



Bible Study on Acts 4:32-37

You are welcome to use this study on your own or together with others from your family, congregation, or community.

Begin with prayer. Then read the passage together.

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. ³⁶There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). ³⁷He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. — Acts 4:32-37 (NRSV)

Understand the Context: This passage comes early in the history of the Jesus movement. It is relatively soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the apostles are beginning to go out and proclaim this amazing news! That news transforms the way they live with one another. This description of one of the earliest communities of believers in the resurrection is one that fascinates us who live in a society founded in part on private property ownership. There is debate about how long the community was able to sustain this way of sharing, though the story immediately following shows that it was imperfectly followed from the start. At the same time, it was a sign of how radically the resurrection changed the way they thought about life together.

Reflect

- What do you notice in the reading? What surprises you?
- What do you hear as a gift or as grace in the reading? What do you hear as a challenge or a call to do something new?
- Put yourself in the mindset of Joseph/Barnabas. What do you think he is thinking and feeling as he sells his field and brings the money to the apostles? How about in the mindset of the apostles when they receive that? How about in the mindset of someone in the community who had experienced extreme poverty and might benefit from the proceeds?
- In what ways does your church community make it possible to meet the needs of others in the congregation physically? spiritually? Emotionally? In what ways does your church



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community meet the needs of others beyond the congregation physically? Spiritually? Emotionally?

- What gifts are shared with your church community in order to make that support of others possible?
- Think of a time when your actions had a direct impact on others – positive or negative. How does that remind you of our interconnectedness?
- As you reflect on this reading, what gifts have come to mind that you might offer for our common life – in the church or in the community?

As you finish reflecting (if you're on your own) or sharing your thoughts in a group, close with a prayer of gratitude for the time, for the gifts that have been and might be shared in the future, and for one another.