



Ananias & Sapphira Lie to God

Acts 5

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

This week, we see a terrible choice made by two believers when they decided to lie to God. God chose to cleanse their sin from the body of believers. And the Holy Spirit continued to work in amazing ways, empowering the apostles to heal, teach, and stand firm in persecution.



Day #1: One Heart, One Mind

Think of a person that you love to spend time with. It might be a friend, a brother or sister, a parent or a grandparent. What do you like to do with him or her? Whatever it is you do together, most likely you enjoy talking to that person. You probably have similar likes and dislikes. This means you are like-minded with this person. Do you have more than one person in your life that you are like-minded with? Today we will look at the early church. The Bible says there were thousands of people who were all like-minded with one another!

The group of followers all felt the same way about everything. None of them claimed that their possessions were their own, and they shared everything they had with each other. - Acts 4:32 CEV

We know from Scripture that at this time there were at least 5,000 Christians (Acts 4:4). Can you imagine 5,000 people who all felt the same way about everything? There can only be one explanation for this. The Holy Spirit lived in each of them and they each submitted their will to the Spirit's leading.

Pretend your kitchen table (or bedroom floor) is an ocean. Now, use a book to be an island. Set it in the middle of the table (or floor). Now, use small objects, such as coins, to represent boats in the water. Get at least ten boats moving in the water all around the island. The driver of each boat goes his own way. Boats move toward the island and away from the island. They move toward each other and away from each other. They are free to go wherever they want to go. Move each boat around in the water. The boats are moving. Is the island moving? No, an island cannot move. Now, select two boats on opposite sides of the island. Imagine that these two drivers choose to direct their boats toward the island. Move the two boats toward the island. Notice, that because the island is not moving, and both boats are going toward the island, these two boats must move toward each other.

Now, think of the island as Jesus. The Bible says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) Like the island, He is solid and immovable. Now, think of people as the ones "driving their boats." Just as the boat drivers are free to drive wherever they want, we are free to live our lives however we want. But when we choose to follow Jesus, we have clear instructions from the Bible. Scripture instructs each believer to follow Christ's example (1 Corinthians 11:1), and make our thoughts to be like His thoughts (1 Corinthians 10:5). This would be equal to each driver choosing to drive his boat toward the island. Just as the boats get closer to each other when they head toward the unmoving island, if two people become more like Christ, they become more like each other.

It is the Holy Spirit in a believer's life that shows him truth and conforms him to the likeness of Christ (John 16:13, Galatians 5:16-26). The Bible says we must be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). This means the driver of the boat must step aside and allow the Holy Spirit to drive his boat toward the island - or guide his life so he can become more like Jesus.

Day #1 continued:



How can we let the Holy Spirit **control** us? It is simply through obedience. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to do something, do it. When the Holy Spirit lets you know you should not do something, do not do it. Then the Spirit will be in control and you will be headed toward becoming more like Jesus, and headed toward like-mindedness with other believers. **Remember, when the Holy Spirit is driving, you cannot miss the island!**

(Parents: Consider how this principle works in the marriage relationship.)

Day #2: Lying to God

The new believers stuck together like a family. They shared everything they had. These new believers were Jewish by birth (Acts 2:22, 3:12). It is very possible that some of them may have lost their jobs when they went against the Jewish leaders by placing their faith in Jesus. But all of the new believers had their needs met because each was willing to share what they had with the others.



There were no needy persons among them. From time to time, those who owned land or houses sold them. They brought the money from the sales. They put it down at the apostles' feet. It was then given out to anyone who needed it. - Acts 4:34-35

One of the believers, nick-named Barnabas, which means "Son of Encouragement," sold his property for this purpose. Barnabas sold a field that he owned and laid the money at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:36-37).

Now we come to a section of Scripture that is very sad. Just when things seemed to be going so well, two of the new believers made a very bad choice. They decided to lie to God.

A man named Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, also sold some land. He kept part of the money for himself. Sapphira knew he had kept it. He brought the rest of it and put it down at the apostles' feet. - Acts 5:1-2

Selling land and giving some of the money to help others is a very generous thing to do. But Ananias clearly led others to believe he gave the full price of the land he had sold (Acts 5:8).

Then Peter said, "Ananias, why did you let Satan fill your heart? He made you lie to the Holy Spirit. You have kept some of the money you received for the land. Didn't the land belong to you before it was sold? After it was sold, you could have used the money as you wished. What made you think of doing such a thing? You haven't lied to just anyone. You've lied to God." - Acts 5:3-4

Peter told Ananias that he did not have to sell the land, and even after he sold it, he could have done whatever he wanted with the money. But Ananias chose to lie about the money. Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira wanted others to think they were as generous as Barnabas, or perhaps they did not trust that God would supply what they needed if they gave away all of their money. Maybe they were greedy, and wanted more than God would give them. Whatever the reason for his lie, Peter said the lie was wrong, for Ananias had lied to God. God is the truth (John 14:6). He is unable to lie (Numbers 23:19). Tomorrow we will see a VERY stern punishment for this sin.




The Bible tells us that God looks at the heart of man (1 Chronicles 28:9). Even though their gift looked good, God knew that Ananias and Sapphira did not have pure motives when they gave their gift, so they decided ahead of time to lie about the money. Ask God to search your heart and show you any impure motives you might have for the things you do.

God, create a pure heart in me. Give me a new spirit that is faithful to you. - Psalm 51:10

Day #3: Radical Removal

God could not allow the sin of Ananias to remain within the fellowship of the new believers. As soon as Ananias heard Peter say the words, "You have lied to God," Ananias fell down and died. Men came and carried his body out to be buried (Acts 5:5-6). Ananias' wife, Sapphira, was equally guilty. The Bible tells us that she had full knowledge of Ananias' plan (Acts 5:2). Not knowing that her husband had died, Sapphira continued to tell the same lie.

