

Series Slide

Story about Gift Money

ENVELOPES- Spending- Saving- Tithe- Giving

Walk to arcade- **Double Dragon!!!**- Line quarters- Used Giving money

Had a friend with a birthday party- needed to get a gift- go get your giving money- UH-OH.

I was immediately grounded until I could earn enough spending money to pay back my gift money.

All the way back to the first sermon about the Good Life
There are 2 ideas wrapped up in what the Bible means by people that are happy.

FLOURISHING- Picture an apple Tree.

Deep- Deep Roots make it sturdy and feeds it.

Wide- Branches spread out- providing homes to birds and squirrels- shade to people and animals- and fruit (not for itself, but for others in the ecosystem.

WHOLE- Single-minded- Everything you have dedicated to one Transcendent purpose.

The Good Life is a life that is deep because you are Spiritually Connected- in deeply rooted in your faith in Christ.

The Good life is a life that's wide- because you have Deep Relationships where you care for others- providing shade and fruit for others. A life of overflow.

The Good Life is a life of Wholeness- Singleminded- all of your life is pointed at a Transcendent Purpose- to love God and make him known in the world.

Title Slide- "Double Draggin': Why the Good Life Takes Grace & Sin Seriously"- Acts 4:32-5:14

Today- pick back up where we left off last week. Brand new church. They've just experienced their first bit of difficulty- Peter and John were arrested and told to stop speaking about Jesus. But they immediately led the church to pray and went out and did it again...and took the whole church with them- giving testimony to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now- please pay attention to my title. I worked hard on that. Remember I spent all my gift money on Double Dragon arcade? Well- we're gonna see a couple of folks today who decide to spend their gift money on something too. And...well- you'll see what I mean.

Acts 4:32-5:14

32 Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. 33 With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them. 34 For there was not a needy person among them because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as any had need.

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus by birth, the one the apostles called Barnabas (which is translated Son of Encouragement), 37 sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property.

2 However, he kept back part of the proceeds with his wife's knowledge, and brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 "Ananias," Peter asked, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land? 4 Wasn't it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn't it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to people but to God." 5 When he heard these words, Ananias dropped dead, and a great fear came on all who heard. 6 The young men got up, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him.

7 About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 "Tell me," Peter asked her, "did you sell the land for this price? "

"Yes," she said, "for that price."

9 Then Peter said to her, "Why did you agree 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 Instantly she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men came in, they found her dead, carried her out, and buried her beside her husband. 11 Then great fear came on the whole church and on all who heard these things.

12 Many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 No one else dared to join them, but the people spoke well of them. 14 Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers — multitudes of both men and women.

Transition: Today- instead of thinking about the Good Life for an individual- lets think about it in terms of the church. I'll call it The Good Life Church. What is a church like that is filled with people living the GOOD LIFE. Deep, Wide, Whole people?

2 points today

1) A Good Life church is generous because they take grace seriously.

First, let me show you that this church is indeed living the good life together. And its all in the first half of v 32

v 32

Now the entire group of those who **believed** were of **one heart** and **mind**, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.

First- they believed. Believed what? That Jesus Christ died for their sins on a cross and then resurrected on the third day- now they know they are forgiven and redeemed and will now resurrect to eternal life when they die.

They believed the gospel- that even though they should be eternally separated from God- because they saw the resurrected Jesus- they know they will be eternally in connected to God.

That's **spiritual connection**.

They are of **"One heart"**-

Luke deliberately uses words the Greco-Roman philosophers used with regard to friendship.

The Greek philosophers believed that yes, you could have this kind of intimacy and sharing, but it couldn't be across the class or racial barriers.

Which it absolute transcends those barriers in this church. That was always one of the most attractive things about the early church- The Deep Relationships- the sharing and caring for one another wasn't bound by race or class...it overflowed to everyone.

Third- One Mind. That's Wholeness- Single-mindedness. That is Transcendent Purpose.

The whole church exists together to Love God by Loving people.

Folks- that is a good life church. Spiritual Connection, Deep Relationships, and ONE TRANSCENDENT PURPOSE.

This is a picture of Deep and Wide Flourishing- and Wholeness.

And look- they don't put any of their money or possessions in the Spending or Saving envelope— - Everything Goes in the Giving and Tithing envelopes.

...and nobody...is headed to the arcade to play Double Dragon.

Now- Look what motivates them.

v 33

They aren't simply told- "This is the way the church behaves."

