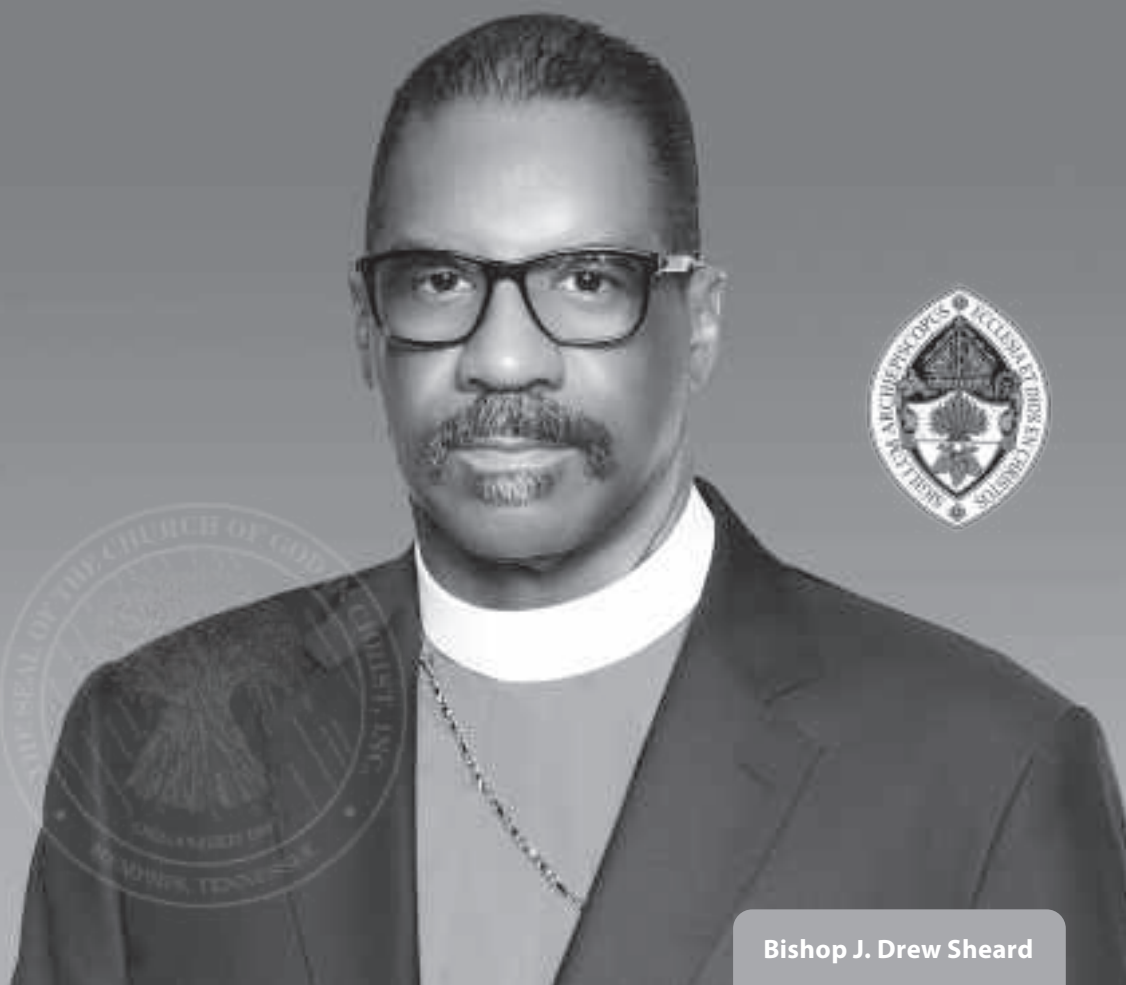


ADULT STUDENT QUARTERLY®



THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

PRESIDING BISHOP



Bishop J. Drew Sheard

“UNFINISHED BUSINESS”

*“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,
and to finish his work.” John 4:34, KJV*

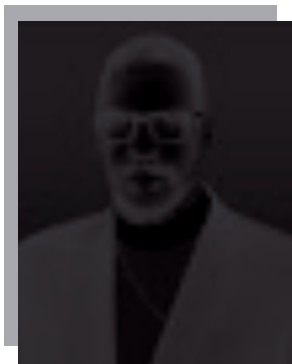
Evangelist Terri Hannett • Executive Director
Supervisor Barachias Irons • Chief Editor

**Church Of
God In Christ**
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THE VOICE OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP



Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In this time of rapid change, it is vitally important for blood washed individuals to actively participate in our churches and communities to assure our voices are heard and God is glorified.

We must remain “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”.

With that being said, I want you to know, we have “Unfinished Business” in upholding our Christian duties and engaging in constructive dialogue to address societal challenges and the continued advancement of the Kingdom of God.

The Power for Living curriculum is filled with scriptures that will encourage and motivate you to keep pressing your way in the things of the Lord.

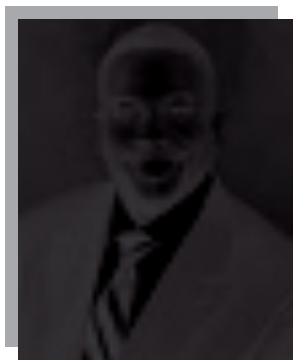
I encourage you to share the Word of God on every occasion and live so God can use you, anywhere and anytime.

