

Lesson 9

Unit 21 Theme:

How Believers Live

● Today is Mother's Day. Some students may not have a mother who is present in their lives. Adapt the lesson as needed to fit the various family situations in your class.

Giving Cheerfully

STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Identify and briefly discuss three different attitudes about giving to the Lord.
 - Bible Adventures* p. 1
 - Bibles, pencils
 - Whiteboard and marker

STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- **Bible Study:** Contrast the motivation behind two different gifts given to the church.
 - Bible Adventures* pp. 2–3
 - “Heroes-of-the-Bible—Peter” Teaching Aid
 - Bibles
- **Bible Review:** Decode three Bible verse puzzles that teach how we are to give.
 - Bible Adventures* p. 4, pencils
- **Memory Work:** Discuss the difference between Barnabas’ gift and Ananias’ and Sapphira’s gift.

STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Play a game that involves deciding what to give to God’s work.
 - “Money Matters” Teaching Aids (game board and personal balance sheets)—assemble before class, pencils, paper clip, metal paper fastener

STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Make an inventory of personal income and plan what part to give to God’s work.
 - Sheets of paper, pencils
- **Optional Activity:** Prayer journal assignment

Memory Verse

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

—2 Corinthians 9:7

Bible Basis:

Peter receives the honest gifts of the early church, but confronts the dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32–5:11).

Bible Truth:

God wants Christians to give liberally and sincerely to His work.

Lesson Aim:

That your students will evaluate their attitudes in giving to God’s work.

Understanding the Bible

This week we will find out about the honest gifts to the early Christian church and also about the dishonesty of Ananias and

Sapphira.

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. After that, the small group of men and women who believed in Jesus grew in number. Soon about 5,000 worshiped with the apostles.

One of the characteristics of the early Christian church was that they cared for each other’s needs. Their personal possessions were not kept for their own use and enjoyment; rather they shared what they had. As a need came up among them, it was met and cared for immediately (Acts 4:32-35). Wealthy believers willingly sold valuable possessions, such as houses or land, and gave the money to the apostles “with no strings attached.” One member of this group was Barnabas, who sold a piece of land and brought all the money from the sale to the apostles.

Contrast Barnabas’s honest, cheerful giving with that of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira. They sold some property and claimed they were giving all the proceeds from the sale; but instead of giving all the money, they secretly plotted together to hold back part of it. They tried to “put one over” on the

—continued on next page

indicates items you will need to prepare before class

Understanding the Bible —cont'd

others, telling a lie before God and people. It was because of their deceit that they died.

Apparently Ananias and Sapphira wanted to enjoy the acclaim of the church without really deserving it. Their deceit was not only to their fellow believers, but also to God. Deceit destroys trust and fellowship, and God dealt with the sin in a drastic way to get the message across.

This experience exerted a purifying influence on the growing band of Christians (Acts 5:11). They continued to give, but not deceitfully. They gave because they wanted to (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-35). Through the unhappy example of Ananias and Sapphira, Christians learn the attitude of giving that pleases God.

TIPS

Classroom

You may want to use one of these strategies to keep your students' level of participation high.

- Be prepared to adjust to your students' moods as they come into class. A listless student may or may not respond to thought-provoking questions. If students are full of life, let them know you appreciate their enthusiasm, especially when it's directed into the lesson!
- Consider doing a mime or acting out the Bible story to use the pre-teens' energy in a profitable way.
- A gentle sense of humor is an excellent tool for promoting desired behavior. Usually students will react favorably to a lighthearted prodding.
- This might be a great month to try something new—bring in a resource person, have an "actor" record a Bible story, or start off with a treat.

PRESSION ACTIVITIES

Select from the following activities to get students thinking about their priorities in using money.

■ Indicate that each student has just inherited a million dollars. Hand out slips of paper and have them write down what they would do with the money. Then they may number their lists according to what they would do first, second, third, and so on. Students may be amused and amazed to hear one another's lists.

□ paper, pencils

■ Write the word "GIVE" vertically on the board. As your students arrive, ask them to create an acrostic by thinking of words that describe how we should give to God. Each word should begin with a letter in the word "GIVE."

□ whiteboard and markers

■ For Worship Time: Use the song for this unit, "Do It," on the DisKit CD, from the Creative Teaching Aids packet.

□ DisKit CD, CD player



Understanding Your Students

It's spring! At this time of the year, do you sometimes find your students to be about as unpredictable as the weather? One Sunday they greet you with yawns. The next week they are full of excess energy! Many of these mood swings are due to the physical

changes that are a natural part of growing up. These varying moods are puzzling to your students, too.