 About three hours later, the wife of Ananias came in. She didn't know what had happened. Peter asked her, "Tell me. Is this the price you and Ananias sold the land for?"

"Yes," she said. "That's the price."


Peter asked her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! You can hear the steps of the men who buried your husband. They are at the door. They will carry you out also." - Acts 5:7-9

At that moment, Sapphira also died and was buried next to her husband. Acts 5:11 tells us that the whole body of believers, along with many other people, heard about this and were filled with fear.

In his book, the Problem of Pain, C. S. Lewis says that God's attitude toward sin is the same as a surgeon's attitude toward cancer. It is a surgeon's desire to remove all the cancer tissue in a patient so it will not infect the healthy tissue around it. Although Ananias and Sapphira's punishment seems very harsh to us, God saw fit for them to be removed from the body of new believers, so their sin would not spread to others. This body was so new and so important; it could not tolerate the corruption brought on by Ananias and Sapphira's willful disobedience.

The Bible tells us a great deal about God's character. Although the punishment of this sin was necessary, it does NOT please God to punish sin.

I, the Lord God, don't like to see wicked people die. I enjoy seeing them turn from their sins and live. - Ezekiel 18:23


 Ask God for the ability to see sin as He sees it. Sin is never to be taken lightly. What we may consider a "little sin" spreads quickly and grows at an amazing rate (1 Corinthians 6-8). God instructs us to stay far away from anyone who calls himself a believer in Jesus, yet continues in sinful behavior (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

Day #4: Jail Break

We see the word **apostles** over and over in the book of Acts. Apostle is another name for Jesus' disciples and those who follow Him. Literally, apostle means "messenger, or one sent out with orders." Jesus had given His disciples their orders. They were to wait to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then go out and proclaim the truth that Jesus was the Messiah.

As we continue in Acts 5, we see the Holy Spirit continued to use the apostles boldly. The Bible says more and more men and women placed their faith in Jesus as the Savior sent by God. All the believers gathered together regularly in the Temple complex, and they were respected by the non-believers. They did amazing miracles of healing and casting out evil spirits in Jesus' name. People even brought their sick friends hoping that Peter's shadow might fall on them so they would be healed!

How do you think the high priest and the Sadducees felt about the apostles, now that the apostles were very respected and people were coming to them for healing and teaching? You probably guessed it. The high priest and Sadducees were jealous (Acts 5:17). Once again, these religious leaders arrested the apostles and put them in jail.

 But during the night an angel of the Lord came. He opened the prison doors and brought the apostles out. "Go! Stand in the temple courtyard," the angel said. "Tell the people all about this new life." - Acts 5:19-20


Day #4 continued:

Early the next morning, the apostles stood teaching in the courtyard, just as the angel had told them to do. Unaware of this, the religious leaders held a meeting and sent officers to get the prisoners.

The officers arrived at the prison. But they didn't find the apostles there. So they went back and reported it. "We found the prison locked up tight," they said. "The guards were standing at the doors. But when we opened the doors, we didn't find anyone inside." - Acts 5:22-23

The officers were confused. Then someone told them the apostles were preaching in the Temple courtyard. So, the guards got the apostles and brought them to the religious leaders. The high priest scolded the apostles. Once again, he told them that they were ordered to stop teaching in Jesus' name. Peter and the others stood firm in their answer. They said they would NOT obey men, but would obey the command of Jesus to spread His truth.

Peter and the apostles replied, "We don't obey people. We obey God." - Acts 5:27-29 CEV


 In the book of Matthew, we see that right after Jesus told his apostles to go out and preach about Him, He made this promise: *I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.* - Matthew 28:20 CEV

God always keeps His promises! Jesus did not send His apostles out to do work on their own. He sent them with the Holy Spirit, and even sent an angel to set them free from their prison cell. Re-read the promise, placing YOUR name in it. Take the time to memorize this promise.

Day #5: Wise Words


When Peter and the others were brought before the high priest and Sadducees, they did not back down. Again, they rightly accused the leaders of hanging Jesus on the cross. But they said God raised Him from the dead and gave Him a place of honor in heaven, so that all the people of Israel would turn to Him and be forgiven of their sin. When the religious leaders heard these words, they burned with anger. They were so angry that they wanted to kill the apostles (Acts 5:30-33).

Just then, a Pharisee named Gamaliel spoke up. He was a highly respected teacher. He sent the apostles out of the room so that he could speak to the other leaders. He said, "Men of Israel, think carefully about what you plan to do to these men." (Acts 5:35) Gamaliel reminded them that in the past, other men had come forward claiming to be someone special. In those cases, some people followed them. But in each case, the leaders died and the followers scattered.

 "So let me give you some advice. Leave these men alone! Let them go! If their plans and actions are only human, they will fail. But if their plans come from God, you won't be able to stop these men. You will only find yourselves fighting against God." - Acts 5:38-39

This was very wise advice. His words won over the leaders, and they decided not to kill the apostles. The Sadducees had the apostles whipped, ordered them not to speak in Jesus' name again, and finally let them go. Read the reaction of the apostles:

The apostles were full of joy as they left the Sanhedrin. They considered it an honor to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Day after day, they kept teaching in the temple courtyards and from house to house. They never stopped telling the good news that Jesus is the Christ. - Acts 5:41-42

 We may wonder how the apostles could be full of joy after being threatened and beaten. Simply put, they were being conformed to the likeness of Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 tells us, "Jesus paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to." The disciples, like Jesus, looked past the pain at hand toward the joy ahead of them. That joy is being a part of God's plan to grant eternal life to all who will place their trust in Jesus. Dear child of God, remember that anything you suffer in this life pales in comparison to the joy of sharing God's truth with those who do not