Look— they are constantly hearing the apostles preaching about the Resurrection of Jesus which means they are constantly receiving the grace of God.

This is what we call "Gospel Centrality".

If you would have asked me when I was that 9 year old kid with my Gift envelope completely cased out for quarters- lined up across the bottom of the Double Dragon screen- "Trevor- what is the Gospel for?"

I would have said, "You believe it to go to heaven."

...and what else?

“That’s it.- Once you believe it, you pray and tell God you believe it...and then you’re in. You don’t really need it anymore. Now I just try my best to be a good person- and the only time I need the gospel again- is if I’m telling another person about it.”

But what I’ve learned- and what the Scripture teaches is that a life of following Jesus- The GOOD LIFE- I need to hear the gospel- every day. I need to meditate on it...and think it through. That’s how “the grace of God” keeps affecting your life...like it does this Good Life church in Acts.

And one of the primary ways the gospel changes you...

...is in your relationship with your money and possessions.

v 34-35

Because this church was always focused on the gospel and the grace of God...they were generous.

They didn’t consider their money and possessions their own- but all a part of the Transcendent purpose of caring for those in need...and supporting the work of the apostles.

Think about the word Grace- I still remember GRACE with this acronym.

God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense

When I was spiritually bankrupt- a condemned sinner hell-bent on making myself the center of my own universe- Jesus Christ left the riches of his heavenly home- limited himself- lived in relative poverty his whole life- was stripped of everything he had, paid the price for my sin against God by painfully and shamefully dying on a cross in my place...and simply by trusting that to be true- and yielding my life to him- I now have access to all his heavenly riches. I’m a child of the king- who has an inheritance coming that cannot fade by moth or rust- promised and guaranteed to me not because of what I did- but because of what Jesus did for me.

That’s Grace- God’s riches at Christ’s expense.

And when I think about that- I don’t think of anything I have as belonging to me- everything I own belongs to God. Because everything HE is- in Jesus- he gave to me.

Look how the apostle Paul uses this with the Corinthian church.

2 Corinthians 8:7-10

7 Now as you excel in everything — in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us — excel also in this act of grace. 8 I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 10 And in this matter I am giving advice because it is profitable for you, who began last year not only to do something but also to want to do it.

If you have centered your life on the Grace of Jesus- then you know that you are not an owner of your money and possessions- you are a steward.

You have been called to singlemindedness- to use everything you have to Love God and Make him known in the world.

And what Paul says here- is if you focus on GRACE- you'll WANT to do it.

That's why he says later- I don't want you to give out of compulsion from me- but God loves a cheerful giver.

Now- let me ask you- do you have a giving envelope- a tithe envelope?

Do you give to the church and to others with joy- or begrudgingly?

Do you think what you give is proportionate to what you have received from Jesus?

Do you find your self defending your giving practices— or looking for more opportunities?

Every time I preach about money or giving- Do you have an open heart ready to hear from God- or can you feel yourself start to hate me a little bit and suddenly become skeptical of my motives— unlike ANY other topic I preach about?

Lets look at Barnabas-

v 36-37

- See this guy named Joseph. He got a nickname from the apostles. A nickname from this early church. It was "Son of Encouragement."
- Barnabas was known as an over-flower. He sold a field and gave away all of the proceeds to take care of other people. In fact, that Barnabas comes up 6 times in the book of Acts, each time...he's forgetting himself...and giving himself away for others.
- 1-Here, He's the **lead giver** in a generous church.
- 2- In Acts 9- He put his neck on the line and stood up for Paul when everyone thought Paul was going to murder them. Barnabas said..."No Jesus has changed this guy."
- 3- In Acts 11- he led the Antioch church in becoming diverse—when people were nervous about Gentiles coming in, Barnabas said, "This is right to let them in."
- 4- He's put in charge of taking **relief money** to Jerusalem when it is hit with a famine.
- 5-He **goes with Paul** on his first missionary journey.
- 6-When **John Mark, fails the apostle Paul and Paul sends John Mark home, Barnabas says, "He can come with me. I believe the Lord still wants to use him."**
- Indeed, he's the son of encouragement.
- **One pastor summarized Barnabas like this,**
- **"he lays his money down and picks people up."**
- His hold on his **stuff was loose, but his hold on others was tight.**
- He is a picture of someone transformed by the gospel.

