



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V22 N2 January 12, 2020

## REMEMBERSHIP

“reMEMBER Generosity”

Acts 4:32-37

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Church

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today.

*“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

**Ephesians 4:15-16**



What does generosity look like?

We often think of “church” in *local* terms—each local congregation being *a church*, and all the congregations in a particular area being *churches*. Paul frequently uses the term in these two ways. For example, in 1 Thessalonians, he writes: “Paul, Silas and Timothy, To *the church* of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you” (1:1; cf., 2Th 1:1), and in 1 Thessalonians, he also writes: “For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's *churches* in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those *churches* suffered from the Jews” (1:14; cf., 2Th 1:4). But we ought also to think of “church” in *universal* terms—all believers of this age being *the church*, the body of Christ. In Ephesians, Paul writes: “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for *the church*, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (1:22-23; cf., 4:4-6; Col 1:18).

Theologically speaking, the Spirit is responsible for the creation of the church. The church, the body of Christ, celebrated its beginning on the day of Pentecost, when the resurrected Christ received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and poured out that Spirit on a remnant of Jewish believers (Ac 2:32-33; cf., vv. 17-18)—to which Gentile believers were later added (Ac 10:1-11:18). This was in keeping with the spiritual blessings promised in the new covenant (see Jer 31:31-34; cf., Eze 11:19-20; 34:25; 36:24-27; Isa 55:3), which believers in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, have now received, and all Israel will receive in the future (Rom 11:25-27). One commentator writes: “The fact that these blessings have been inaugurated in the church distinguishes the church from Jews and Gentiles of the past dispensation. But only some of those blessings have been inaugurated. Consequently, the church should be distinguished from the next dispensation in which all

of the blessings will not just be inaugurated, but completely fulfilled” (Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 49).

This “better” new covenant is the subject of Hebrews 8:1-10:18. The writer states his point at the outset: “Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being” (Heb 8:1-2). Reading on, we understand that this high priest is Jesus, who is a superior *mediator* of a superior *new covenant* (v. 6)—superior because, the writer of Hebrews says, “he did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, to appear for us in God's presence” (9:24). What's more, unlike ministers of the old covenant, “he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to hear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (vv. 26b-28).

No wonder in Ephesians 4:32-36 we read about the apostles' testifying powerfully to the fact of the resurrection (v. 33) by which Jesus was proclaimed to be “both Lord and Messiah” (Ac 2:36). After all, it was in connection with his seating at the right hand of God that the Spirit was poured out in fulfillment of the promise of the Father. And it was in connection with the pouring out of the Spirit that the church was formed. And no wonder we read about God's grace being “so powerfully at work in them all” (v. 33). After all, it was in connection with the filling of the Spirit (v. 31) that the first believers were enabled to live the gospel generous lives that they did.



## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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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.

### READ in another translation

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "one in heart and mind" in v. 32.
- Underline "their own" in v. 32.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 32.
- Underline "they shared" in v. 32.
- Circle "grace" in v. 33.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 34.
- Bracket "from time to time" in v. 34.
- Circle "owned" and "he owned" in v. 34 and v. 37 respectively.
- Circle "Levite" in v. 36.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Describe what being “one in heart and mind” looks like.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  2. Explain the *contrast* in verse 32.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  3. “With great power” refers to more than apostolic *rhetoric*. To what does it refer? (See 2:43; cf., 3:1-10.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  4. The apostles were testifying “to the resurrection.” Why “the resurrection” in particular? (See Ac 2:29-36.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  5. What makes you think the generosity of the early church was voluntary . . . or not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  6. “Great *grace* was upon them all” (ESV). What has grace got to do with generosity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  7. Put what “from time to time” means in your own words.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  8. People who sold property didn’t *literally* put the proceeds at the apostles’ feet did they? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  9. Joseph, whom the apostles called “Barnabas,” lived up to his name. How so?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  10. **Discussion:** The unique generosity of the early church was remarkable. Talk about its significance.
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### Commentary On The Text

The general description of early Christians' sharing and the specific description of Barnabas' exemplary generosity found in Acts 4:32-37 is closely tied to the previous description of Christian *koinonia*, i.e., fellowship, in 2:42-47. One commentator writes: "This brief pericope illustrates what Luke wrote earlier, in 2:44-46, about the early Christians sharing and selling their possessions, as well as giving verbal witness. Luke recorded this description to emphasize the purity and unity in the church that resulted from the Spirit's filling (v. 31). This is the second summary narrative that pictures exemplary life in the church (cf. 2:42-47; 5:12-16)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2019 ed., 125, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)).

