



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

Acts 4:32-37 ESV

They Had Everything in Common

³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. ³⁶ Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷ sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

[INTRODUCTION]

Pictures have become the way we record history now in the modern era, it is as if there is not a picture that corresponds with an event, we won't believe it as modern people. Ever since the turn of the century pictures and videos have accompanied the developments of the day. Every generation since has developed its' own way of capturing its' own place in the historical record.

From news reels played in the local theater in the 30s-50s to the war correspondents during Vietnam and the Cold War era, to the birth of cheap home cameras with disposable flash cubes to the awesome polaroid and 8mm home movies, to the period of scrapbooking up to the crazy fad of selfies, every generation wants to record what it was like in their day.

This is what makes the Bible so special, it not only records God's story but before there were ever cameras God was careful to capture pictures for us that were meant to make us see how it was in that day. The book of Acts is such a story, it is a Narrative, and it functions as the ancient world's **film coverage** of what the early church was like. In today's passage the story pans out and if you were watching this play out on your device this is where you want to grab this image because of its' beauty.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

SO, we are calling today's sermon **SCREENSHOT**, *that's how we take our polaroid in today's world*. Something grabs your attention; something strikes you as beautiful or interesting you screenshot it; you want to capture that moment, so you don't lose it. This passage is a brief hiatus before the storm, it is the dark red beautiful dawn of what could be, what will be in eternity, before the storm hits, it makes you want to capture the moment.

[RECAP – here's what has transpired to set the pic up]

It is at this point in the story that the church has withstood its' first test. The Devil and the forces of darkness had gone after the Apostles and the first converts by **direct assault/external threat**. They had gotten the whole Jewish government to rise up, arrest them, put them on trial in their version of the supreme court, and had charged them not to speak in the name of **JESUS!** Of which Peter, gets a second chance faced with the challenge of standing before the same men that murdered His Lord, and instead of denying Christ, makes this **BOLD** declaration by the power of God's Spirit:

Acts 4:19-20 ESV

¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we **cannot but speak** of what we have seen and heard."

It was through this confrontation that the Apostles and the church decided that what was the most important thing to do was to **SPEAK** the Gospel, to be **BOLD**, to proclaim Christ even if the government tells you not to, and then to **TRUST in Christ's Reign as Sovereign Lord**. Bill challenged us last week with the reality that this is how we should be living in 2023 - will we rejoice in Jesus's Reign or not, will we give into the negativity in the world, or will we spend our time **ENCOURAGING** one another this year to keep Speaking and to do it Boldly for Christ!?

They left that encounter committed more than ever to Speak and because of their group decision to continue with the Gospel proclamation, God rewarded them with and even fuller expression of His presence:



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

Acts 4:31 ESV

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

It is at this very moment that Luke takes a **SCREENSHOT** for us, before the next challenge hits them, and you will see that next week. Except next time the Devil has regrouped and instead of hitting them from as an external threat he begins the attack from the inside.

Luke takes this picture so we could know what it was like to have people who love Jesus, people who had been brought together from different cultural backgrounds, people that had been affected by the Gospel, people that had been filled with the HS. This screenshot is one of the most important pictures in all of history for it shows how Jesus makes a people for Himself and gives them **COMMONALITY** and what that commonality generates is the opportunity to achieve great things! It is the actual picture of the fulfillment of **Eph. 1:10** – “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

[WHAT IS COMMONALITY]

You see commonality is what makes multiple people into a single unit, it is what makes individuals into a team.

- Commonality against evil is what united the Allied powers against Totalitarian Regimes.
- Commonality for civil rights is what opened the door for all ethnicities to be treated equal.
- Commonality for the life of the unborn is what got Roe vs Wade struck down and is now opening doors to end the murder of the unborn.

The great sport teams that win have it, the fortune 500 companies spend a lot of \$ building it, and the political parties within the government fight to get it. The world knows that commonality is the power **behind movements**, the power that **creates change**, the power to **disrupt the status quo**.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

Because of this we are going to take time to stare at this photo, take it all in, to make sure that we understand what it means, for just like the first century church we are in for a fight as well.

This Commonality was what preserved the church through the decades that we will cover in the book of Acts, and it is this same commonality that will preserve the church today. Today we will learn where this commonality **DERIVED** from, how it is **DEVELOPED**, and what it looks like **DEPLOYED**.

1. Commonality is DERIVED by HS Regeneration.

³² Now the full number of those who **believed** were of one **heart** and **soul**, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

This scene, all of those within the frame of the pic, are **all believers**. That's where the power in the church starts. They believed in Christ, believed they were sinners, believed He died for them, and believed He was alive reigning as their king. But unfortunately, this is not the story for many churches today because this is not where their efforts go to build **commonality**.