Back to 1)

- **How about you? If the church gave you a nickname what would it be?**
 - Son of Complaining?
 - Daughter of Gossip
 - Son of Devoting Himself to his Career While He Neglects His Family?
 - Daughter of Blameshifting?

- Son of Excuses?

If those are your names- you don't need a guilt trip- you need a GRACE trip. If not- you Trippin'

2) **A Good Life church takes sin seriously because they fear God.**

- ...Ananias...another guy in the church... is watching this whole Barnabas thing...and he sees something he really wants.
- A NICKNAME.
- He wants people to say cool things about him.
- He loves the attention of people.
- But there's a problem.
- Ananias doesn't want to get a nickname the way Barnabas got his... by laying down his money and picking people up. That's too risky.
- Its not safe.
- Ananias wants to keep his money, his safety...at the same time he wants people think he's just as generous as Barnabas.
- So he comes up with this plan. He says to his wife:
- "We'll sell this property we have for \$10 grand.
- But, we'll keep that on the down low.
- "Then, we'll go to the apostles and only drop \$5 grand at their feet...and nobody will be the wiser.
- "We'll get nicknames...
- ...and, we'll still have \$5 grand to buy some new property.
- What do you think they'll call us, honey? I wonder if the apostles will let me make a suggestion.
- "I'm thinking, 'Mr. Fantastic'....cuz of how my generosity "STRETCHES ME"..huh? You know...Fantastic 4? Mr. Fantastic? Nevermind.
- "Hey, what if everyone called you Saphirra the Titha...well...that doesn't make sense because tithe means 10% and they'd think we're giving 100%...oh whatever...you come up with something... point is...this plan is flawless.
- "Barnabas is gonna look like Ebenezer Scrooge once we pull this off"
- But when they do it, it backfires. Peter calls them on their lie...and they fall dead on the spot.

- Both of them are dragged away.
- Its a Double Draggin'
- **BTW- that's a heck of a job for the early church interns-right?**
- **Can you imagine Tucker and Kerstie- carry these bodies away.**
- Now, I know what you're thinking.
 - Isn't this harsh?
 - Isn't God being unreasonable?
 - I mean, did he really have to strike them dead.
- I gotta admit. I'm with you. When I read this the first time, I though, "Where is the grace?"
- Couldn't have Peter just said, "Look, Ananias...don't front. Let's be honest here. You sold that field for 10 G's...not 5. Now next time don't be like that. We are going to love you no matter what..."
- I mean, why didn't Peter just share the gospel with him again? Why he's gotta go all 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' on him?
- Here's why...
- At this time in the history of God's movement in the world, He's doing some very unique things. Namely, in the kinds of signs he's showing in the world.
- A sign is when God takes something that is true about the kingdom of God...and puts it on physical display.
 - Its when God shows us what his future is like.
 - Up to this point we've seen this positively. Right?
 - People who have been lame or blind since birth, have been completely healed.
- Well, Just like at this unique time in history, God shows the future of his healing- WHOLENESS- he also shows the future of his judgment of sin.
- He is showing us, in a magnified way at a unique time in the history of the world...that when you decide to provide your own safety...and when you decide to find a name for yourself outside of him...it leads to eternal death.
- See, often we think of sin as simply "doing wrong things".

- So its easy to never look under the surface.
- Take lying for example.
- Most of us don't lie...just to lie.
- See, Lying is a surface sin.
- Lying is smoke...and wherever there is smoke...you can always trace it to a fire.
- If you follow the smoke of lying to its fire, you'll find a deeper, root sin.
- Lets say you call me at 9 pm and say, "Trevor, can you come over to my house and help me move my piano upstairs."
- Then I say, "I'd love to, but see, the thing is, I promised my wife that I would rearrange the shirts in my closet at 9 pm. And I must keep my promises to my wife."
- Now, in that moment, the simple fact is that I lied. (You know this because my wife would never want me to "rearrange" anything in our house.")
- But if I simply recognize that I lied ...and that lying is morally wrong...therefore a sin...I haven't really seen how that is an offense against God.
- And if I only acknowledge the immorality of an action without seeing how its actually offended God himself...then I'm just waving smoke away while I let the fire rage on in my heart....and eventually I'll burn to the ground...kind of like Ananias an Sapphira.
- See, when I told you that lie, I was actually serving a different god.
- On one hand, I valued your approval over God's. I wanted you to think that I really wanted to help you move your piano, because I wanted you to believe that I was a good guy.
- On the other hand, the truth was I just wanted to stay home. I wanted the comfort and safety of chilling on my couch, in my pajamas.
- So, instead of either going to help you, or simply saying, "I really need to stay home tonight"...I tried to get the best of both worlds.
- Your approval...and the comfort of my couch.

