radical in mind (32) and radical in giving? Because they believed in the power of resurrection of Lord Jesus!

Grow in God's Grace (verses 33-34) encourage giving or generosity, which is the 2nd ingredient. Verse 33 continued to say 'and much grace was upon them all'. for there was not a needy person among them; there was no hesitation to meet the need of the needy. They were moved by God's grace to do whatever it took to meet those needs; They abounded in charity, so that, in effect, they had all things common; for (Ac 4:34) As there were many poor that received the gospel, so there were some rich that were able to maintain them, and the grace of God made them willing. the rich are appointed to relieve the poor. **grace** was upon them all, not only all the apostles, but all the believers, (magnificent and very extraordinary) from on high, from above.

Grow in God's Riches (verses 35-37) great witness

The concept of sharing is foreign in American society, when individualism prevails and consumerism and materialism ...everybody want things bigger and sooner, and so we are constant in the quest of accumulate more for ourselves. We can be so rich towards ourselves that we cannot be rich towards others; and certainly not towards God! There is such a great need of liberation from bondage of these contemporary trappings.

Great witness –Do people look at you, and see Christ? Every one saw a beauty and Excellency in the early church, and respected them. They were very liberal to the poor, and dead to this world. These believers were so taken up with the **hopes of an inheritance in the heaven** that this was as nothing to them. They did not take away property, but they were **indifferent** to it.

Accumulate wealth in heaven, not on earth! **Despised earthly inheritance**

There are two basic reasons people don't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior: (1) they have never met a Christian; and (2) they have met a Christian. Say that again? They have met a Christian, but this 'Christian' is not any different than the world! Yes, he/she goes to church and but attending out of guilt, or giving out of obligation, being a part of activity out of reluctance, I don't know what it is, and people see you clearly! (Not only that God watches every act and word, and thought and attitude that you have against Him and people around you! Christian influence is no small matter. (Remember – we're God's house? We're to be His witnesses!) The disciples loved one another dearly. How good and how pleasant it was to see the multitude of those that believed were **of one heart, and of one soul**, and there was no such thing as discord nor division among them.

They were all of one heart, and of one soul. Though there were many, very many, of different ages, tempers, and conditions. Perhaps they had been of different sects among the Jews, before their conversion, or had had discords over certain issues; disagreements or different opinions, but now these were all forgotten and laid aside, and they were unanimous in the faith of Christ. They perhaps had several worshipping assemblies, according as their dwellings were, under their respective ministers; and yet this occasioned no jealousy or uneasiness; for /@they were all of one heart, and one soul

Conclusion: We're All In This Together

Radical miracle – death coming back to life!

The ministers went on in their work with great vigor and success (Ac 4:33): /with great **power** gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The doctrine they preached was, the resurrection of Christ: a matter of fact. By the great power wherewith the apostles attested the resurrection may be meant, bearing witness too.

We are here told what they did with the money that was so raised: **They laid it at the apostles' feet**--they left it to them to be **disposed of as they thought fit**; laid at their feet than lodged in their hands or in their bosoms.

V36 Here is one particular person mentioned that was remarkable for this generous charity: it was Barnabas, afterwards Paul's colleague. His name was Joseph. he was of the tribe of Levi, having rights in the Leviticus possessions. In token of their value for him, they gave him a name, Barnabas--the son of **encouragement** he being endued with extraordinary gifts. A son of **exhortation**, A son of **consolation** (so we read it); one that did himself walk very much in the comforts of the Holy Spirit--a cheerful Christian, who knew he had the Lord God of Israel for his inheritance, he **despised earthly inheritances**, but /@brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet,/@ to be given in charity. and this enlarged his heart in charity to the poor; or one that was eminent for comforting the Lord's people, and speaking peace to wounded troubled consciences.

A miraculous benevolence: (1) each one had goods that he possessed; (2) they did not say that this goods were their own; (3) they used all as if it belonged to all; (4) there were none that lacked, for (5) those that had houses and lands sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles. It was a time when a great liberality was called for. Thousands of Jews from abroad had become Christians.

Invitation:

Perhaps God's speaking to you today that you ought to be like Barnabas, willing to share, encourage. Who do you know in our church that needs financial assistance? What do you plan to do about it? Are we giving out of total voluntary or love? Are we sharing with the needy and poor? How do we apply the way of living in early churches to today's society? Walk the aisle
Kneel before the altar

Showing your hands

Turning in sermon notes 'Tear off here Prayer Requests'

God desires to see you giving your desires and burdens unto Him. Don't hold it to yourselves. He is interested in your hearts – be sensitive.