By Paul T. Bennett Church School Superintendent

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Mount Zion A.M.E. Church of New Brunswick, NJ

11/22/2020

Responsive Love

Acts 4:32 – 5:11

Love (noun)

- A Feeling
- An Action
- Sacrificial
- Impartial
- **Mindset**

Section Review

- 11/1: John 13:1-15, 34-35: Love manifests itself in service to others. It is not self-seeking nor unwilling lay aside titles for the betterment of all
- 11/8: John 15:4-17: Jesus commands His Disciples to love one another as proof that they abide in the love He gave them
- 11/15: 1 John 3:11-24: Love is manifested through your actions more than your words. It is better to be hated for your love than your hypocrisy.

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Background

- The Book of Acts was written by Luke, the writer of the Gospel of Luke
- As the Gospel of Luke chronicled the “acts” of Jesus, the Book of Acts chronicles the acts of the apostles and the Church
- Leading into todays lesson, the Church is emboldened these events:
  - John and Peter healing a man who was lame since birth
  - John and Peter’s arrest for preaching Jesus and the Gospel
  - John and Peter’s release because the ruling authorities could find no charge against them, as well as the response and praise of the people witnessing the miracle of the healed man in front of them
- The common belief amongst believers then was that Jesus’ return was eminent

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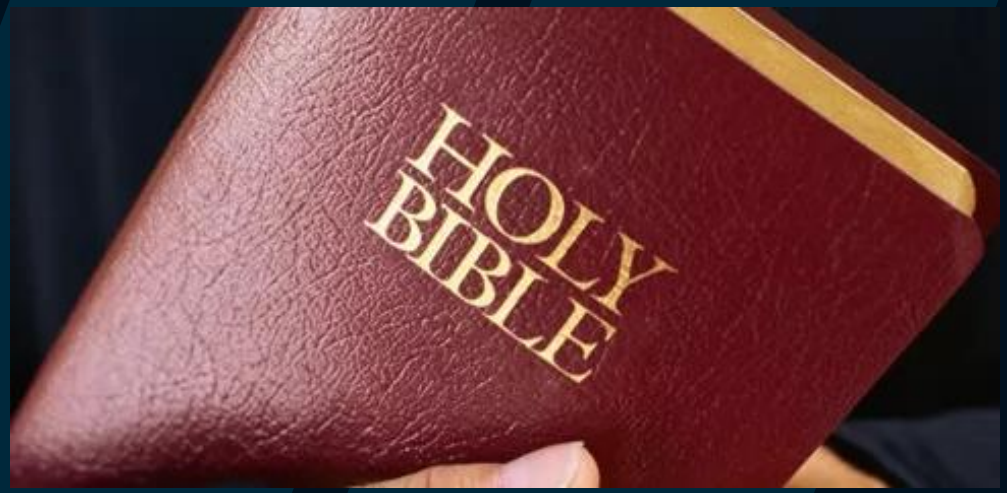
Lesson Text

Acts 4:32 - 37(NKJV)



32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. **33** And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. **34** Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, **35** and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

36 And [d]Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of [e]Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, **37** having land, sold *it,* and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

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Commentary: Christian Economics

ECONOMICS

- **The study of SCARCITY**
  - **The gap of unlimited wants and limited resources**
- **Scarcity can be a reality or a mindset**
  - **Scarcity or lack is a source of both Envy and Jealousy – which are the antithesis of love. They both stem from a belief that there's not enough to go around**
  - **No matter how much one has, they may still feel it is not enough, nor can what they have materially can truly satisfy what they lack emotionally or spiritually**
- **Mark 8:36-37**
  - **36** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?
    37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

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Commentary: Christian Economics

Traditional Economics

- How many seeds are in an apple?

Christian Economics

- How many apples are in a seed?

Do we operate from a scarcity mentality or an abundance mentality?

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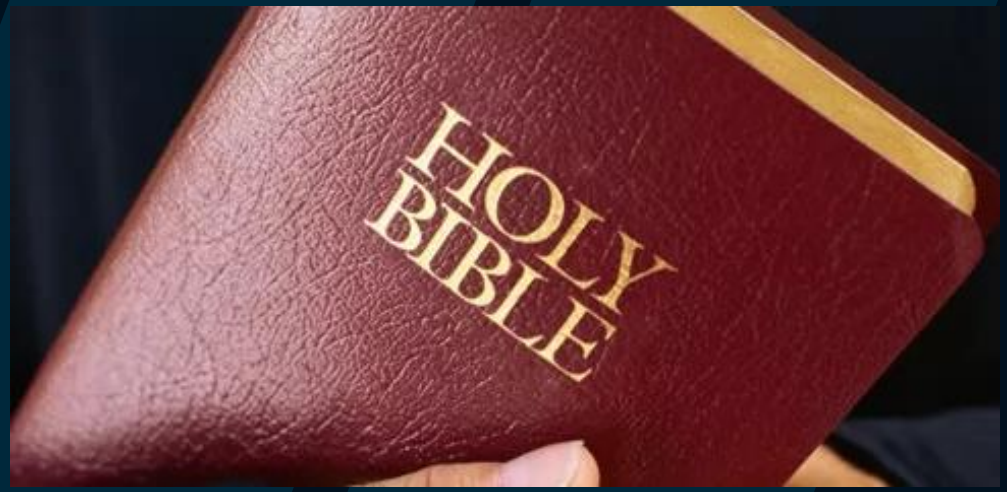
Lesson Text