Sincerely,

A black and white image of a handwritten signature, which appears to be "J. Drew Sheard", written in ink on a light background.

J. Drew Sheard,
Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle
Church Of God In Christ, Inc.

THE VOICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLISHING BOARD



Blessings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,

The fact that you are reading this letter indicates that God has blessed you to experience another year of His grace and mercy. We often transition from one season to the next and sometimes take for granted the privilege God affords us to see a new year, a new season, and a new day. Thank God for our now and our next!

Our Presiding Bishop has ushered us into a new season this year, realizing that our church has “Unfinished Business.”

In John 4:34, Jesus, speaking to disciples, said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” Here, Jesus reminds his disciples of the purpose of their mission and that both planting spiritual seeds and collecting the harvest are valuable. And God wants us to know that if we expect to reap a harvest, we must first scatter the seed of the Good News of Christ to a dying and depleted world.

Understand that the seed has no flaws because it is God’s Word. It holds much potential, but it can only be activated if it takes root in fertile soil. Our job as the church is to plant the seed of life into the heart of every person: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Once these seeds are planted, our churches will grow: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37).

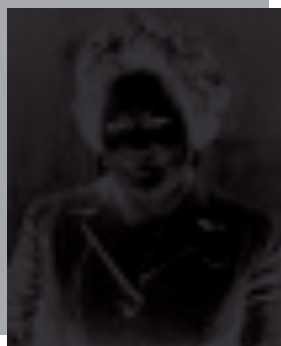
Sunday School is the foundational building block of our church. God’s seed is cultivated during school on Sunday so we can face the world on Monday. We have an obligation to spread God’s word so that His business may be accomplished here on earth.

I thank the thousands of loyal supporters of our literature who partner in God’s mission of sharing the Good News to the world. We have work to do! I want to personally thank you for answering the call so that lives may be changed and transformed.

We are also in a time of political change. So, I ask that you continue to pray for the unity of our country and pray for God to manifest Himself in our lives and our churches in a new way. I ask that the Lord shift the winds of grace and favor in our direction so that we can experience Him as we have never experienced Him before. Church, let’s do the work. We have unfinished business!

In His Service,
Bishop Uleses C. Henderson, Jr.
Chairman of the Publishing Board
Church Of God In Christ Inc.

THE VOICE OF MARKETING



Dear Saints,

Greetings in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! I pray this letter finds you in good health and strengthened by God's unchanging grace. As we approach another season of celebration and reflection, I am reminded of God's faithfulness and His call to us to remain steadfast in the work of the Kingdom.

The theme for this year, **"Unfinished Business,"** compels us to look inward and upward as we commit ourselves to fulfilling the divine mandate given to each of us. Jesus reminds us in John

4:34, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."* Just as our Savior found sustenance in obedience to God's purpose, so too must we press forward to complete the assignments He entrusted us.

In these challenging times, it is easy to grow weary or become distracted by the cares of life. Yet, the work of the Kingdom cannot wait. There are souls to save, broken hearts to mend, and communities to uplift. The business of love, justice, mercy, and evangelism remains unfinished, and God has chosen us—His Church—as vessels to carry out His will.

This is a clarion call to all of us:

- **To stay mission-minded** in advancing the Gospel.
- **To serve tirelessly** in our communities and congregations.
- **To build bridges of hope** where there is despair.
- **To finish the race** with the confidence that we have done the work He sent us to do.

Let us approach this season with renewed passion and unwavering faith. As we labor together, may we keep our eyes on the One who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

I encourage you, beloved saints, to recommit yourselves to the work God has placed in your hands. Whether in your local church, family, or community, know your labor is not in vain. The harvest is plentiful, and the time to finish the work is now.

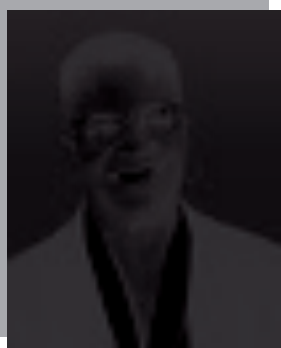
May the Holy Spirit empower us to persevere and complete the mission with joy and diligence. Thank you for your faithful service, your prayers, and your love for the body of Christ. Together, let us press forward, confident in the promise that He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion.

With great expectation for what God will do in and through us,

Yours in Christ,

Sandra S. Jones, B.S., MTh., PhD (c)
Chairman of Marketing (Board)
Senior Marketing/Sales Consultant
Church Of God In Christ Publishing House

THE VOICE OF THE CHIEF EDITOR



Dear Sunday School Student,

The Word of God, as stated in 1 Peter 3:15, admonishes believers to:

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

In a world plagued by war, poverty, political unrest, and crime, the message of 1 Peter remains as relevant today as it was when Peter wrote to the people of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. To be prepared to answer questions about our faith, we must diligently study the Word of God. The *Power for Living* curriculum of the Church Of God In Christ provides a structured and systematic way to delve deeply into Scripture, equipping us to share the truth with those seeking answers.

