

The Holy Spirit Gives Ordinary Christians New Hearts

Lesson 02 of the series: "Marvels of Acts"

I. The Holy Spirit transformed thousands of ordinary people from all over the world into a selfless, generous, and unified church by giving the believers new hearts.

"At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem... Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter replied, 'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' ... Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all." Acts 2:5,37-38,41 (NLT)

"All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means 'Son of Encouragement'). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles." Acts 4:32-37 (NLT)

Note: We all need new hearts.

"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?"
Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT)

"Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me." Psalm 51:7-10 (NLT)

Life Application: We must surrender our lives to Jesus so the Holy Spirit can change us from the inside out.

"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT)

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

II. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and suffered terrible consequences.

"But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. Then Peter said, 'Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!' As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, 'Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?' 'Yes,' she replied, 'that was the price.' And Peter said, 'How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too.' Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened." Acts 5:1-11 (NLT)

Life Application: We must never try to fool God by keeping up appearances.

"People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7b (NLT)

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness."
Matthew 23:27-28 (NLT)

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked." Galatians 6:7a (NIV)

"And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live." Ephesians 4:30a (NLT)

Note: Generosity in the church must always be voluntary and from the heart.

“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’” 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT) (see also Proverbs 22:8)

III. The Holy Spirit worked powerfully through the believers whose hearts were fully devoted to God.

“The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.” Acts 5:12-14 (NIV)

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” 2 Chronicles 16:9 (NLT)

Life Application: We must pray that the light of the gospel will shine out through our changed hearts.

“Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. You see, we don’t go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Let there be light in the darkness,’ has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”

2 Corinthians 4:4-7 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions.

1. Describe the most authentic Christian you know. What makes his/her faith so genuine?
2. Read Acts 4:32-37. What do you think it means when the Bible says the believers in Jerusalem were “all of one heart and mind?” How was this possible?
3. What is the most generous thing you’ve ever seen anyone do for someone else? What was his/her motivation?
4. What can we learn from the following passages about our hearts?
 - Jeremiah 17:9-10
 - Psalm 51:7-10
 - Ezekiel 36:26-27
 - 1 Samuel 16:7
 - Matthew 23:27-28

Which one of these passages speaks the loudest to you? Why?

5. Read Acts 5:1-11. Why do you think God punished Ananias and Sapphira so severely? How did they lie to the Holy Spirit?
6. Discuss 2 Corinthians 9:7. “You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’” What’s wrong with a pastor putting a little pressure on his church to give?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4-7. Would you say “the light of Christ” is shining in your heart today? If not, what’s blocking it?

Discuss the following quotations:

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.” Jesus in John 17

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.” C. S. Lewis

“Sin is more dangerous than wild bears, more deadly than blazing forest fires. Ask Nebuchadnezzar, who lost his mind because he refused to deal with his pride. Ask Samson, who was reduced to a pathetic shred of a man because he never got control over the lusts of his flesh. Ask Achan and Ananias and Sapphira, who all lost their lives over ‘small,’ secret sins.” Nancy Leigh Demoss