



Being Good News for Our Community - Spring 2017

Study 7 - Do Act Generously

Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

(sermons on March 5th)



Acts 2:42-47 The First Christians

These verses come immediately after Peter's preaching to the crowd in Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Pentecost, 7 weeks after Jesus' Resurrection and 10 days after his Ascension. About 3,000 had responded to the message about Jesus (Acts 2:41). It shows how the lives of the very first Christians were changed by their new faith in Jesus.

v.42 breaking of bread – probably a form of Communion service, but before this is interpreted as a sort of church ceremony, note they did this 'in their homes' (v.46), probably as part of a meal together.

1. Go slowly through these verses describing the first Christian community; for each phrase discuss:
Why was this important to the first Christians? Should it be important to us? Do we tend to over-emphasize, or under-emphasize this aspect of living out our faith?
(the apostles' teaching.... fellowship.... breaking of bread.... prayer.... awe.... wonders and signs.... everything in common.... gave to anyone as they had need.... meet together in the temple courts.... broke bread in their homes.... ate together.... glad and sincere hearts.... praising God....)
2. What do you think motivated these first Christians to act so generously? What holds us back?
3. Do you think we should follow their example in 'having everything in common'?
Or should we focus on 'giving to anyone as they have need'?
What difference would it make to ourselves, to our church, and to the communities around us?

Acts 4:32-37 More Early Christians

These verses follow Peter and John being arrested, then threatened and released, for preaching about Jesus, after healing the man who had been unable to walk and begged outside the gate of the Temple. The church responded by praising God and praying for boldness to speak about Jesus (Acts 4:29-31).

4. How were the early Christians generous as a church, as well as individually? How can we encourage each other to be generous? How do we avoid pressurizing people?
5. 'There were no needy persons among them.' (verse 34) Is this an inspiration, or a challenge, to us?
What different sorts of needs are there among people in our church and community? Which ones are we trying to meet at the moment? Where could we do more? Which needs might be being ignored?
6. In both passages from Acts, the description of the Christians' generous lifestyle follows bold preaching about Jesus, evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit, and prayer.
Do we tend to separate these aspects of our faith; how, rather, does one lead to another?

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Generosity at a Distance

When he wrote 2 Corinthians around 56AD, Paul was in Macedonia (northern Greece, perhaps Philippi), preparing to go south to Corinth. He wanted to clear up any issues before he arrived, so that he could leave a strong and united church in Corinth, when he returned to Jerusalem with the collection to help the Christians there, who were suffering from a famine. Paul hoped that the Christians in Corinth would be ready with their contribution to this famine-relief collection (see 2 Corinthians 9:1-5).

v.7 Each one should give – to the collection from the Greek churches to the Christians in Jerusalem

v.9 the quotation is from Psalm 112:9, part of a description of ‘the man who fears the Lord’.

7. What does Paul say here about *why* we should give generously and the *effects* of generous giving?
(e.g. verses 6, 8, 10-11, 13, 15)

8. How does generosity bring Christians together, even if they are a long way apart?
(especially verses 12-14)

9. What does Paul say about *how* we should give, and what it shows about our faith and maturity?
(e.g. verses 7, 13)

10. Paul was asking mostly-Gentile Christians in Greece to help mostly-Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, over a thousand miles away.

Which Christian organizations are arranging that sort of generosity-at-a-distance today?

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The season of **Lent** began on Ash Wednesday 1st March. In Trull and Angersleigh we are being encouraged to read Archbishop Justin Welby’s book – *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace*.

Another project is the **40Acts Challenge** to ‘do Lent generously’:

www.40acts.org.uk

As a growth group, why not consider how you might support and challenge one another through one of these projects – or in some other way – to act more generously.