The twelve-month study for 2025–2026 will help us serve as conduits of kingdom work:

- **Fall Quarter:** We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in first-century believers, as recorded in the Book of Acts. The early Christians spent time together in fellowship, breaking bread, and boldly sharing their faith despite facing hostility. Their unity—having “all things in common” (Acts 2:44)—demonstrates the power of an unshakable commitment to God’s calling.
- **Winter Quarter:** This quarter focuses on the essence of worship. While sacred days and observances are important, true worship is revealed through how we engage with and love our brothers and sisters in Christ. As Scripture reminds us, we cannot love God and fail to love one another.
- **Spring Quarter:** Perhaps the most pivotal of all, this quarter centers on *living a life of faith*. Salvation is not something we can achieve on our own—it is *by grace through faith* (Ephesians 2:8). As we examine faith, we will recognize that our spiritual growth depends on its strength, for *without faith, it is impossible to please God* (Hebrews 11:6).
- **Summer Quarter:** This season will highlight the transformation that occurs when a believer becomes a new creation in Christ. Repentance and obedience are essential elements of the new life. A key question explored will be: *Why do people continue to do what they know is wrong?* Through this study, we will understand the necessity of dying to self and living a transformed life in Christ.

I pray that these lessons will help you grow in your walk with the Lord and equip you to “give an answer” to those who inquire about the hope within you—always responding with love and humility.

In His Service,

Barachias Irons, Chief Editor
Church Of God In Christ Publishing House
Supervisor, Angola First Jurisdiction

QUARTERLY QUIZ

The questions on this page may be used in several ways: as a pretest at the beginning of the quarter; as a review at the end of the quarter; or as a review after each lesson. The questions are based on the Scripture text of each lesson (King James Version).

LESSON 1

1. Why did the disciples ask God to perform signs and wonders (**Acts 4:29**)?

2. What sign did the Lord give that showed the disciples' prayer was honored (**v. 31**)?

LESSON 2

1. Define the word *lacked* in verse 34 and *consolation* in verse 36 (**Acts 4:34, 36**).

2. Name one reason some Christians do not share what they need to help others.

LESSON 3

1. How did Peter explain the apostles' disregard for the Sanhedrin's orders (**Acts 5:29**)?

2. Name the two men that Gamaliel gives as examples to the council for not touching the apostles (**vv. 36–37**).

LESSON 4

1. Stephen is described as what type of Jew in the Light on the Word section?

2. David wanted to build God a house of worship. Who did the Lord allow to build a temple (**Acts 7:47**)?

LESSON 5

1. What prompted the apostles Peter and John to visit Samaria (**Acts 8:14**)?

2. Which apostle preached about the Kingdom of God and Christ in **verse 12**?

LESSON 6

1. Did the Christian Jews initially believe or doubt Saul's testimony (**Acts 9:21**)?

2. Saul increased in strength, but in what city did he "confound" the Jews (**v. 22**)?

LESSON 7

1. Despite how this would appear to Jewish leaders, why did Peter agree to go to Cornelius' home (**Acts 10:28–29**)?

2. Who is Simon Peter staying with when he is summoned to visit Cornelius? Whose message is Cornelius waiting to hear (**vv. 32, 34**)?

LESSON 8

1. What is the significance of Peter refusing the Lord's direction three times during his vision (**Acts 11:10**)?

2. Why do you think Peter chose six other men to travel with him to Caesarea? Why do you think he was careful to point this out (**v. 12**)?

LESSON 9

1. How many squads and soldiers guarded Peter (**v. 6**)?

2. The church responded to Peter's imprisonment by doing what (**v. 5**)?

LESSON 10

1. "And God, which knoweth the _____, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no _____ between us and them, purifying their hearts by _____" (**Acts 15:8–9**).

2. Why was there great joy among the believers (**v. 3**)?

LESSON 11

1. Where was the prayer meeting held (**Acts 16:13**)?

2. Why do you think that Lydia needed to insist so strongly that Paul and his men stay at her home (**v. 15**)?

LESSON 12

1. Describe Paul and Silas' audience and who believed their truth of God's Word (**Acts 17:4**).

2. How did the Bereans respond to Paul's message (**vv. 11–12**)?

LESSON 13

1. Explain what *pressed* means in **Acts 18:5**.

2. Why did Paul shave his head in Cenchrea (**v. 18**)?

ADULT QUARTERLY

FALL QUARTER 2025

SEPTEMBER • OCTOBER • NOVEMBER

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PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

BIBLE BASIS: ACTS 4:23–31

BIBLE TRUTH: Prayer is a powerful weapon that God has given His people.

MEMORY VERSE: “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: **REVIEW** the apostles’ prayer for strength

to speak with boldness and to continue Jesus’ ministry while under political duress; **GAIN** insights into prayer as a means through which Christians can remain strong voices for change and effective ministries in their communities today; and **ASK** God in bold prayers to empower their mission and ministry.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Acts 4:1-31 & Matthew 6:9-15—Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

ACTS 4:23–31, KJV

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.



BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

A. Servants (Acts 4:29) *doulos* (Gk.)—Slave; someone devoted to another to the disregard of their own interests.

B. Boldness (v. 29) *parresia* (Gk.)—Free and fearless confidence; speaking frankly.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: Students will discuss how they share their various gifts and talents in various ways.

