



The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

ACTS 4:32-5:11

"THE FIELD"

AUGUST 20, 2023

AT A GLANCE

Our own hearts pose the greatest threat to the testimony of the gospel and the church, more than any external threat.

CONTEXT

The Book of Acts is the theological history of the church. In the previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the church) have become the place where heaven and earth meet. At this point, many are receiving the Gospel, and many are opposing it. Those that have received the Holy Spirit are reordering their lives around faith in Jesus and bearing fruit.... but as we will see, not everyone is there for the same reason.

SERMON SUMMARY

Pastor Joey admonished us that Christian unity, and its witness to the validity of the Gospel, is the hope of the world and the life we are all longing for.

We are easily tempted to believe that the biggest threat to Christian unity is opposition from outside the church. But Pastor Joey highlighted that the biggest threat to our unity comes from within the church. And it starts with us.

Ananias and Sapphira show us that a spirit of self-preservation, self-exaltation, and self-deception bent on exploiting community is the real threat to the church. When we yield to that spirit, we plant seeds of disunity.

Thankfully, God judges the heart and spirit of each of us. When we betray the Holy Spirit for the SELF, it is not hidden from him. It's a serious offense with grave consequences. He will not tolerate a false unity.

Ultimately this is for our good, because performing for personal gain is a poor substitute for becoming one with God and his church. Pastor Joey charged us to cry out to God for a true heart and Spirit-filled unity at Faith Church.



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This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.

DISCUSSION

Read Acts 4:32-5:11

Notes for this week: This is a complex text; we need to understand the historical and biblical context to discern its meaning. It is important to note that Ananias and Sapphira were not required to give everything they had. They were not under compulsion or obligation but instead were asked to give freely and joyfully. But Ananias and Sapphira's desire to be seen as more generous than they actually were grieved the Holy Spirit and threatened the unity of the early church.

Expand your Awareness

Manufacturing favor and posturing for influence are common temptations to our sin nature. People will often use whatever means at their disposal (money, power, personality, gifting, titles, etc.) to promote a false self to secure something they think they need.

- Where have you experienced this in the world?
- Where have you experienced this in the church?

Explore the Self

We are all guilty of posturing for power, prestige, and influence, either in practice or in our hearts. We are often tempted to present a false self, sometimes consciously, but more often subconsciously. To root out that false self, we must become aware that the false self exists and understand what we are using it for.

- Why is it so hard to present who we really are without pretense?
- How have you experienced the temptation to present a false version of yourself in order to get something in return?

Pastor Joey mentioned that the "spirit of self" tempts us away from unity and the Holy Spirit. Getting clear on what the self is seeking is the key to dislodging its power. These goals of the spirit of self are:

Self Preservation: Greed/Gratification
Self-Exaltation: Personal Glorification
Self Deception: False Righteousness

- Which one resonates most with you today? Why?



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- How does that get in the way of Christian unity and your witness to the Gospel?

Sometimes our temptations aren't as obvious. Often believers can experience the spirit of self creeping in because we haven't grasped afresh the extravagant joy that comes from God through the Holy Spirit. To experience true relief from the temptation to self-glorification, we must identify our deeper needs so we can only seek God for them.

- In your life currently, which of the following needs most resonates with you and why?
Self-Preservation: Need to feel safe.
Self-Exultation: Need to be seen/valued.
Self-Deception: You need to be loved just as you are.

Rejoice: God, has met that need through Christ Jesus! You are safe, valued, and loved, just as you are and as you grow. But knowing this doesn't mean we always experience it. So let's deal if the obstacles that get in the way of experiencing these gifts.

- What beliefs, behaviors, or experience stands in the way of your ability to experience God's Spirit of unity?

Experience Transformation

Once we know the obstacles, we can repent, reorient, and receive the Holy Spirit that fills us and makes us one with one another.

- What do you want to repent of today that stands in the way of your joy and unity with God and others?
- What truth do you want to practice or dwell on this week that is tied to the need listed above? How will you do that?
- What small behavior can you change this week to practice more authentic Spirit-led unity here at Faith Church?
- Who, specifically, do you want to practice that with?

Pray

Pray God would grant a true repentance and a yielding to the Holy Spirit within us and in unity at Faith Church.

Keep Learning

Pastor Joey highly recommends reading [The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness](#) by the late Pastor Tim Keller, and Chapter 3, "Vainglory: Image is Everything" in [Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies](#), 2nd edition by Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung.

**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**



Read Acts 5:12-42