

Sermon-Based Small Group Preparation

For the week of February 19, 2012

“Living Beyond Greed”

Sermon Series: *Flow* (week 6 of 7)

Hebrews 13:5

» Please look over these questions *before* your Small Group meeting «

Getting Started

- 1) When you were a kid, was there anything you collected (playing cards, rocks, dolls, etc.)? Did you enjoy swapping with others?
- 2) As a teenager, did you place a high priority on your image and the approval of others? In what ways did you try to affect others' perceptions of you?

Into the Bible

Read Acts 4:32–37

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

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

- 3) What qualities are evident in the early church as described in this passage? What do their actions tell us about what they valued?
- 4) Which of the following words would you use to characterize those who gave great monetary gifts to the Christian community meeting at the church in Acts: generous, manipulated, selfless, radical, idealistic, mandated, cultish, liberated, etc?

- 5) Can you think of any examples today of people who treat their wealth or possessions like those who belonged to the early church, as recorded in Acts 4?

Read Acts 5:1–11

¹ Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

⁹ Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. (NIV)

- 6) Where did the actions of Ananias and Sapphira go wrong? What was their sin?
- 7) What might this couple have hoped to gain by their gift to the church?
- 8) Is it wrong to be acknowledged for giving, whether those are gifts of money, time, spiritual gifts, or things?

- 9) How could a seemingly generous display of giving, which was rooted in greed, have affected the early church? Does the dramatic end that came to Ananias and Sapphira seem in proportion to their sin?

Sermon Notes

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Digging Deeper

- 10) What are ways that we lie to the spirit, today? What personal motives often feed our actions? What values reveal themselves in our excuses to others, to ourselves, and to God?

Read Hebrews 13:5: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’” (NIV).

- 11) Why is it so important to God that we live contented lives? How does this impact our relationship with him, with the church, with the world?
- 12) At the core of greed resides the discontented impression that things are not enough, not good enough, that more can and should be had. In what areas do you struggle most to be content in your life?

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

Three different kinds of greed:

- 1) Financial greed
- 2) Sexual greed
- 3) Greed for power

Three concepts to help us grow in our ability to be free of greed:

- 1) The concept of “enough”
- 2) The concept of “contentment”
- 3) The concept of “gratitude”