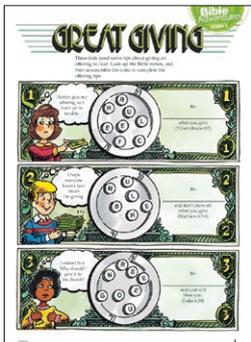


STEP 1 

Life Need
(5–10 minutes)

Lesson Aim:

That your students will evaluate their attitudes in giving to God's work.



LES. 9

Objective: That your students will identify different kinds of givers.

Materials:

- Bible Adventures, p. 1
- Bibles
- Pencils
- Whiteboard and marker

Today's lesson, from Acts 4:32—5:11, will help students discover wrong and right attitudes toward giving to God, through the examples of how the early church gave. The following activity will help them connect to the Bible story by beginning to think about what their attitudes are toward giving.

I wonder what motivated you to be here this morning. Let me guess—you just couldn't wait to see your wonderful Sunday school teacher! Wrong? Well, perhaps you wanted to see your friends—that's a good reason. Or it could be you have a desire to know more about serving the Lord—that's the best motivation of all.

One fact about being a Christian is that it's not enough just to do the right things like coming to Sunday school. There are some people who do all the right things for all the wrong reasons! You'll find examples of what I'm talking about on page 1 of *Bible Adventures*.

Distribute *Bible Adventures* and have your students turn to page 1, "Great Giving." Read the directions.

 **Here you see some kids with wrong attitudes toward giving. What's the matter with them?** *(One girl is unhappy about giving; she's doing it out of fear or obligation rather than joyfully. The boy is hoping people will think he's very generous or spiritual; he's showing off. The last girl is selfish and wants to keep the money for herself.)*

Then ask volunteers to look up and read aloud the Scriptures. Students can unscramble the letters in the coins to find the words "cheerful," "humble," and "generous." Write these words on the board. As a class, come up with a definition of each word. Use those definitions for reference as you work through the Bible study.

Today we'll learn that these words describe the right attitudes God wants us to have about giving.

Even in Bible times some people gave out of love for God, and others who had some things to say about giving gave from a desire for attention and praise. We are going to meet some people from each of these categories today.



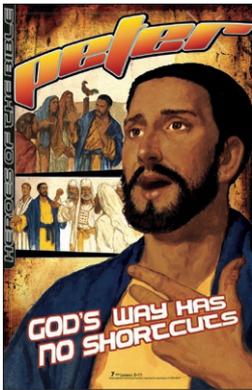
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Options for Steps 1 and 4.
RealLifeDownloaded.com

STEP 2 

Bible Learning
(15–20 minutes)

Bible Basis:

Peter receives the honest gifts of the early church, but confronts the dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32–5:11).



Objective: That your students will explain how early Christians were motivated to give generously to God's work.

Materials:

- Bible Adventures, pp. 2–4, pencils
- "Heroes-of-the-Bible—Peter" Teaching Aid, Bibles

Bible Study

Display the "Heroes-of-the-Bible—Peter" Teaching Aid. Ask students to share what they know about Peter. Have students find Acts 4 in their Bibles, then turn to *Bible Adventures*, pages 2 and 3, "Mixed Motives." Read the first paragraph aloud.

- ▶ **If you became very generous in your school or neighborhood, would you attract attention? Why?** (*Students don't need to answer the question now, simply let them think about it as the Bible study progresses.*)

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 4:32-33 as the others follow along in their Bibles.

- ▶ **What did the believers do?** (*They shared everything they had.*)
- ▶ **What was the job of the apostles?** (*To tell people about the Resurrection.*)
- ▶ **What might it have been like to be part of the early church?** (*Exciting to see God working. It could be scary, too, because some were against the church.*)

Read the next paragraph aloud. Ask volunteers to read the footnotes. Then ask a volunteer or two to read Acts 5:1-4.

- ▶ **Was it wrong for Ananias to keep part of the money back?** (*Point out verse 4: Ananias's lie was wrong, not simply holding money back.*)

- ▶ **How did Ananias lie about the money he gave?** (*Students may struggle with this, since Ananias didn't actually say anything. When he laid the money at Peter's feet, the implication was that he gave the entire sale price. It was actually only part of it.*)

- ▶ **Why do you think he lied?** (*He thought he could get by with it. He may have hoped for praise for his generous gift.*)

- ▶ **What did Peter accuse Ananias of doing?** (*Lying to the apostles and to the Holy Spirit.*)

Ask a student to read the first Scripture Spotlight section (Acts 5:5-6).