When many church staffs have jumped on and put their hope in leadership pipeline development tools, when search committees spend their time finding pastors with more education than integrity, when budgets are spent more on the newest attractions and events, Luke captures in his picture what makes the church successful – the **full amount** of the **Converted**.

The Church full of the **Converted** will have a lot of **Commonality**.

AND commonality in the Gospel is what breeds power in the church! You can spend a lot of time incorporating worldly business practices into the life of the church and a church may gain money, popularity, and attendees but a healthy church that alone cannot make. What makes a healthy and growing church is when it is full of people that have been changed by the Gospel!



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

- “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart” - Acts 2:37
- “And awe came upon every soul” - Acts 2:43
- “And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” - Acts 3:10
- “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness” - Acts 4:29

The Gospel had called at least 10,000 people by this point in time all had been cut to the heart about their sin (2:37), and they had been overcome by the fact that God would provide a sign of His presence by miracles (2:43; 3:10), and they had received the boldness to proclaim God themselves (4:29). These are truly regenerate people. And these shared experiences have made the strong common bond among them to the point that it had reshaped their desires and had given them a new source for life.

³²...were of one **heart** and **soul**

One heart and soul, it is the picture of the body, the church, that is being kept alive by one source; a heart made alive by Jesus. This group has a collective soul that has one purpose for living, one desire. The heart is what sustains life, and the soul gives that force direction: **They were going to be bold for Jesus even if it killed them.** Because they had this singular focus, they no longer viewed personal items as something to be treasured but were seeking to employ all they had to free their fellow members to pursue Christ for the longing of their soul.

³²...and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

Truly converted people are caring people, they are sacrificial people, they are **generous** people. This type of generosity is easy to see, easy to comprehend, but difficult to apply. These people cared enough about each other, for they saw in each other's eyes a desire to live for God, they made themselves busy about freeing each other up from the enslavements of the world.

Ministry is empowered by the people of the church, those that are **truly converted** because the **truly converted give sacrificially** to the work of God. The principle of the tithe was just a starting point for these folks, it had taught them how they are to be with their money, all of it belonged to God and all of it was to be employed so that they all may have a chance to live for Jesus.

There are those that believe this is what old school socialism looks like in the 1st century, with the redistribution of wealth to establish true equity. **BUT** Verse 35 tells us it wasn't a redistribution of wealth, but that help went to those in need. So, what we have is thousands of new converts, possibly 10,000 people, of which up to half or even maybe the majority were from out of town, of different cultures, from the day of Pentecost making them Jews. These Jews had stayed in Jerusalem, that means relocating homes, families, and businesses, they didn't receive the relocation stipend as some of us have.

Then on top of that because of the practices of the day some of them, both the Jews from Jerusalem and the ones from neighboring lands, they were enslaved to masters because of debt. So, we have a mass of people that had the commonality of the gospel and people gave to the body **to give freedom to live out their calling with a new family – practicing Kinsman Redeemership**. Jesus taught that one cannot serve God and money (Mat. 6:24) and people were using any means necessary to free people so they may have only one master.

He had also taught that He didn't come to bring peace among family members, *"For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."* (Mat. 10:34-15). It means some of these converts would have been cut off from



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

family, cut off from a means of making a living, cut off from inheritances, and cut off from temple life itself.

We need to take notice that the Gospel calls us to be **free from worldly entanglements** and it also calls us **to help those trying to escape it.**

Want to have a better Year in 2023, practice radical generosity, practice radical giving, and demonstrate commonality by living out of your regenerated heart.

- Perhaps that means you do need to start giving to the church more this year because converted people share the **common trait of generosity.**
- Perhaps that means you need to be generous with hospitality more this year and open your house to people in this church because converted people share the **common trait of community.**
- Perhaps you don't have a lot of material things to give but what is it that you have that can help people get out of bondage to this world, because converted people share the trait of speaking **boldly to one another.**

A church full of converted people will be a church fully committed to helping one another break free from the world and helping one another pursue Christ.