INTRODUCTION

The Power of God's Word

In Chapter 3, God uses Peter to heal a crippled man who sat at the temple gate daily begging for help. Once the man was healed, he began to dance and praise God to the amazement of those around him. Peter and John used this moment as an opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and explain how faith in Christ made the man whole. The priests, temple guard, and Sadducees were disturbed by Peter and John teaching the people about Jesus and His Resurrection, and threw them both in jail. As a result of Peter and John's message, the church added five thousand believers. The council was afraid of the people's reaction if they were to harm Peter and John, so they decided to bring them before the council and question them.

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the courage to speak and the words to say to the council. The council was amazed by the boldness and skillful use of Scripture by these ordinary men. Since they were not able to deny the miracle that had been performed, the council decided to try to stop the Gospel's spread by demanding that Peter and John stop preaching about Jesus and threatening them.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will know that the Holy Spirit will fill them to speak God's Word with boldness.

I. PREPARED FOR OPPOSITION (Acts 4:23)

In verse 23, Peter and John return to the believers and share all that the council did and said to them. Jesus had warned His followers of this very situation (**Luke 12:11–12**). Peter and John had experienced opposition because

of their commitment to the Gospel. They had healed a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus. This had confused the council members of the Sanhedrin because Peter and John were not religious teachers, but men of Galilee who healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, a man the council had condemned to death.

Peter and John reported to the fledgling church what the Sanhedrin told them. They were officially told to not speak or preach in the name of Jesus. It wasn't the healing that was so bad in the eyes of the Jewish leaders, but the Gospel message and the name of Jesus. The two apostles were beaten as an act of discipline to ensure the Sanhedrin's orders were followed. This beating was also probably used as an example to instill fear in their followers. Ultimately Peter and John rejoiced in their suffering, since they were suffering for Christ. It was the treasure of the Gospel message that inspired the prayers of the new church, and it should inspire our prayers as well.

Acts 4:23–31

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

The expression "their own company" (Gk. *idios, I-dee-os*), or "their own circle," denotes the Christian community. It suggests that after their release, Peter and John returned to "headquarters," perhaps the Upper Room of **Acts 1:13**, where members of the new community had no doubt been engaged in intercessory prayer for them. They reported their experience with the council. This report must have caused the early company fear. The persecution of leaders is a tactic that is often used to silence their followers.

II. GOD PREVAILS OVER OPPOSITION (vv. 24–28)

This portion of the lesson begins what is sometimes called the Believer's Prayer. These early believers quote **Psalms 2** in their prayer. This psalm, most likely a coronation psalm, is attributed to David. It describes the hostility

that accompanied the installation of a king. The king, God's servant, is a consecrated worshiper and the recipient of hostility from the Gentile nations. As the nations attempt to oppose or dethrone the king God has anointed, they are told it is all for nothing; their efforts will fail. These nations are not just opposing an earthly king, but God Himself.

The believers go on to describe the hostility that Jesus faced at the hands of these same leaders and how their treatment of Jesus did not derail God's divine plan. The Jewish leaders and Roman authorities had attempted to silence Jesus in death, but in vain—He rose from the dead. Now Jesus is crowned Lord of the universe due to His Resurrection and ascension to Heaven. The believers trust in the resurrected King who is sovereign over the authorities of this earth. Any attempt at opposing the spread of the Gospel message is a vain attempt. Just like the Gentile kings of **Psalm 2**, the Jewish leaders' opposition is in vain.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.

With one accord, they turned to God in prayer. The Greek word for "one accord" or "together" is *homothumadon* (**ho-mo-thoo-ma-DON**), which indicates that they were like one person in prayer. It is a combination of two Greek words meaning "together" and "passion." The disciples were all praying together with the same passion and ardor. It does not mean they all simultaneously said the same words. One of the leaders may have prayed accompanied by a responsive "amen" from the rest. It was more like an orchestra with the Holy Spirit as the conductor. There is power in a gathering of believers when they are in "one accord" (see **vv. 24–31**).

They addressed God as "Lord" or "Master" (Gk. *despotes*, **des-POE-tace**), a term denoting the sovereignty of God and His absolute control over all creation. The term is also used for

a slave owner or a ruler with unchallengeable power. In the disciples' prayer, the term certainly points to the fact that the authority of the council was subject to a higher authority still, and that the law of men cannot overturn the decrees of God (cf. **vv. 19–20**). The disciples filled their minds with thoughts of the sovereignty of God before stating their petition. The sovereign God is the God of creation. He made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them (cf. **17:24, 26**; see also **Nehemiah 9:6**; **Psalm 146:6**).

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

The sovereign Lord is the God of revelation. He had revealed to His servant David the opposition Christ would face from various groups. "Why did the heathen rage" is quoted from **Psalm 2:1–2**. **Psalm 2** originally referred to the accession of a Davidic king, the Lord's Anointed, and the revolt of His vassals. It was interpreted by the Jews and the early Christian church as a Messianic psalm (cf. **Acts 13:33**; **Hebrews 5:5**). In the psalm, the "heathen" (Gk. *ETH-nos*, people other than the Israelites) is paired with the "people" (Gk. *lah-OSE*, Israelites, the people of God). In other words, both God's people and those from outside resisted God's chosen leader. Here the community references the psalm to reveal the extent of Jesus' rejection as the Messiah. Once again, it is only a few from among God's people and from the Gentiles who accept God's chosen Messiah.

