

Background Scriptures: Acts 4:32–5:11 • Print Passages: Acts 4:32–37; 5:1–11

KEY VERSE: 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. (Acts 4:32)



Joseph's family has been connected to the Air Force military community for his entire life. Both Joseph's mother and father are active-duty Air Force soldiers.

Joseph's father works on the C-130 Hercules, which is a cargo and gunship aircraft, and his mother is a nurse practitioner. Joseph's parents have been stationed at various Air Force bases in the United States and in other countries.

Joseph and his friends know they are fortunate to travel and meet people from all over the world, but they also know their parents face the threat of danger as they fulfill their various military missions. There have been times when Joseph's

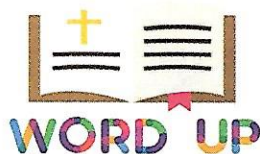
parents had to suddenly deploy and travel to secret locations to fulfill a mission. During those times, Joseph was always thankful that he had a community of teachers, family, and friends who were supportive to military families. There were people whose job was to make sure everyone was okay by arranging meals, offering transportation to medical appointments, taking kids to and from school—whatever was needed to help fill the roles of parents who had to be away for a period of time.

During a Sunday morning sermon, Joseph listened as the preacher talked about how early Christians often sold and gave away their possessions to make sure new believers had what they needed. This allowed the people to focus on God, instead



of worrying about their daily needs. Joseph thought of his military family and how their coming together helped others to stay positive and encouraged as they awaited the return of their loved ones. In both cases, Joseph realized that God's grace was at work, inspiring people to reach out and bless others.

What possessions do you have that you can share to bless someone else?

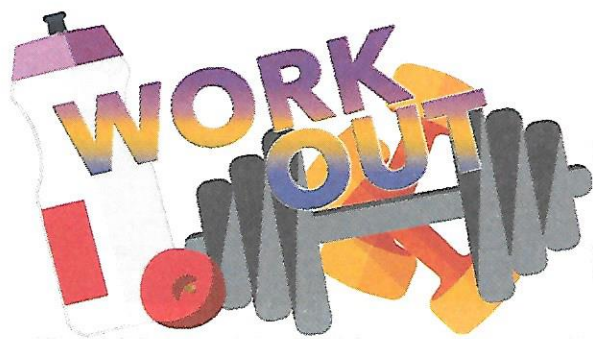


Acts 4:32–37; 5:1–11

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.

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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.



Today's lesson highlights how early Christians sold their possessions to ensure that the basic needs of everyone in their community were met. The early Christians worked together in a spirit of unity. Believers acknowledged God as their provider and believed that all their possessions were gifts from God to be used to meet not just their needs, but the needs of others as well. Three characters are highlighted in the text: Joseph, also called Barnabas, and a married couple—Ananias and Sapphira.

Barnabas moved into the community where the disciples and the people of Cyprus were

sharing their possessions. Realizing what was happening, Barnabas sold some of his land and he brought the money to the apostles to share with those in need. In contrast, Ananias and Sapphira sold some of their land—but instead

of giving all the money to the apostles, they kept some of the money. Ananias and Sapphira lied and told Peter they gave all the money raised from selling their land. Because of their deceit, both Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead. Their deaths made it clear to the people just how serious the issue is to lie to the Holy Spirit. Being honest promotes a spirit of unity, which is so necessary when doing God's work. God still expects His church to have a spirit of sharing and working in partnership with Him to meet others' needs.

INSIDE OUT

Sometimes, people fail to recognize how God uses other people to provide for their needs. God is always working behind the scenes, even when we do not detect His movement in our lives. Early believers often combined their resources—such as money, land, and crops—to ensure that no one went without the basic provisions that were needed to sustain a good quality of life. Do you have a spirit of giving? Pray and ask God to point you toward situations where you can bless someone else through your giving.

There's an App for That!

Many people believe giving to the less fortunate should only be expected of those who are wealthy, but the Bible teaches otherwise. Giving to others can involve more than money. Sometimes, people need and appreciate a kind smile, a thoughtful conversation, or a helpful task, more than money. Many Christians' closets are cluttered with good things they can no longer use that others would be happy to have. Never use limited financial resources as an excuse for not giving to others. When you have a genuine desire to give to others, God will help you find a way to do it.



Walk Out

In today's "Wake Up!" story, Joseph expressed appreciation for the military community that supported his family. How does your community support you? Schools, churches, public transportation systems, charities that provide food, clothing, and shelter are all examples of valuable community resources. What other agencies or organizations can you think of that provide useful services to your community?



STEPPING OUT

This week, think about the people in your community who may need such necessities as food, clothing, toiletries, or other supplies. Talk to your family and friends about preparing care packages or doing something special for the people you identified. Develop a good plan for how to collect and distribute items to the people who need them. Do not forget to give God the glory for the opportunity to bless others.



It's Game Time!

Most people have possessions that they rarely use. How is your “sharing meter”? On the lines below, make a list of things you consider to be some of your most valuable possessions. Review the list and think about how you can share those possessions with others in a meaningful way. Consider giving things away that others would be happy to receive.

Media Mission

Search the Internet to learn the names of the wealthiest Americans and the most generous Americans. Compare the two lists and make note of the names that appear on both lists—“wealthiest” and “most generous.” More than 80 percent of the world’s population lives in serious poverty. You are wealthy compared to most of the world. Whom will you help?