2. Commonality is DEVELOPED by Apostolic Teachings.

³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Commonality was developed by the Commonality of the teaching of the Apostles, that all agreed about the Truth's about Jesus' Resurrection. You see agreeing about the resurrection of Jesus means:

- They would have agreed about His deity and the power He had.
- They would have agreed with Jesus' claims on being the Son of God.
- They would have agreed to agree with the necessity of Him having to be raised from the dead because He had lived a perfect life, because His life was unjustly taken from Him, because death would have to give Him up.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

Agreeing that Jesus was resurrected and making it the basis of their teaching meant they **accepted everything Jesus taught about Himself as truth.**

There was a summary or a **CREED** produced by the early church that summarized what the Apostle's taught, about Christ. *The earliest written form of this creed is found in a letter that Marcellus of Ancyra wrote in Greek to Julius, the bishop of Rome, about AD 341.*¹ It gives the summation of the Apostle's teaching, which became the calling card of the Christian church which was necessary to **Develop the Commonality** in all churches. Every church, in order to be called a church, had to believe these things:

The Apostle's Creed²

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,

¹ https://www.logos.com/grow/the-apostles-creed-its-history-and-origins/?campaignid=18467614031&adgroupid=142254639065&keyword=&device=c&utm_source=google&utm_medium=advertising_cpc&utm_campaign=google_search-keyword_dsa_logos_us_en&gclid=Cj0KCQiAzeSdBhC4ARIsACj36uFAex7L5znVUc5gBJHyAYuYzNyGX0pWJKETTxEJiRRD4gUwgRX4yqYaAoVjEALw_wcB

² <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/apostles-creed>



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

First, right off the bat, from this early Creed there is given a way to distinguish between what is a church and what is merely a copy, and that is the belief in the Trinity. There are present today places that believe they are a church and yet they do not hold to the Apostle's Creed of a Trinitarian God: Mormonism – Latter Day Saints
Jehovah's Witnesses
Christian Science
Oneness Pentecostals
Scientology

To develop commonality in the church, to have power in our ministries we first have to believe the essentials and that is God is a Trinitarian God.

Secondly, we build on these beliefs by embracing all that the scripture teaches, for the Apostle's Creeds **connects the OT with the NT**. The Necessity of the OT is paramount to **Develop Commonality**. There are some churches even here in Atlanta that believe that the OT is not necessary to preach and teach in the modern church and that it becomes a hindrance for people coming to faith in Jesus. To develop a commonality that strengthens and makes strong bonds in the body the church needs to feast upon the full diet of all of scripture to understand it's history, to understand why God had to send His Son, to understand the ways in which His covenants save us, to understand where depravity comes from, to understand why Salvation comes from faith and not works.

Thirdly, let me just say it is also important not to get hung up on arguments that keep us from fellowshiping with each other and other like-minded churches. We will have disagreements over mode of Baptism, over eschatological positions, over parenting/educational styles. And yes, those things do need to be talked about, but they cannot take the place of the Apostle's teachings. **You could spend a lifetime teaching on the elements of the Apostle's Creed and never come to the end of the need of the church having to have those truths preached over and over again.** Let's put it this



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

way, our Sunday Morning preaching times don't need to be wasted on Speculative teachings on Christ's return and His ordinances, BUT it is ok to enjoy the occasional debate among friends and to ensure that it is communicated internally for the sake of unity and membership.

To Develop Commonality, to increase our Generosity, to Cultivate a strong base of Converted Membership, we need to spend more time on the Apostle's Teachings. More time on their teachings, more time reading books that teach the right things about their teachings, while keeping our debates on secondary issues where the need to be, on the side-lines.

3. Commonality is DEPLOYED by Faithful Obedience.

Lastly, I want us to look at the example given here of a person that was strengthened by the commonality, he added to it, and then he was deployed from out of it. You and I should look at this example and not be afraid to say, *this could be me!*

³⁶ Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷ sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

I thought it was neat after we talked about last week our theme for the year was to be encouragers, look at what Barnabas' new name means, "**son of encouragement**". Barnabas was one of Luke's favorite people, he is mentioned 23 times in the book of Acts, and in each encounter, he is noted to have portrayed another attribute of Christ, he did something else that got his story written in the book of Acts, or we can say Luke took his historical picture so we know what Barnabas looked like (see page 72).

All of these things, demonstrate how he loved Jesus more than his stuff and what this world had to offer. He had walked out on his duties as a Levite representing a man dedicated to the service of Judaism and through this faithful church he was deployed for a life of **Faithful Obedience to Christ** (like leaving Catholicism).



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 15 Screenshot
By Pastor Jody May 01/08/2023**

I knew such a guy...

[CHALLENGE + APPLICATION]

Today family, for those in here that would call yourself one of the converted how about test that with an emphasis on generosity this year, help those around you break away from the chains in this world.

Having a problem with that, how about spend some time building on the Apostle's teachings and develop your picture of Christ.

Then seek to serve others in this church, and serve your community as well, and see how many good and positive names you can develop for yourself before the good Lord calls you home.

And together let's work on having all things in common, and enjoy our lives as we speak boldly for Christ our King.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has made commonality possible through establishing the plan that would bring the birth of His son's church.

Go in the name of the Son, that made it possible to have all things in common through the sacrifice of His life bringing us into His family.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that enables our generosity, makes clear the Apostle's teachings, and deploys us in service of the Kingdom.