- ▶ **Why do you think Ananias was punished so severely?** (*His lie hurt Christ's church. God had an important lesson to teach about honesty.*)

- ▶ **Why were the people afraid?** (*They saw God's power; they were afraid it would happen to them.*)

Have a student read the next Scripture Spotlight section.

BIBLE STUDY BASED ON ACTS 4:32-5:11



MIXED MOTIVES

The generosity of the early Christians attracted a lot of attention in Jerusalem. Two incidents with very different endings taught the people that why a Christian gives is even more important than what is given!

*A member of the tribe of Levi. All Jewish priests were Levites.

Read Acts 4:32-33. What did the

believers do? What was the job of the apostles? What might it have been like to be part of the early church?

One of these believers was a Levite¹ named Barnabas.² He came from the island of Cyprus³ before he moved to Jerusalem. Barnabas sold

¹Pronounced nuh-bus. His was Joseph. means "enc"



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STEP 3 ▶

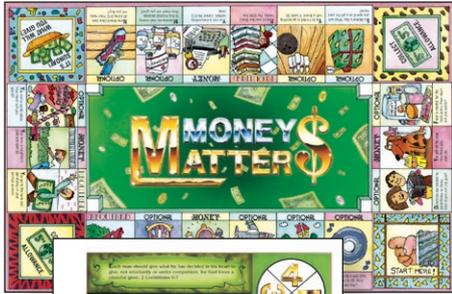
Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

Objective: That your students will play a game that involves deciding what to give to God's work.

Materials:

- “Money Matters” Teaching Aids (game board and personal balance sheets)—assemble before class
- Pencils
- Paper clip
- Metal paper fastener



Use the game “Money Matters” Teaching Aid to give your students a chance to practice managing a sum of money using biblical guidelines. Directions for preparing and playing the game are printed on the back of the game board.

We’re going to play a game that will give you a chance to make decisions about spending money. Remember as you play that it’s okay to spend money on things you want or need, but you should plan on using part of what you have to help people in need and to assist in the work of the church.

Pass out the balance sheets and explain their use. Have students turn to the sample entries on the back of their balance sheets. **Everyone starts this game with a balance of 20 dollars.** Point to the entry at the top of the sample balance column. **Each time you earn or spend money you will add or subtract the amount from your balance in the same way as shown on this sample.** Quickly read through the four entries, letting your students ask any questions they may have.

Direct your students’ attention to the boxes marked “Your Totals” under the sample balance sheet entries. Read through the four categories of information to familiarize your students with what they’ll be evaluating later.

Ask a volunteer to read through the game rules on the back of the game board. You may set a time limit for the game; or you may declare the game finished when everyone has gone around the board one time.

After the game is finished and the totals completed, continue the discussion with the following questions.

- ▶ **How many of you used some of your money to serve God?**
- ▶ **How does that amount compare with the amount you spent and saved for yourself?**
- ▶ **How much of your money do you think God wants you to give to His work? (*All we can cheerfully give.*)**

In Old Testament times, God asked the Israelites to be willing to give a tenth of what they earned to His work. Giving a tenth of your money to God is called tithing. Tithing is a good thing to do, but God also cares about our attitude.

- ▶ **Why is giving from your heart important?**

STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

God wants Christians to give liberally and sincerely to His work.

Objective: That your students will evaluate what they can cheerfully give to God's kingdom.

Materials:

- Sheets of paper
- Pencils

Now let's think about real life. I'm going to give each of you a sheet of paper. I want you to write on this paper all your sources of income—include allowance, money from jobs, and money received as gifts. Then try to estimate your average monthly income from what you've written down.

Explain that this part of the lesson is to be done privately. There may be quite a difference in the income level of various students, so you want to avoid embarrassment and bad feelings. Have students move to different parts of the room.

Think very seriously about what amount you can cheerfully and willingly give to God's work each month. God knows that some of us may have more to give than others. He is not impressed with dollar signs but with the attitude of our hearts.

Think of other things besides money that you can give to God. Students will probably think of things like time, physical strength, or various talents. Money is really just a small part of what we have to offer to the Lord's work. But the way we handle our money is a pretty good measure of how generous we will be with our other resources.

When students are done, bring them back together and discuss these questions:

-  Which do you think is harder to do? Give money, things, or time? Why?
-  How can you be a more cheerful giver this week?

Closing Activity

Pray a prayer similar to this one with your class. Dear Father, we know that everything we have comes from You. Thank You for Your generosity to us. Help us be generous as we give to Your work. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Optional Activity

In your prayer journal this week, make a list of what you can give to God's work, willingly and cheerfully. (This includes money, time, and other things.) Ask God to help you give these things cheerfully.