

When do you see God's power demonstrated so that you feel a reverential awe?

*Matthew 10:28 NLT - 28 "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

*Romans 6:23 NLT - 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

According to Jesus it is His power over our eternal souls that should inspire a healthy fear of God. Yet Paul assures us that God offers us the gift of salvation if we are willing to accept it.

*A complete picture of God includes both His fearsome power and His loving grace. What are the problems with failing to recognize both?*

## WRAP-UP

The hallmark of the early church was their unity in heart and mind and the love of others they expressed through generosity to the needy. But Ananias and Sapphira wanted the appearance of doing that work without being committed to it in their hearts. And they were willing to lie to God, others and perhaps themselves as well to do so. God lovingly offers us forgiveness and salvation, but we should never forget that He also is the righteous and powerful judge in whose hands our eternity lies.

## Memory Verse

*All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.*

*- Acts 4:32-35 NLT*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Let God's love for others fill your heart and look for ways to generously bless those in need around you.*

# "Ananias and Sapphira"

Book of Acts – Week #7

## INTRODUCTION

The names of Ananias and Sapphira may not be as readily recognized as Peter and John, but if you have heard of them, you probably know that their story didn't end well. In the previous chapter in Acts, we were encouraged, not only to find that the believers preach boldly, but they were unified in heart and mind. So much so that they shared everything and took care of all who had needs. And then we learn about Ananias and Sapphira. Their contribution was marred by deception and the result was their deaths. Let's look into this event to see what led to this unfortunate conclusion.

## Key Passage

*Acts 5:1-11 NLT - 1 But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. 2 He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. 4 The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!" 5 As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. 6 Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" "Yes," she replied, "that was the price." 9 And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too." 10 Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.*

## STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

### 1. Community/Charity

*Acts 4:32-35 NLT - 32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. 33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.*

*1 Corinthians 1:10 NLT - 10 I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.*

Before we consider what Ananias and Sapphira did, let's see what was happening around them at the time. In Acts 4:32 we are told all believers were united in heart and mind. That must have been an answer to their prayer for a miraculous sign because that kind of unity only comes from God.

*Paul appealed to the Church at Corinth to be united in thought and purpose and the result was that they lived in harmony. What are the kinds of things we commonly find dividing a community of believers? Do you think believers can hold different opinions without being divided, and if so, what are the issues you consider non-negotiable?*

As this body of believers became unified their viewpoint was turned away from themselves and towards others. They didn't consider what they owned as theirs alone, rather they saw God's provision as something to be shared. In giving away what they had, they received even more from God.

*What did they receive in verse 33? In what ways have you been blessed by God as you have given to others? What prevents us from providing for the needs of others?*

### 2. Generosity/Attention

Hopefully we don't do our good works just so that we can be seen by others as generous, but when we are generous, we do shine in a way that others notice.

The generosity of the early church drew attention, and the generosity we find around us today is also drawing attention.

*Matthew 5:16 NLT - 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

*What good works and generosity have you heard of during the pandemic that you can attribute to God moving through His people? What effect do you think that has on other believers? on non-believers?*

### 3. Dishonesty/A Lie

Now we come to Ananias and Sapphira. As others had done, they sold some property. But in verse 2 we see specifically how their gift was cloaked in deception. They brought part of the money and claimed it was the full amount.

*What are some reasons a person would make such a claim? How might they have lied to themselves in justifying what they did?*

There was no record of an investigation, or witnesses to the deception, but Peter knew what had happened. It appears that God had revealed the truth to Peter. Not only was he aware that this was not actually the full amount, Peter knew what was happening in Ananias' heart.

*Ananias' heart was not united with the other believers (Acts 4:32). What was the condition of his heart? What do you think might have happened if he gave the money without lying about the amount?*

It would be easy to conclude that withholding part of the money was the reason Ananias had sinned, but Peter clarified that Ananias wasn't required either to sell or to donate the proceeds of his sale.

*So, what was Ananias guilty of? How do Peter's statements; "You lied to the Holy Spirit" and "You weren't lying to us, but to God" shed light on the triune nature of God?*

### 4. Death/Fear

After Ananias died his wife appeared before Peter. She was given an opportunity to tell their truth about gift, but she also lied. Both Ananias and Sapphira died as a result of their sin, and fear gripped the church and all who heard what happened. We may have difficulty reconciling both loving and fearing God. Pastor Jared gave the example of surfers who both love and fear the waves because they recognize the deadly power they contain.