

I. My Notes ... WWC message 10/25

II. Series: A Disciples Life – Our Daily Journey

- Title: Who Are You Obeying?
- Text: Acts 4:32-5:42
- Quote: Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Dietrich Bonehoffer (Theologian, Author)

III. Introduction

- Having a sense of community is important. This helps with a sense of belonging and meaning. Being a part of a community brings people together, it fosters a feeling of inclusion, of identity and significance. This is one of the strengths of the New Testament Church. They were united in purpose and intent. As the Church grew, after Pentecost, unity was one of the identifying characteristics that attracted people from many diverse backgrounds. I have learned that people want to be part of something bigger than themselves. This is what the New Testament Church experienced. Their identity was based on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. Their unity was founded on love – God’s love for His creation (that’s us). This sense of community echoed through the crowds and even reach many of the religious leaders... **Acts 6:7** - *The word of God was continuing to spread. The group of followers in Jerusalem increased, and a great number of the Jewish priests believed and obeyed. (NCV).* Jerusalem became the hotbed of revival. People were hearing the Gospel message, and it was changing lives.
- Picking up where we left off, look at what Luke records in this letter.
“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.” (Acts 4:32-35 CSB). Pay attention to what Luke is telling us ... “the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind” (vs.32). This unity was a testimony to what the love of God does in our lives. David wrote a Psalm of praise about unity in God’s eyes. *“It is good and pleasant when God’s people live together in peace! It is like perfumed oil poured on the priest’s head and running down his beard. It ran down Aaron’s beard and on to the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Mount Hermon falling on the hills of Jerusalem. There the Lord gives his blessing of life forever.” (Psalm 133 NCV).* Unity is a blessing, it is a reflection of God’s nature, and one of the ways it is seen is by the Holy Spirit working in us and through us.

- Jesus prayed for believers to have the same unity that He had with the Father (see John 17:21-23). Paul wrote about the unity we have with each other and with the Lord God in his letter to the church at Ephesus (see Ephesians 4:1-6). This sense of unity reflects God’s nature – as evidenced in the Trinity. And it is strengthening the church. When others see people in agreement, united in purpose, valuing the differences that each member possesses, it is a testimony that inspires others to act in the same God-honoring way. This Christ centered community should be a testimony to the world of the compassion and grace of our Lord.
- The strength and power of community require a foundation of truth. This truth is Jesus Christ ... *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me.” (John 14:6 NCV).* Truth is a guiding principle in the life (and walk) of a believer. It is foundational to spiritual growth, integrity, and genuine relationships. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another.” (Ephesians 4:25 CSB).* The importance of truth and community are evident throughout Scripture. It was because of

truth and community that this growing church gave sacrificially. Making sure that needs were met and Christ was glorified. Think about what this kind of church would look like today, what impact it would have.

- This community saw the gifts and values that others had. *“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.” (Acts 4:36-37 CSB).* Luke is using the example of Barnabas (we will hear more about him later in our journey through Acts) and his actions to prepare others for a life lesson and a hard one at that.

IV. Loyalty and Obedience – The Power of Community (Acts 4:32-37)

- God is asking us to choose obedience. Many would rather sacrifice than live God’s way. Authentic faith, real love is demonstrated in the choice of obedience – the decision to let God’s way guide us. This is a matter of heart over following a manufactured standard.
- When Jesus was being criticized for who He was associating with He has something to say. *“10 While he was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12 Now when he heard this, he said, “It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:10-13 CSB).*
- Have you been called? Are you looking for the love and acceptance that can only come from God? It’s a choice to live with kindness and compassion – God’s way ... Not my way.
- Barnabas chose obedience. He chose to encourage through his words and actions. He gave freely, he gave willingly, so that others could find God’s love and grace.

V. Illusions and Disobedience – The Danger of Deception (Acts 5:1-11)

- We've come to a very dark story in the formation of the New Testament Church. It's one that scares many people and concerns others deeply.

- **Acts 5:1-11 CSB**

5 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.

- Let me say a couple of things first. What God did and had done, He did freely. He gave freely; He loves freely. As believers we are encouraged to do the same. Paul explained this to believers ... *7 Each of you should give as you have decided in your heart to give. You should not be sad when you give [or give reluctantly], and you should not give because you feel forced to give [out of compulsion]. [L For] God loves the person who gives*

·happily [cheerfully]. 8 And God can ·give you more blessings than you need [L overflow/abound all grace to you]. Then ·you will always have plenty of everything [L in all things at all times you will have all you need]—·enough to give to [abounding/overflowing in] every good work. will always have plenty of everything—enough to give to every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:7-8 EXB).