"The kings of the earth" (and "the rulers," who stood up against the Lord and His Christ, were represented by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of

Galilee and Peraea (**Luke 23:7**), Pontius Pilate, and even Herod the Great, who attempted to kill Jesus at the start of His time on earth. This shows that the sovereign Lord is the God of history. The Greek conjunction *gar* (**GAR**), which indicates a cause or reason proves the truth of the preceding prophecy by pointing to its historical fulfillment. Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel are clearly identified with the kings, the rulers, the nations, and the people of **Psalm 2:1–2** as quoted in **Acts 4:25**.

The expression “thy Holy child Jesus” explicitly identifies Jesus with the royal Son of God addressed in **Psalm 2:7**. Jesus is both the obedient Son and the One whom God anointed or made Messiah. Jesus, “whom thou hast anointed,” refers to the Holy Spirit’s identification of Him as Messiah at His baptism. The Holy Spirit’s resting on Jesus signaled His anointing or empowerment and the inauguration of His earthly ministry (cf. **10:38; Luke 3:21–22; 4:18–21; Isaiah 61:1**).

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

Who are the “kings of the earth”?

III. EMPOWERED FOR OPPOSITION (vv. 29–31)

At the end of the prayer, the believers appeal to God to give them greater boldness and empower them to perform greater works in Jesus’ name. They accept and embrace the fact that they will face opposition. David faced it. Jesus faced it. Their request is not for God to alleviate it or make a way for them to escape it. They are not concerned about themselves, but focused on the Gospel being heard, and they understand that the plan of God has a history of hostility from those who feel threatened by it. They seek God and ask to be empowered and strengthened so that they can continue to serve Him with boldness.

God responds to their request with a physical sign: the entire place shakes. This must have

confirmed and strengthened their faith. The disciples are then empowered with boldness to preach the name of Jesus. It is important to note that the power the apostles sought was so they could better serve God and others, while the power that the council sought was strictly for their own benefit. As we seek God for power, we need to have a proper understanding of what power is for. God empowers us to serve others and not ourselves.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word. 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The council’s threats were not a cause for fear and silence, but bolder speech. The apostles therefore prayed that they might have courage to proclaim the Word of God “with all boldness.” The Greek word for “boldness” (*parresia*, **pah-reh-SEE-a**) in this context refers to freedom in speaking and unreservedness of utterance. The disciples wanted to speak the message of the Gospel without fear. The word “servants” comes from the Greek word *doulos* (**DOO-las**), which means slave and contrasts with the majesty of “Lord” from **verse 24**.

The disciples’ next request is that God would place the seal of His public approval on their witness by granting further mighty works of healing and similar signs and wonders through the same name that had cured the lame man—the name of Jesus.

The term “hand,” most frequently used to refer to God’s act of punishment, here denotes His action in bringing blessing (cf. **Luke 5:13**). It was of course the apostles’ hands that were stretched out to heal, but, as in **Acts 3:16**, they attributed their power to God working through them as they restored men to wholeness in the name of Jesus.

The account here is reminiscent of the description of what happened on the Day of Pentecost, both in the external signs of the Spirit's coming and in the disciples' prayerful attitude when He comes. In answer to the disciples' united and earnest prayers, the place was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they proclaimed the Word of God boldly. They were encouraged to continue to proclaim the faith despite the council's threats.

The shaking (Gk. *saleuo*, **sal-EW-oh**) of the place where the disciples were symbolizes the presence of God (cf. **Exodus 19:18; Isaiah 6:4**). The assurance of divine favor and help came even as they prayed. An earthquake might be a cause for fear to some, but to those who see it as an answer to prayer, it is an encouragement. The verb "filled" followed by the verb "spoke" indicates the immediate and continuous action of the disciples. They were continuously proclaiming the Word of God with boldness.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 2

What scriptures gave you strength to boldly stand tall when you had no supporters to help?

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will know that followers of Christ will draw strength from Him as they seek God in prayer.

Many circumstances in life can challenge our faith and hinder our relationship with God. This is why we must stay ready and willing to pray for one another. In order for Christians to witness boldly, we must have uncompromising trust in God's plan in spite of opposition.

STUDENT'S RESPONSES

AIM: Believers will take comfort in knowing that God answers prayer.

