

**ALL IN:
Stewardship
Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:32-5:11**

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Text Introduction: We are a journey together called ALL IN. Our chief text for the study is Acts 2. It is one of the most foundational passages of the New Testament on the work of the church.

These described in Acts 2 were authentic believers in Jesus Christ. They believed, and as a result of their belief, they were baptized. After being baptized, they banded themselves together as the church.

As a church they committed themselves to these things: Discipleship (becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus), fellowship (doing life together), prayer, worship, and stewardship.

The reason that I wanted us to take a hard look at this passage is because these are the very things that will happen in the new building that we will build. There will be a Fellowship Hall that will seat double the capacity that our existing Fellowship Hall seats. This will be a place of teaching with up to 17 Adult Education rooms being available. This space will also have connecting corridors that are a vibrant place of fellowship. This space will also house a new prayer room for our church's prayer ministry.

As a result of doing these things together, the LORD continued to prove Himself to them so that there was a sense of awe about them, they experienced miracles together, they had favor with one another, and every day people were being saved.

We have focused on each of these commitments, except the one before us today—stewardship. I want to put several texts before us today, starting again with the Acts 2 passage.

Text: Acts 2:42-47 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

⁴³ Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵ They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. ⁴⁶ Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32-5:11 Now the large group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. ³³ And the apostles were giving testimony with great power 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 the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed for each person's basic needs.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite and a Cypriot 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.

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 Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds from the field? 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 men 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 There was an interval of about three hours; then his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

⁸ "Tell me," Peter asked her, "did you sell the field 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.

Introduction: I heard a story about the conversation between two men. One said to the other, "If you had two houses and I didn't have one, would you give me one of your houses?" His friend replied, "Absolutely!"

Then the first man asked, "If you had two cars and I didn't have one, would you give me one of your cars?" Again, the reply was, "Sure!"

"If you had two farms and I had none, would you let me farm one?" "Of course!"

Finally, "If you had two pigs and I had none, would you give me one of the pigs?" This time his friend answered, "Absolutely not!"

"Wait a minute," his friend said. "You mean to tell me that you would be willing to give me a house, a car, and a farm, but unwilling to give me a pig?" "Well," the man said, "I have two pigs."

"It is easy to talk about what we would do if we had it. It is something else to talk about what we should do when we do have it."¹

I think it is a fairly safe introductory statement to say, "This is a pretty dramatic passage of Scripture." This is a pretty difficult passage to apply to our lives. What do we do with a passage like this one?

¹ Max Lucado, Audio Bible Study, "Rules of the Kingdom," *Becoming Money Smart* Series.

Just as we do with all Scripture, we seek to take the timeless principles and apply it to our lives.

Basic Truth Regarding Stewardship:

Our surrender to Christ transforms our view of possessions

This is pretty basic to this passage. Their relationship to Christ changed everything about them—even the way they viewed their possessions. At the very least, we should understand that these believers began to understand that, in Christ, their possessions no longer belonged to them, but to Christ. When that happens, we see ourselves not as owners, but as stewards. In our surrender to Christ, we surrender all. We give up our rights to Him.

So that, our Stewardship is marked by....

Unity

They were united by Christ. They were united with believers and for believers. As the New Testament unfolds, we recognize that their stewardship of resources even went beyond fellow believers. In Acts 11, we have an account of the believers in Antioch sending aid back to Jerusalem because of a famine. The same example is mentioned in the Corinthian letters.

Generosity

Our giving should also be marked by great generosity. Paul commended the Macedonian believers for their great generosity when he wrote to them as recorded in 2 Corinthians 8:1-3—

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God granted to the churches of Macedonia: ² During a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity. ³ I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability,

Necessity

One of the principles that we see in these Acts texts is “necessity.” They gave in accordance to the need. They gave because that to which they were given was a necessity. So, you might ask, “Is this necessary?” I want to say to you that I believe this project and therefore this giving effort is necessary for us to improve our ministry, but I realize that necessity is a relative term. So, I am willing to say to you as your pastor that I believe this is necessary, but ultimately the determination of necessity is up to you.

Integrity

When we move to Acts 4 and 5, we have two examples of stewardship—one positive and one negative. Two principles emerge. One is integrity. Stewardship is a matter of personal integrity. This is between you and God. I am responsible and you are responsible.

Accountability

This is also a matter of personal accountability. You are going to stand before God one day, and I am going to stand before God one day.

The Financial Challenge of ALL IN: The financial challenge of the “All In” campaign is to pledge and give 5 million dollars over a three-year period. This goal was chosen because it represents approximately the budget receipts for 2012 and the projected budget receipts for 2013. The simple way to meet this challenge is for every giving unit in our Church to give an amount over the next three years, above your budget giving, equal to the amount you have given to the budget in 2012 or 2013. So, in sum, you will continue to tithe to the budget (or give exactly what you have given to the budget) and additionally give this same amount spread across three years to the “All In” Campaign. If everyone does this, we will meet our goal. Not everyone can, and we realize that. Using this goal as a challenge, what can you do? Pray that God will give you a clear word—that’s all we ask.