- The Apostle goes on to say, “12 *This ·service you do [L ministry of service] not only helps the needs of ·God’s people [T the saints], it also brings many more thanks to God. 13 It is a proof of your faith. Many people will ·praise [glorify] God because you ·obey [submit to] the ·Good News [Gospel] of Christ—the gospel you ·say you believe [confess]—and because you ·freely [generously] share with them and with all others.” (vs. 12-13 EXB).*
- The issue we read about with Ananias and Saphira was not about giving or generosity. They owned the land – God didn’t require them to sell it. And even if they chose to and to keep the money that was their choice. The issue was twofold. First, it was about truth. They sold the land and kept some of the money for themselves. Not a problem. The problem was the lie and seeking the praise of men. Their lie was an attempt to get the praise and honor that belonged to the Lord God. They were committed to the deception – Ananias first, then Saphira. If they had come and offered a portion of that they Made from the sale of the land, that would have been received with joy and gladness. It looks like they wanted more and their desire, this heart matter, caused them to lie.
- It’s a lesson for all of us. Hypocrisy damages community and hurts the message of the church. It is about honest communication, about living truthfully, and loving authentically.

VI. The Cost of Obedience (Acts 5:12-42)

- Faith is not just practiced within the church walls; it flows into every part of a believer’s life, including where they work. The transformative power of

belief and trust in Jesus Christ often shines through in real-life stories of people who bring love and compassion to every part of their life.

- Obedience will cost you ...
- Cathy Truett, founder of Chick-fil-A, built his business on a foundation of Christian principles. Known for its policy to remain closed on Sundays to honor the Sabbath, Chick-fil-A is a testament to upholding one's faith in a competitive business environment. Cathy's faith led him to emphasize family values, community support, and employee welfare, fostering a culture of respect and integrity. His philanthropic efforts through the WinShape Foundation have provided millions of dollars in scholarships, foster care initiatives, and marriage counseling, illustrating how faith-driven leadership can extend beyond financial success to meaningful societal contributions. (taken from www.faithanswerspress.net)
- In Acts 5:12–42, we witness a Spirit-filled community marked by signs, wonders, and radical unity. The apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, continue to preach and heal publicly—even after being warned and imprisoned. Their unwavering obedience to God over human authority becomes a defining trait of the early church. Despite threats and beatings, they rejoice in suffering for Christ and refuse to be silenced. There are some strong lessons for us today.
- The Disciples were following the mandate they were given. Go, make disciples -(Matthew 28:19). And doing what Jesus reminded them - You will be My witnesses (Acts 1:8). This drew the attention of the religious elite and got the Apostles arrested. Because of their commitment and their obedience an Angel released them (vs. 20) and told them, "Go and stand in the temple, and tell the people all about this life." (CSB). This resulted in them being arrested once again.
- Their commitment was absolute. They were confronted by the High Priest (He was the highest human authority at the time) and ordered to stop preaching Jesus (see 5:28). Battle lines were being drawn, and choices were being tested.

- Do you think this could happen today? People everyday have a choice ... obey God or yield to man's way. Teachings in some churches have drifted from the Gospel message, from the words of Jesus to political or social messages. And if you emphasize the teachings of Jesus, you are criticized or told you are out of touch with today. Truth has taken a back seat to agendas.
- I want to encourage everyone to follow the example of Peter and John. Learn these words ... *"We must obey God rather than people."* (Acts 5:29)
- This declaration is a mandate on how believers should live. It affirms the sovereignty of God in your life. It reveals the trust and faith that you have in Jesus Christ. And it shows the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

VII. Last Words

- The Disciples' loyalty was absolute. Even their actions caused Gamaliel (a respected member of the Sanhedrin) to challenge other leaders to stay away from these men. He said, *"So in the present case, I tell you, stay away from these men and leave them alone. For if this plan or this work is of human origin, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even be found fighting against God."* They were *persuaded by him.* **(Acts 5:38-39 CSB).**
- The courage to stand firm in our faith only comes from the choice to live God's way, not your own way. Obeying God isn't just a policy to post on the door, it is the ultimate expression of a heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit, and a will that has been placed at the feet of the One who saved us.
- Is God asking for obedience in some area of your life? Is there something you see that may strengthen (enhance) the community around you? What's stopping you?
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always