- The smoke of my lie shows that in that moment, I served a different god. Me.
- I wanted people to say glorious things about me...while I did what was most comfortable...for me.
- Now, is that not exactly what Ananias does here?
- He wants people to say great things about him...about how generous he is...about what a good guy he is.
- But he also wants the comfort and safety of keeping his bank account padded.
- His lie is smoke to the fire of his self-worship.
- That, is called idolatry. God-replacing.
- **V 5:3-4**
- That's why Peter says to Ananias that he "lied to the Holy Spirit."
- Or that he "Didn't lie to man, but to God."
- See, the truth is, he did to lie to man.
- But Peter is telling him, and us, that the greater sin here is against God. When you follow his lie down to his heart motivation, there is rebellion against God.
- See, you are created to find your safety and your beauty and your identity in God.
- And when you do that...you show other people how good he is.
- But when you choose to communicate to others that you are a god...by serving yourself...by sinning...you make yourself look good, while you make god look small.
- In essence, He has diminished people's "fear" of God.
- Did you notice there is a phrase in these 11 verses about Ananias that shows up twice...and it talks about the fear of God.
- **V 5:5 & v 5:11**
- See, the fear of God means 2 things.
- It means that you recognize that God is better, different than you. In a dangerous kind of way.
- I often compare it to the way you feel at the edge of the Grand Canyon or a raging fire. You know if you get too close, it will kill you. But still, there is something about its beauty and warmth that draw you close.

- The fear of God is knowing that he is dangerous...but he is absolutely everything you want.
- In other words, **Fear of God- Awe with a desire for intimacy**
- You want to be close, but you know he's so much better.
- See, without a fear of God...you'll either think he's so big, so holy, so perfect, so beautiful...that you shouldn't even bother with a relationship with him...
- ...or you'll decide God really isn't that good, or doesn't exist at all... either way...you'll try to find love and approval from something and someone...and you'll always be afraid to show how empty it leaves you.
- You'll try to find the deep love only God provides from a husband or wife. But they'll never satisfy you. Not ultimately. Because as you get close to them, you'll see their flaws...and then you'll divorce them because you put them in the place of God and they can't live up to that.
- Or, you'll do it to friends, or a parents, or your kids.
- Anybody that you try to get love and approval from that doesn't have the awe inspiring holiness and beauty of God...will crumble under the weight of your expectations.

This is why Deep Relationships are impossible without Spiritual Connection and Transcendent Purpose.

Because without knowing you have all the love and approval you could ever need from God- You'll try and squeeze it out of others approval. Which means all your relationships will ultimately be centered on yourself.

And without a Transcendent purpose- there is nothing for you relationships to be about. You aren't going anywhere together.

- That's why the fear of God is so important. And why we absolutely must take our sin seriously.

v 5:14

Look at the result of what happens- the generosity of this church- the ministry of this good life church- look what the result is.

OH MY GOSH- those guys are a cult! Stay away!

No-

Believers are added to the Lord increasing numbers- both men and women. That's gospel multiplication

City Church- will you write that down somewhere?

I want you to put that verse somewhere you can see it everyday.

Go ahead- write it down.

This- this right here- is where our church is headed. It's what I'm praying everyday for our church

Application-

1- Will you get serious about grace and let it increase Your generosity.

First- to the church- Second- Outside the church- to the poor, the sick, those in need.

Do you protect your time and your money?

Are you willing to risk your bottom line to make your house nicer but unwilling to risk for the mission of God through the church?

What step of generosity do you need to take with this church?

next week- we'll have a step of commitment for you- will you take it.

Will you take a step now- by giving maybe for the very first time to this church- or maybe today is the day you start a regular habit of tithing? On the app, touch the QR code and start that step of responding to God's grace today

2- Will you confess your hidden sin today? are you faking it?

If we are going to be this kind of church- we need this.

We must take Grace and Sin seriously.

If you don't protect yourself from being found out- you'll find that the grace of Jesus is always ready to meet your sin.

Do you need to be forgiven today? He's ready to do it.

Prayer Counselors & Altar