

SERIES: "i Worldview"  
"i-Give" - Acts 4:32

The past two weeks we've been talking about iPods. Ever since Apple Computers began marketing these miniature music machines in 2001 they've been a popular item with both adults and kids alike. iPods have been marketed in various shapes and sizes and colors, and there are all kinds of different accessories have been developed to make them even more desirable. Different styles of earbud (ear phones) cradles for them to set in so that you can play your music through hi-fidelity speakers. I've even seen a flotation device that holds your iPod and external speakers so that you can listen to your favorite music in the pool.

But the ultimate in iPod extras has got to be something called the iDiamond. Designed by Heyerdahl Jewelers out of Norway:

- The case is made of 18 karat white and pink gold and is embedded with 312 diamonds.
- The earbuds (also made of 18 karate white & pink gold) has 118 diamonds.
- Cost of this item - \$50,000.
- Now if you just wanted the earbuds... you could get them for a mere \$8,000.

Now you might ask – who would buy such a thing? I don't know. I haven't a clue. But somebody will! This is a one-of-a-kind accessory, and somebody with a lot of money will want it! Now as I was thinking about that it occurred to me that that's the way it is with many things in our lives. I don't want this I-Diamond toy... so it wouldn't matter how much it costs – I wouldn't buy it. BUT if there's something I DO want... I'll find a way to get the money to purchase it.

- If I need a new car – I'll find the money somehow.
- Need to buy a house – I'll find the money.
- Want to go on a cruise or a trip badly enough – I'll find a way to get it done.

It just depends on how badly I want that SOMETHING. If you want something badly enough... you'll find a way to get it.

Now, that brings me to today's text.

Acts 4:31 tells us "...the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." Then - right after this incident we're introduced to another problem the church faced.

When the church began back at Pentecost, this was a big feast day for the Jewish people. The law required that God's people return to Jerusalem from wherever they were living. And some of them lived several days journey away. Some in Africa, Italy, Greece and other far-flung nations. But once Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost, some 3000 men repented of their sins and were baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Now all these people were part of an exciting body of believers... and nobody wanted to go home.

They don't have jobs. They don't have permanent homes. And, if they're going to stay... they'll need help. They'll need money. So, the early church met their need. Acts 4:34-35 says "... from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sale, and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

The rich surrendered their wealth to the poor. They held all things in COMMON because they WANTED to. It wasn't imposed upon them by the church.

That's what we find in Acts 5 where we read the story about Ananias and Sapphira. This early church couple saw that others were selling their land and receiving great honor. They wanted to cash in on that excitement, so they sold some of their land as well... and gave only a portion to the church to use for the poor.

But notice what it says in Acts 5:4, Peter rebukes Ananias for what they'd done. "Didn't (the land) belong to you before it was sold?" (you didn't have to sell it). "And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?" ( you didn't have to give any of it to the church). "What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

In other words, Ananias and Sapphira sinned against God not because they gave only a portion of the sale of their land. No, they sinned because they lied about their donation in order to manipulate the church into giving them the praise everyone else got.

This is what I'm seeing here: 1st the early church gave themselves to God.

The next thing I noticed in this passage was that the early church gave themselves to prayer.

And then... right after they prayed we're told: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had." Acts 4:32

Prayer came before giving. And I think their prayerfulness led to their giving hearts. But, why would that be? Well, too many Christians forget to include God in their plans. They do good things, but they don't often talk to God about what they're going to do. They don't really mean to do that, but it happens. Giving to the poor is a good work. And when WE do that good work, we accomplish what we can do. But when we pray before we do good works, we accomplish what God can do through us.

So let's review. The early church gave themselves: First to God, then to prayer, and then, they gave themselves to each other. And they gave to the church to help the poor because they wanted to take care of the poor among them so badly... they found a way to get it done.

CLOSE: You remember that iDiamond we talked about. Estimated value \$45,000. And you know... they didn't sell it. (pause) They auctioned it. And they gave the proceeds – ALL \$45,000 – to charity. But the money didn't go to the poor... it went to "The Soil Association". A group dedicated to organic food and farming. Now, I've got nothing against organic food and farming but it's significance pales in comparison to the value of God's people giving to take care of the poor and the needy in their midst.