

# SENT Sermon Study Guide

## Acts of Thanksgiving – Acts 5-7

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 4:32-37, 5:1-11,  
6:1-15, 7:54-8:1



### **Sermon Notes:**

“Thanksgiving” in Spanish is “acts of thanks” – a tangible response

Acts 4:32-37 - A Transformed Community – a response of thanksgiving to Gospel

- united in heart and mind – regardless of background or status
- what’s mine is not mine - not holding back anything – shift in attitude
- sharing of possessions to meet needs – thankful generosity

As a Result – they witness with power, much grace, no need

- Barnabas – intro, example of this thanksgiving generosity

Act 5:1-11 - Who are We Fooling? - the lying/pretending is the problem

- We choose – Authentic faith - or appearance of commitment?
  - not about lack of faith – its holding back, and lying about it
- God is not fooled – Things got REAL! - no room for fake – half-hearted
- We harm ourselves - We undermine community – We undermine witness

Acts 6:1-15 – Stephen – A Faithful Servant - Committed

- growth of community – many needs to be addressed
- calling people to serve the community - full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom
- Stephen – v5 - full of faith and the Spirit – called and willingly serves
  - v8 - full of grace and power – miracles, signs and wonders

Acts 7:1-53 - A Faithful Witness before the Sanhedrin

- Stephen gives a short history of Israel’s unfaithfulness
- rejected the prophets sent to turn people back to God, point to Messiah
- rejected Jesus, sent to rescue his people
- rejected the law, sent to guide the people
- reminds them the temple is not necessary – God was in the tabernacle
- presence of God goes wherever he wants – doesn’t need a temple
- Luke here paves the way for a people with Jesus, not temple at centre of life

Acts 7:54-8:1 – No Matter the Cost – Committed even to the end

- filled with Spirit – we too can see God’s presence and Jesus as Lord
- our lives offered into God’s hands – as an “Act of Thanksgiving”
- We become like Jesus – following Jesus example - forgiving even enemies

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. In what ways does our faith community reflect the experience of this early church? In what ways is our experience different? What would it take for us to become more like this example? What is one thing that you think we can do right now to move in that direction as a church? Will you get it moving?
2. What would it look like to you to be “united in heart and mind” in a church context? What are the barriers that you can see in your own life to being “united in heart and mind” within our church? Take some time to name and pray against these obstacles to our church unity.
3. The text at the end of Acts 4 names Barnabas (son of encouragement) as an example of the kind of generosity and thankful spirit evident in the community. Who are two or three people in your life (but maybe not in the room right now 😊) whose example of faith are an encouragement to you. Take time to pray together giving thanks for these encouragers in your life.
4. In the Ananias and Sapphira story, it becomes clear that the problem is not how much they gave (all or just some), but rather that they were lying about what they had given. As a result of lying to God, it says they drop dead on the spot. What does this say about the God we are serving? How does this story affect how you think about who this God is? The text says those who heard about it were terrified. Do you think we treat our relationship with God too trivially? What are some of the things we do that might suggest this is so? Read Hebrews 12:28-29. Where have you encountered this aspect of who God is in our faith practice and teaching?
5. Stephen’s defense before the ruling council in Jerusalem accuses them of having rejected God’s prophets, God’s law, and now God’s messiah for Israel. What are some ways we too have rejected God’s voice in our lives – as individuals – as a local church – as a global church? How do we react when we hear a prophetic call to repentance?
6. What would it look like in my life today to display the kind of complete commitment to the Gospel of Jesus that Stephen demonstrates in Acts 7:54-8:1?

## **Taking Action:**

In the coming week, take the time to name two habits in your own daily life that are barriers to being united in heart and mind with others. Pray for God to help you tear down those barriers – tell someone else, then follow through.

or... make an intentional choice to share some of your resources in an act of sacrificial (it hurts) generosity for the cause of the Gospel.