Our ability to effect change is directly related to our prayer life, personal worship, and relationship with God. This is where we start. The

church in Acts began with prayer, but their prayer empowered them to go out into the community and do works for the benefit of others. Brainstorm some areas in which your community needs change. Pray as a class for God to empower you to serve. Ask God for boldness to step out and serve the community and watch Him move.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we pray for boldness to speak Your Word and live Your Word as we share the Christian faith with others. In the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Praying for One Another

Speak to any missionaries at home and abroad, and you will realize that organized opposition—comparable to that faced by Peter and the other apostles—still tries to hinder our fulfillment of the Great Commission. Powerful forces across the globe continue to gather together "against the Lord, and against his Christ." For this purpose, Crossworld, the international Christian missionary organization, has released ten model prayers to support mission workers. An article listing the prayers is on their website, as well as a PDF file of the "How to Pray for Missionaries" bookmark that can be downloaded. Crossworld also encourages people interested in world missions to subscribe to their email lists to get stories and prayer requests about missionaries in the field. With resources like these, we will sharpen the effectiveness of our intercessory skills. You can find the article "Prayer for Missionaries" on the Crossworld website (<https://crossworld.org/resources/prayer>); download it and meditate on it. Then, pray for the global mission team with newfound power and direction.

HOW TO SAY IT

Sanhedrin.	san- HEED -rin.
Sadducees.	sa-dyu- SEES .

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

Prayer of Humility (Matthew 6:9–15)

TUESDAY

Prayer of Gratitude (2 Chronicles 6:1–15)

WEDNESDAY

Open-Hearted Life (2 Corinthians 6:1–13)

THURSDAY

Greater Things Through Prayer (John 14:11–13)

FRIDAY

No One Else (Acts 4:1–12)

SATURDAY

No Other Authority (Acts 4:13–22)

SUNDAY

Praying for One Another (Acts 4:23–31)

PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read **Acts 4:34–5:10** and “Sharing All Things.”

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COMMENTS / NOTES:

SHARING ALL THINGS

BIBLE BASIS: ACTS 4:34–5:10

BIBLE TRUTH: The early followers of Jesus shared everything with one another, so there was not a needy person among them.

MEMORY VERSE: “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold” (Acts 4:34).

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: **UNDERSTAND** the sacrifices and rewards of the early Christians’ willingness to share their possessions with others; **EXAMINE** our motivation for making sacrificial offerings; and **DRAFT** a list of statements that would motivate others to contribute freely to a community project.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 4:32–5:11 & Isaiah 1:15–18 Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

ACTS 4:34–5:10, KJV

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own

power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

A. Lacked (Acts 4:34) *endeos* (Gk.)- To be in need, destitute.

B. Consolation (v. 36) *paraklesis* (Gk.)-help, encouragement, comfort.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: Students will appreciate that although there are exceptions, most people are glad to share what they have with those in need.

INTRODUCTION

The Spirit of Generosity

The generosity described in this lesson is a continuation of the giving described in **Acts 2:44–45**: “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” The Gospel message of Jesus’ extravagant love had a significant impact on the early church. The reality of Jesus’ tremendous sacrifice inspired them to sacrifice for the benefit of others. They were not comfortable seeing their brothers and sisters in Christ go without. This conviction led them to do more than just pray for their brothers and sisters; it prompted them to take personal action. In this lesson, we see that the spirit of generosity is still needed in the church.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will learn that some believers in the early church did not share with those in need and were punished.

I. UNRESERVED GENEROSITY (Acts 4:34–37)

In the Old Testament, we see that God is consistently concerned with the plight of those less fortunate. Israel was chastised many times because they had failed to take care of those unable to take care of themselves: widows, orphans, and the poor. God makes clear that Israel is responsible for taking care of one

another (**Deuteronomy 15:4**). He also commands Israel to bring all the tithes and offerings to the house of God so that there would be provision there (**Malachi 3:10**). This was so the poor would know that they could come to the Temple and find food.

As a response to the generosity Jesus showed them, the early church provided for all so that no one “lacked.” Their possessions and goods were shared in common and given to anyone who was in need. This was remarkable in first century Palestine, as most of the population lived in poverty. The early church provided the context to live out Jesus’ command to “sell your possessions and give to the poor” (**Matthew 19:21, Luke 12:33, NIV**). The community of the new covenant shared everything.

Acts 4:35–5:10

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Josus, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

The first phrase in this verse echoes the words of **Deuteronomy 15:4**: “There shall be no poor among you.” In this way, Luke (who wrote Acts to follow his Gospel) paints a picture of the early church as a new Israel. This would have appealed to those in the Jewish community, as they could see the church fulfilling the role of the ideal community in the age to come. This community was attractive to those Jews living in poverty at this time.

What is striking about the Christians’ sharing all their goods in common is that it was a voluntary practice. The iterative imperfect tense is used in **34b–35**. This tense indicates that the community members used to sell their property and share the wealth as a regular

practice. There is evidence that the Qumran communities near the Dead Sea around the time of Christ practiced the surrender of property. There is a similar generosity of spirit and on-going commitment to communal needs here in Acts.

Laying the money at the apostles' feet was an act of submission—not to the apostles as mere men, but to Christ. The twelve represented Christ on Earth. The act of the believers laying the money at their feet was symbolic of submitting their wealth to Christ. This was not worship of the apostles but a symbolic statement. The apostles actually turned over the responsibility of distributing the proceeds to the seven deacons once this duty distracted them from their main task of prayer and preaching the Word (**Acts 6:1–7**).

