

## I Love My Church

(Giving)

Acts 4:32-35

My Grandmother had an old trunk growing up and as a little kid I always imagined that it had treasure in it. I asked my Grandmother once if it had treasure in it and she said yes, but not the kind of treasure you are thinking about. She began to show me old family photos and quilts that had been handed down in the family. It was filled with things that were precious to her.

We hang on to these things because we hope they might mean something to the ones coming behind us. Regardless of the reason, it's being saved because it holds hope, promise, memories, and value for the future.

In our text today we see this played out by the early church and one very serious way we get to love our church.

(Read Text Acts 4:32-35)

When it comes to possessions, the early church knew how to help one another, to love one another. I wonder how long it took before someone decided they needed to hang on to some of their stuff? And I wonder if, when we start holding tightly to our bank accounts, sometimes this is what we sound like to God when we start talking about our money and our stuff.

(Play Nemo clip)

Here are some principles on Giving that will honor God with your money and stuff, no matter how little or how much you have.

### 1. Release your grip.

- Verse 32 our text says, "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.."

- Some might be tempted to say, “Well, they didn’t have a lot so it was easier for them to have a looser grip.” You don’t have to be rich to be selfish!! Remember Ananias and Sapphira- struck dead because they lied about how loose their grip was.
- This is not the place to make excuses for being seagulls. The truth is, it’s not ours. It never was. It’s God’s and we are the bank. He invests with us and hopes to see a good return on his investment. And he measures for that good return is how we love others with what we have.
- Let me show you the blessing of a loose grip. Luke 21:1. Jesus gives a lesson on how God evaluates giving. A person’s gift is not determined by the amount that he or she gives, but by the amount of sacrifice involved in the giving. God judges our works and ministry not by its size or influence or success, but by the amount of sincere dedication, sacrifice, faith and love involved. This widow is forever immortalized in the Bible as a blessed giver and she leads the way for all generations to come on how to give with a loose grip.
- This is a hard sermon for me to hear as it is for you. So release your grip!! Give over to the Lord what originated from him any way and trust him with your finances.

## 2. The second principle is, tighten your belt.

- Make room in your budget to help people. That’s exactly what the early church was doing. Verse 34,35 “There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostle’s feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.”
- The early church wasn’t keeping hope chests. They were not storing up for a rainy day. They were liquidating assets!!
  - I’m not saying that we sell off everything we own and move into the sanctuary!! I’m simply saying that if our lifestyle is getting in the way of us being generous with the people around us then we need to tighten up our belts just like the early church did.

- Let me bring it in focus for you. I'm talking about the single mother who's riding the bus because she can't afford to fix her car. The family who's dad lost his job and who might lose their home. The retiree who has to choose among his or her prescriptions because they can't afford all of them. Or the college student who may have to drop out because of lack of funds.
- See, I'm not talking about the homeless. We need to help them too, but the way we communicated love to our church is making sure we are not neglecting the needs of one another.
- And when we're able to finally peer past the fence, we need to be ready to act on what we see. And once we have loosened our grip and tightened our belts, then we have the opportunity to....

### 3. Give it all away.

- Once the early church ditched the seagull mentality, no one ever had need. Acts 34 "There were no needy persons among them." And what was the result of their generosity? People saw the testimony of the resurrected Jesus!!
- The people knew the truth of Jesus because of the way they took care of one another.
  - This message is awkward isn't it? We've spent centuries trying to get beyond the four walls of the church to impact the community, to become more than a holy huddle or a spiritual country club. And now it feels like this passage is saying we got it all wrong.
- But that's not what it's saying at all. I think what it's saying is simply this: In our passion to reach beyond our walls, we can forget to also reach within them.
  - Maybe you are here today and you have never given or you have never tithed because you haven't surrendered it to the Lord or maybe there are other areas of your life that you haven't surrendered that need to be

turned over to the Lord today. I want to give you an opportunity to do that today.

- (Alter time)
- Have everyone go back to their seats. So, lets do something courageous today. Pull out your wallet. I'm probably not selling my house or cars today. But in my wallet right now is \$50.00. It represents all that I have right this minute. (Have Sarah come up to the stage). Today we are going to take up a special offering for Sarah for her as she goes on her trip. What if we each gave what we have today?