In Acts 4:32-37 Luke provides his readers with another glimpse into the life of the Jerusalem church. What he had described in general terms in 2:42-47, he describes again in more specific terms by providing an outstanding example of someone who actually sold a piece of property and brought the proceeds to the apostles to be distributed to the poor. Verses 32-33 describe the unique unity "in heart and mind" that marked the congregation. Verses 34-35 describe the unique generosity that accompanied that unity. And verses 36-37 describe a concrete example of that unique generosity.

On the opening verses, one commentator writes: "The opening two verses are almost identical with 2:43-44, only in reverse order. Together they characterize the community life as marked by four things: their unity in mind and heart (v. 32a), their sharing of their possessions (v. 32b), the power and witness of the apostles (v. 33a), and the grace of God, which rested upon them (v. 33b). The overarching concept was their unity, their being 'one in heart and mind,' their fellowship in the Spirit (cf. *koinōnia* in 2:42). This served as the basis of their sharing of their possessions" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 151).

Luke's comment, "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (v. 33), suggests that the above characteristics of community life were the work of the Spirit. Peter concluded his sermon in Acts 2 with these words: "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" —referring to happenings on the day of Pen-

tecost — "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (vv. 33, 36). The unity of the church and its unique generosity, as well as the powerful preaching of the apostles and the great grace that was upon them, all were all products of the Spirit (cf., 4:31).

In verses 34-35, Luke reports that "there were no needy persons among them" (v. 34a) and then explains why (vv. 34b-35). Commentators frequently note that this description meets the standard God called for in Deuteronomy 15:4, "There need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you." One of them observes: "All of these descriptions of the mutual care within the community are presented positively by Luke. These acts evidence the community's piety and mutual commitment to God and one another. It is a sign that they see each other as family or friends, worthy of compassionate care" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 215). This idyllic situation existed because people with investments liquidated them and brought the proceeds to the apostles to distribute to those in need. The tenses of the verbs in Greek indicate they did not do this all at one time; it was a continuing practice. "The economic situation in Jerusalem is deteriorating at this time due to famine and political unrest. Employment opportunities are declining, and unsaved Jews are beginning to put economic and social pressure on the Christians" (Constable, 125). So "from time to time" (NIV) as the need arises, individuals step up to meet the needs by liquidating some of their assets. How long did this practice continue — for it could not continue indefinitely? Perhaps until the persecution and scattering of the church in Jerusalem (8:1-3).

In verses 36-37 Luke introduces his readers to Barnabas, who will be mentioned twenty-two more times in the book of Acts, and tells them about his unique example of generosity. He lives up to his nickname, which means "son of encouragement," by selling a piece of property and giving the money to the apostles to distribute to those in need. This encourager, whom Luke later calls "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith" (11:24), is "surely a man of rare quality, a community builder, able to promote and sustain warm and constructive personal relations" (James D. G. Dunn, *Acts*, 60) whose generosity is worth imitating.

## Word Studies/Notes

v. 32 *one . . . mind* “Luke liked to emphasize the unanimity of mind and purpose of the first believers (see 1.14 and similar emphasis of the earlier summary account in 2:46). Looking back, he saw the sort of spirit which Paul encouraged among his churches (1 Cor. 10.24, 33; 13.5; Phil 2.4) to have been literally lived out in the first church” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 59). “The unity of the believers extended beyond spiritual matters to physical, material matters (cf. Matt. 22:37-39). They owned personal possessions, but they did not consider them private possessions . . . Their unity manifested itself in a sense of responsibility for one another. Love, not law, compelled them to share (cf. 1 John 3:17-18)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2019 ed., 125, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)).

v. 32 *their own* “‘No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.’ The picture is one of unqualified sharing, of not claiming owner’s rights, of saying ‘what’s mine is yours’” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 151).

v. 32 *they shared* Cf., “they had everything in common” (ESV). “The Greek literally reads ‘everything was in common with them.’ Taken by itself, this could refer to shared ownership; but in conjunction with the first expression, it also refers to a practice of freely sharing one’s goods with another” (Polhill, 151). “This sharing of possessions shows how ‘connected’ their mutual participation is. It extends even down to possessions, as verse 34 explains in more detail . . . The point is that many are voluntarily giving over a great deal of their possessions for the use of all. The result is that community members’ needs are met” (Bock, 214).