Barnabas' given name was Joses or Joseph. The apostles who spoke Aramaic nicknamed Joses "Barnabas," meaning "son of prophecy," from the Aramaic *bar* meaning "son of" and *nabu* meaning "prophecy." Some have given the nickname a slightly different meaning, translating it as "son of refreshment." Based on his intimate knowledge of the man, Luke translated the Aramaic into Greek as *huios parakleseos*, which is translated variously as "son of consolation/exhortation/encouragement." Parakleseos comes from the same root as the word Jesus used in His promise to send the Holy Spirit: "And I will pray to the Father and He will give you another Comforter [*parakletos*], that He may abide with you forever" (**John 14:16**). Luke uses these exact words to indicate that the Holy Spirit had distinguished Himself in Barnabas. It is interesting to note that the main function of prophecy (from which we get part of the compound of Barnabas' name) is to build up, encourage, and comfort (**1 Corinthians 14:3**). Whenever we see Barnabas in the pages of the New Testament, he is building up, encouraging, and comforting others to be their best for Jesus.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

What was Barnabas' birth name?

QUESTION 2

How can you exemplify some of the characteristics of Barnabas in your daily life?

II. Consequences of Deception (5:1–10)

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is puzzling. The generosity displayed by the early church was completely spontaneous. No one was commanded to sell their property and give the money to the apostles. People chose to do it because it was their heart's desire to make sure their brothers and sisters in Christ were well cared for. The field was Ananias and Sapphira's to do with as they pleased. It would stand to reason that if they decided to give the apostles part of the money and keep part of the money for themselves, that would have been perfectly acceptable.

What prompted them to lie to the apostles? Maybe they wanted to appear generous so they could become leaders in the church. Maybe they wanted to be seen giving a lot of money like the rich people in **Mark 12:41–43**. Whatever their reason, what happened to them serves as a strong reminder that the façade we put up to impress others is not able to stand in the presence of the Holy Spirit. God is a discernor of the heart, thoughts, and intents of people. It is impossible to lie to Him; He knows us and whether what we do is sincere or for show and appearance. God will reward us according to our intentions, so make sure that all that you do is done with a pure heart and not a hidden agenda.

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part

of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Nothing is known about Ananias and his wife Sapphira outside of their sin. It is a sad reminder that sometimes we may be known for all the bad we have done and not the good. The name Ananias means “one whom God has graciously given” and it stands in stark contrast to the stinginess of his actions in this narrative. His actions also stand in stark contrast to the actions of Barnabas, who gave all of the money from the sale of his land to the church. This was in direct contradiction of the work of faith being done in the hearts of those early believers. They truly believed everything was to be shared by all; apparently Ananias and his wife Sapphira did not.

Sapphira was named as an accomplice in this act of selfishness and dishonesty. The Bible does not say that she actually sold the land or kept back the proceeds. It does say that she had knowledge of what Ananias did. She is guilty because she knowingly went along with it. The word in the King James is “privy”

(Gk. *sunorao*, soon-ah -RAH-oh). It is a compound verb using the Greek words for “together with” and “to see or know.” She was not an innocent party but knew what was going on and considered it in her best interest to keep some of the money as well.

Peter as one of the apostles confronts Ananias. The Holy Spirit revealed Ananias’ sin to him. Two things come to mind as we look at Peter’s words of confrontation. First he says that Satan, not the Holy Spirit, had filled Ananias’ heart. The direct influence of Satan himself prompted Ananias to keep some of the money and lie to the apostles and the rest of the church.

Peter then goes right to the heart of the matter. The land was Ananias’ property before it was sold. The money was his when he sold the land. It made no sense to lie to the church. Ultimately Ananias did not lie to the church, but to God. He had broken the trust of the community through his selfish and deceptive act. The word for “kept back” can also mean “to pilfer or embezzle.” Once Ananias pledged to give the proceeds to the church, it was the Lord’s property; to keep some was embezzlement. His act was a sin not just against the community but against God. The word for “conceived” (Gk. *tithemi*, TI-thay-mee) also means “set” or “appointed” and indicates the premeditation on the part of Ananias. This was not a knee-jerk reaction, but a planned scheme to deceive the church.

Immediately Ananias is judged, convicted, and executed. We do not know what caused Ananias’ death. One thing we know for sure is that this judgment was God’s judgment. Immediately the result is that “great fear came upon all who heard it”—not an ordinary fear but a “great fear.” Here we see the effect of Ananias’ death and the possible reason for Luke including this incident in the narrative. Luke wanted to show the hand of God in forming the community and protecting its purity.

For the young men to immediately wrap him up and carry him out without ceremony

showed that this was divine judgment. In first century Palestine, only the burials of criminals and those who committed suicide were done with this much urgency. The young men were back within a matter of three hours.

Next, Peter confronts Sapphira. She had walked in not knowing what had happened. Luke does not state where this meeting took place and who was present. All he wants the reader to focus on is the seriousness of the couple's deception. Peter questions her on the price of the sale. It doesn't state how much it was and whether it was for good reason—any amount was enough to warrant the judgment of the Lord. Peter in his question gives Sapphira a chance to repent of her wrongdoing. To her demise, she does not repent but continues with the lie.