Acts 5:1-6(NKJV)



5 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. **2** And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it,* and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. **3** But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? **4** While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. **6** And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him.*

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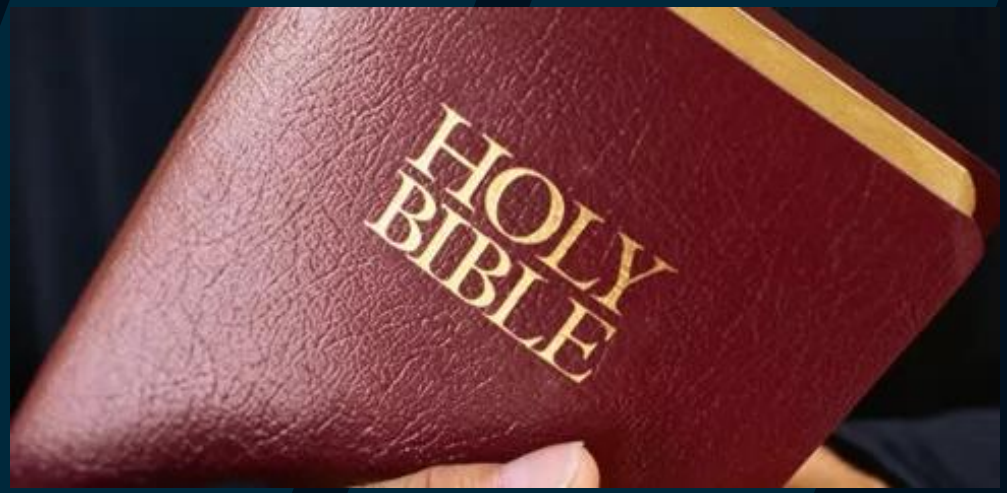
Lesson Text



Acts 5:7-11(NKJV)

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Commentary: WHO are you trying to impress?

- God is not so much concerned with how much you give, for not everyone has the same to give, but what do you do with what you give?
- People often give for the wrong motives.
  - Ego or poor self image
  - Self Interest (e.g. tax break or shelters, publicity)
  - Keeping up with the Joneses
- God KNOWS what we have as well as our hearts. We will have peace and joy when we are honest with Him and be content where we are, but that does not prevent us from seeking greater opportunities that glorify God **(1 Corinthians 7:21)**
- Never give out of pressure, nor compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver **(2 Corinthians 9:7)**

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Commentary: Retrospective

- **The acts described in chapters 4 and 5 came before the Great Persecution initiated by Saul of Tarsus (chapter 8)**
- **The persecution continued with Herod in chapter 12 and onwards**
- **The resources that were so readily shared in the beginning soon ran out, leaving the Church in Jerusalem in distress**
- **Saul was converted and became the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (chapter 9)**
- **The Church in Jerusalem required Gentile believers to be circumcised and to follow other ceremonial laws. The matter was resolved at the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15)**
- **The offerings Paul collected from the Gentiles went to aid the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 20)**
- **While the Jerusalem Church's resources dried up, God still provided from another unexpected source**
- **How can Christians give generously or creatively without impoverishing themselves, while still saving or investing for the future?**
- **Do not underestimate the VALUE of your time and your talent**
- **Reassess your values and spending habits. Budgeting could be a useful tool.**

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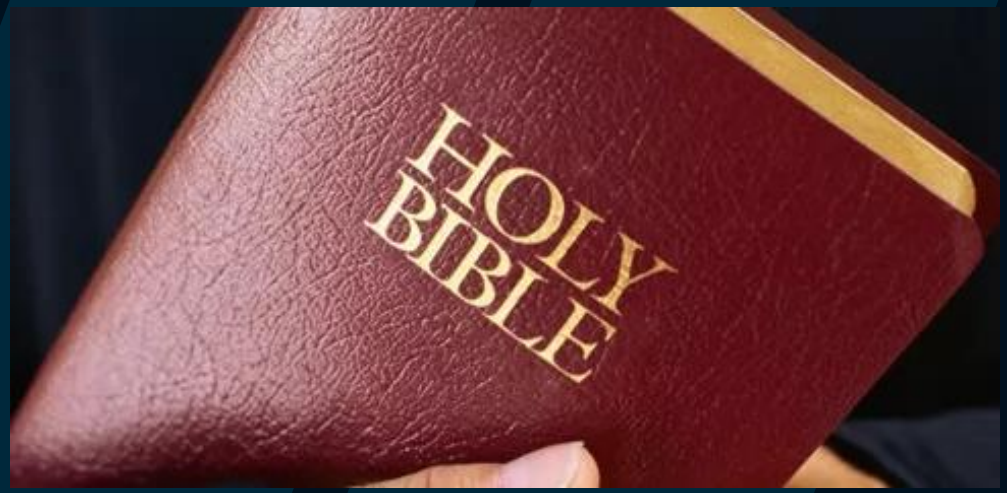
Scripture References



Matthew 25:14-30

Parable of the Talents

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Church School Creed & Benediction

CREED

Our Church School must grow & grow
And we must help to make it so
Every member a **Christian**
Every Christian a **worker**
Every worker **trained**
A worker that **will not be ashamed**
This we ask in Jesus' name

-AMEN

BENEDICTION

We have come
We have studied
We have learned
So until our next coming together
To study God's word
May His rich blessings reside with you
And may His Grace be eternally yours

-AMEN