v. 33 *grace* “The ‘abundant grace’ that rested upon these Christians was the divine enablement that God granted them to speak and to live as they did” (Constable, 125). “‘Much grace was upon them all,’ primarily in God’s blessing on their lives and witness” (Polhill, 152).

v. 34 *from time to time* “The voluntary sharing described in verse 32 seems to have been customary, but the occasional selling mentioned here was evidently exceptional (cf. 2:45). The imperfect tense verbs here imply ‘from time to time’ (NIV)” (Constable, 126). “Some members own houses and land, part of a very small middle class in this first-century culture, about 10 percent of the population. The upper class was even smaller, about 4 to 7 percent. These members of the new

movement are selling what they have and bringing the proceeds to the community as represented by the apostles, who oversee the distribution of resources. The imperfect verb (*epheron*, were bringing) and present participle (*pōlountes*, selling) in combination suggest a *gradual liquidation of assets*, not selling everything all at once (Williams 1990:93)”

(Bock, 215, italics added). “The voluntary nature of the Christian practice is evidenced by the consistent use of the iterative imperfect tense throughout vv. 34b-35. This is how they ‘used to’ do it. They ‘would sell’ their property and bring it to the apostles *as needs arose*” (Polhill, 153, italics added).

v. 37 *he owned* “Repeated attempts have been made to see this as an early Christian experiment in community ownership . . . There are many reasons to reject such suggestions. First, there was no transfer of ownership, no control of production or income, no requirement to surrender one’s property to the community . . . Second is the example of Barnabas in vv. 36-37. His sale of property would hardly be a sterling example if surrender of property were obligatory. Third, in the example of Ananias and Sapphira, Peter clarified for Ananias that his sin was in lying about his charity. The land remained his to do with as he pleased; he was under no obligation to give the proceeds to the church (5:4)” (Polhill, 153).

v. 37 *Levite* “Levites were often wealthy and very well educated, but not all were priests. Generally, Levites were not to own land (Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9). Exceptions, however, existed in the OT, and life for Levites was different by the first century (Jer. 1:1; 32:7-9; Josephus, *Life* 13-15 §§68-83; 76 §§422-30; Bruce 1990: 160). Levites served in the temple, keeping watch over the gates, policing the area, instructing, and copying the Torah (Le Cornu and Shulam 2003: 258)” (Bock, 216).

## Other Texts to Consider

### Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”



## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Imitate the gospel generosity of Barnabas, for generosity is a mark of the early church that was filled with the Holy Spirit.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

Several years ago, while attending a high school graduation party, the hostess stopped and thanked me for “sharing her daughter” with her. She expressed how valuable my relationship with her daughter was and how she appreciated knowing I was speaking truth into her as a trusted adult and friend. Not only were this mom and I “church friends” but her daughter was my go-to babysitter and favorite person to talk music and books with at Starbucks. Being a member of Central Bible Church means more than just attending on Sunday mornings. Church is a lifestyle, a part of who you are, not a building you go to once a week. Parents, it’s essential you take steps toward Biblical community. The people in your Community/Home Groups can be your village that will help you raise your children to God’s glory. They can be by your side from potty training to teenage romance. They can be the safe adults your kids trust and turn to when they need an outside perspective. Your kids are growing in their Biblical community, also. The friends they make at church today will likely travel with them throughout junior high, high school, and even beyond. They will laugh, cry, celebrate, and endure trials together. These are the people who can keep them accountable as they grow older, pointing them to Christ and helping them grow in their faith. Friends, there’s gold in community. We are praying you and your family go deeper this year by connecting with a group of believers to belong, become and go beyond.

### What Does The Bible Say?

What does the Bible say? Read Acts 4:32-37

1. Who shared and what did they share?
2. To whom was the money from selling possessions given?
3. What did Barnabas do for the group?

### What Do You Think?

What does it mean for the believers to be “one in heart and mind” (v 32)?

### What Do You Do?

Sharing is caring! This week share one meal with someone in your neighborhood, one item with someone in need, and one Bible verse with a friend who needs encouragement.

## CORE COMPETENCY: Generosity

I give away my faith, life, money and time to help with God’s work.

## MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 13:16

*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I completed my Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ I memorized this week’s verse
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought my Bible to church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)  
*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)  
*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)  
*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)  
*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)  
*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)  
*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)  
*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)  
*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)  
*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)  
*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)  
*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)  
*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)  
*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)  
*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)  
*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)  
*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)  
*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)  
*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)  
*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)  
*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)  
*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)  
*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)  
*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)  
*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)  
*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)  
*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)  
*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)  
*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)  
*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)  
*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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