

**Conversations on
 Acts 4:32–35**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the scene at the end of *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946; G) where George goes to the bridge looking for Clarence. Discuss: In what way did the community come together to help George? How is that like the early church community in Acts?

WHAT is important to know?

Verses 32 and 34–35 provide the literary frame for the reading. Verse 33, which stands at the center, provides its gospel. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the “great power” behind the signs and wonders that the community has witnessed. It is this power that births the church and defines its mission. The imperative of this mission is not only to *proclaim* the resurrection gospel but also to *embody* its truth by caring for one another in ways that secure the fullness of life God intends. (*Samuel E. Balentine*)

- ✧ The term *gospel* is a translation of the Greek word for “good news.” What is the good news that you find in verse 33?
- ✧ Think of verse 33 as a picture and verses 32 and 34–35 as its frame. How does this frame complement this picture? How does this frame distract from this picture?

WHERE is God in these words?

The holiness of this small sect is clearly displayed in their sharing of possessions, so that “there was not a needy person among them” (v. 34). The root concept of holiness is that of being set apart for God’s use. Here the holiness of the church is made manifest in their attitudes toward the goods of this world. In their use of the goods of this world, the early disciples display the lordship of Christ and provide further witness to his resurrection. By giving Christ lordship over their wealth, early disciples are providing yet one more living sermon to the world. (*Alan G. Padgett*)

- ✧ God is not named in the Acts passage, but Padgett (above) draws a sense of holiness from how this group lived together. How would you describe the holiness of this group of early believers?
- ✧ What is the “living sermon” the disciples are preaching to us? How do you respond to this sermon?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Even leaving aside the remarkable willingness to give up private ownership and share with others in need, the vision

of a faith community being “of one heart and soul” (v. 32) stretches our credulity beyond the breaking point. It would be all too easy to dismiss a passage such as this, or even to use it to critique the tendency to romanticize a bygone era, rather than deal with the hard realities of our contemporary situation. But doing so would be to overlook the potential of this text to make us think deeply about the effects Jesus’ resurrection might actually have on our lives. (*Cynthia M. Campbell*)

- ✧ If you wanted to reject or dismiss this passage, what reasons would you give? How might the disciples respond to your line of reasoning?
- ✧ What are some hard realities we face in today’s society? What does this text have to say about these realities?
- ✧ Are you aware of Jesus’ resurrection having an effect on you? If so, how does it influence your daily life?
- ✧ When we’re living in difficult financial times, is it wise to give Christ lordship over our wealth? Why or why not?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

At the beginning of Acts 4 we read that the community of believers had grown to about five thousand members. Yet, those people were of “one heart and soul” (v. 32). How else could that have happened except through the unifying power and reconciling peace of the Holy Spirit? And that is what we need in the Christian church today—to receive God’s gift of unity in the midst of our diversity. The Lord calls us to identify and reconcile ourselves not only with other Christians, but also with all of God’s human family on earth. United we stand—divided we fall. (*George Bryant Wirth*)

- ✧ When have you been part of a group that was of “one heart and soul”? What united this group? What sustained the unity of the group?
- ✧ We often think of the differences that divide groups of Christians. What do all Christians hold in common? What makes these commonalities significant?
- ✧ What would it look like if Christians in your community were truly unified? What might you accomplish?

Thank God for the gift of Christian community.