Peter's reaction is similar to what he said to Ananias: It was not to men that she had lied, but to God. Ananias and Sapphira had both agreed (Gk. *sumphoneo*, **sum-foe-NEH-oh**), which literally means to "sound together" indicating they both were on one accord, indicating their planning to lie to the community. This was not a mere reaction, but a formulated, well thought out plan to deceive the community. Peter then lets Sapphira know she will meet the same fate as her husband.

Sapphira fell down dead in the same way her husband did. The same young men who had carried Ananias out to be buried also carried her out. They were together in their sin, and now they lay together in death. It is interesting to note that Luke mentions the sin and fate of Sapphira as well as her husband. Throughout the books of Luke and Acts, women are given an equal amount of attention as men. It is the same in this case, although Sapphira's actions are far from praiseworthy. Still, it shows Luke's focus on the value of women as equal agents and recipients in God's economy.

Again we hear that "a great fear" comes on not only the whole church, but also everyone who heard about these things. Here we see Luke writing not only from a spiritual perspective,

but also as an apologist for the church. He is showing his audience that the early church community was the real thing. It was in fact God's community empowered by the Spirit and tasked to continue the ministry of the crucified and resurrected Messiah.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 3

Was Ananias free to do what he wanted to do with the money after selling his land?

QUESTION 4

How can the story of Ananias and Sapphira affect your decisions about paying tithes and filing your income taxes?

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will know that believers in Christ are responsible to care for others.

Today it seems like people are quick to cast the church and Christians in a negative light. Pastors of large congregations are criticized for their congregations being too large. Pastors of small congregations are criticized for their congregations not growing. This is all the more reason for us to make sure that we are sincere in all that we do. Engaging in pointless arguments will not do anything to advance the cause of Christianity. However, displays of sincere compassion, generosity, and concern will silence any critic.

STUDENT'S RESPONSES

AIM: Students will understand that believers should have the right intentions when caring for those in need.

We at times get stuck thinking that making periodic contributions to the "Benevolence Fund" is all that we need to do in terms of helping others. While making contributions is a great thing, this lesson emphasizes the whole community's responsibility to care for all those in need. Together with the class, plan a project in which you can pool your resources together to sacrificially help someone in need.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, help us to be honest with You, ourselves, and others. Let us not create stories and lies that cause pain, problems, and even death. As we accept the purity of Your love and goodness, we will create hearts that are acceptable unto You. In the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Sharing All Things

Encouraging generosity in the local church, like that illustrated in our lesson text, is a motivation for studying passages like this. We also learn a lot about the value of generosity from Paul's discourse in 2 Corinthians 8–9. The apostle's observation that "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7) is the popular exhortation for us to happily respond to the love God has already shown us in Christ. But, as we closely examine the two chapters in 2 Corinthians, we observe how the apostle employed several motivational techniques simultaneously.

Paul highlighted the sacrificial giving of the churches in Macedonia to inspire the Corinthians to follow their example (2 Cor. 8:1–5). He also reminded them of the pledges they had already made and counseled them to strive to keep their promises (2 Cor. 8:6,10,11). Paul emphasized that giving was as much an area of accomplishment as demonstrations of faith, speaking gifts, knowledge, and zeal in the church—it is a grace in which to excel (2 Cor. 8:7). He also explained that giving should be born of their love for him and his leadership (2 Cor. 8:7b). Moreover, as a test of the sincerity of their love, he would not force their compliance (2 Cor. 8:8). Paul outlined a principle that we should give in proportion to what we have (2 Cor. 8:12). We should be more generous when we have a surplus so as to make up for others' lack. At some point, they may have more to contribute when we ourselves are short (2 Cor. 8:14,15).

Paul even seemed willing to use embarrassment as a stick. After explaining how beloved Titus would be accompanying a couple of officials chosen to carry the offering to Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:16–23), he professed to be confident that they would live up to all he had boasted about them (2 Cor. 8:24). Paul indicated he would soon visit them, along with some of the Macedonians mentioned above. The apostle then reminds the Corinthians that their reputation for generosity had been the inspiration for the Macedonians to give so liberally (2 Cor. 9:2); if the Macedonians found that the Corinthians didn't honor their pledges, it would be shameful for everyone involved.

Another principle Paul shared was that we must sow generously to reap generously. God, who is ultimately responsible for all our bountifulness, "will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest" (2 Cor. 9:10, NLT). Moreover, when we share our gifts with the needy, they will thank God for us (2 Cor. 9:12). "They will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you" (2 Cor. 9:14, NLT). So, we are blessed by God for our generosity and then doubly blessed by the intercession of those to whom we gave. Take the time to examine this passage for yourself!

HOW TO SAY IT

Privy.	PRI-vee.
Cyprus.	SAI-pris.

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

Rescuing the Weak
(Psalm 82)

TUESDAY

Living Blamelessly
(Psalm 26)

WEDNESDAY

Sharing Generously
(1 Timothy 5:11–19)

THURSDAY

Sharing with All
(Isaiah 1:15–18)

FRIDAY

Sharing Troubles
(Philippians 4:1–14)

SATURDAY

Sharing Out of Abundance
(Luke 3:10–16)

SUNDAY

Sharing All Things
(Acts 4:34–5:10)

PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read Acts 5:27–29, 33–42 and “Witnessing to the Truth.”

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COMMENTS / NOTES: