

LESSON 48

Ananias & Sapphira

ACTS 4:32–5:11



BIBLE TRUTH

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS POURED OUT IN GRACE, DISCIPLINE, AND POWER

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Acts 4:32—5:11 from the Scriptures or read story 126, “Ananias & Sapphira,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Joseph versus Ananias and Sapphira

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ costumes such as old sheets or towels with rope belts
- ✓ another adult to act in the skit

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15MIN

Do You Want a Cookie?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ cookies for the class—enough for each child to have two (Make or purchase cookies without nuts as some children have severe nut allergies.)

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Joseph’s Generosity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Looking at the Fear of Man

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

TOTAL 75 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Great grace led the new believers to do great things for God—It is amazing to read about the early Christians and how the Spirit of God worked grace into their lives. We can often forget that the descriptions are of brand-new believers, not people who had been Christians for years and years. The first believers were so affected by the gospel and the in-filling of the Spirit that they were glad to sell their possessions and share with those in need. Joseph sold a field and brought the money to the apostles so that those in need could be cared for. In Acts 4:33 we learn how they were able to do these good works: “great grace was upon them all.”

Great grace is guarded by God—Acts 5 starts out, “But a man...” With these words Luke contrasts the generosity of Joseph with the deception of Ananias and Sapphira. Perhaps Joseph was praised or esteemed for selling his field and giving the money to those in need. Ananias and Sapphira sold a field too, and they pretended to give all the money to the apostles while keeping some of it for themselves. They did not have to sell their field, and they did not have to give all the money to the apostles. But this sin—this lie—was treated by God as a very serious matter. The Holy Spirit brought severe discipline for the good of all.

Peter confronted Ananias and, later, Sapphira for lying. His words help all of us to remember that when we sin against each other, our greater sin is against God. Immediately, Ananias and then his wife fell down dead, and great fear came upon those who saw. The Holy Spirit was working to keep the church pure. Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). When Ananias and Sapphira sought to deceive the early church and so discredit its witness, they sided with the gates of hell against the church and God judged them for it. The result was that a holy fear came upon both believers and unbelievers when they heard of God’s judgment.

You can’t fake great grace—There is no comparison between the selfish attempt of Ananias and Sapphira and the great grace that fell upon the church with the power of the Holy Spirit. After God judged Ananias and Sapphira, many people were healed and believers were added (Acts 5:14). We need to remember that three thousand were converted after Peter’s explanation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That means that thousands were being converted here as well. When people understood the gospel and saw the power of God, many put their faith in Jesus.

The compromise of Ananias and Sapphira had the potential to hinder the work of God. That is why the Lord judged them so severely. This swift judgment served to warn the early believers of the dangers of sin and of the fearful holiness of God and to help them realize you can't fake God's great grace.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Fearing God

The Bible tells us that it is a good thing to fear God. Proverbs tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7) and wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Since Jesus has taken our punishment, we believers do not need to fear God's eternal judgment, but we cannot assume God will not judge sinful behavior. A healthy fear of God's holy discipline will help us to avoid the sins that otherwise would entangle us. By judging Ananias and Sapphira, God demonstrated that he does not take sin lightly. Sin cost God the sacrifice of his Son. God is not mocked. Those who sow to please the flesh will reap corruption (Galatians 6:8).

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the early church with great power. There was a mighty outpouring of grace in the lives of the new Christians. The transformed lives of the new believers validated the gospel message that was being proclaimed. More than ever, Luke tells us people were "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14). When a person believes the gospel, they are not just added to some club, they are added to the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27) with Jesus as the head of that body (Ephesians 1:22-23).

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Acts 4:32—5:11 from the Scriptures or read story 126, “Ananias & Sapphira,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Joseph versus Ananias and Sapphira

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ costumes such as old sheets or towels with rope belts
- ✓ another adult to act in the skit

The purpose of this skit is to flesh out what might have been going on in Anania’s and Sapphira’s hearts. Feel free to use this script or ad-lib the performance.

- ANANIAS:** Did you see what Joseph did today? He sold that field of his and gave all the money to Peter.
- SAPPHIRA:** Yes, everyone made such a big deal about it. It seems like you have to do something special anymore to get attention.
- ANANIAS:** You know, we could sell that field we have.
- SAPPHIRA:** Our field is worth three times what Joseph sold. Are you crazy?
- ANANIAS:** No, listen. We could sell it, give some of the money away to the disciples, and keep the rest for ourselves. We don’t need all that land anyway.
- SAPPHIRA:** If folks thought Joseph was generous, just think of what they would say about us!
- ANANIAS:** Sure, nobody counted Joseph’s money. Why, he could have kept a bunch for himself anyway.
- SAPPHIRA:** Yeah, I’ll bet he did. No one would ever know.
- ANANIAS:** No one would ever know!

Read Acts 4:32—5:11 and then ask the class the following questions:

- **Why do you think Joseph sold his field?**
(Joseph sold his field to help the poor.)

- **Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira sold their field?**
(Though we are not specifically told, we can infer that they sold their field with mixed motives as they withheld money for themselves. The word “but” in the first verse of chapter five connects and contrasts their story with that of Joseph.)

- **Did they tell the truth about their field?**
(No. They lied.)

- **How did they lie?**
(It is clear from the story that they implied or actually said the money they offered was all of the money from the sale of their field when actually they kept part of the money for themselves.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESON 2 15 MIN

Do You Want a Cookie?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ cookies for the class—enough for each child to have two (Make or purchase cookies without nuts as some children have severe nut allergies.)

The object of this lesson is to illustrate the lying of Ananias and Sapphira.

Once you have the attention of your class, have your helper come in carrying a large container of cookies. He should offer you a cookie, to which you reply yes. Go on to ask if you can have enough cookies for the class. Tell your helper if he gives you fifteen (the number of students you have) you will share the cookies with the class.

Once the helper agrees and leaves, start eating your cookie and ask the class if they would like some. Of course, they will answer yes. Now it is time for your Ananias and Sapphira move. As you pass out the cookies break off a little piece of each one for yourself. For some, just break

off a little, but for others break off more. Keep the pieces in the container. As you go around the room, comment on how good these cookies are.

The helper should return and ask you if you had a chance to pass out the cookies to the class. You should answer that you passed them all out to the class. While you are talking to the helper, eat the pieces in the container. Your helper should inquire where you got the cookie pieces. You can tell the helper that they are just some of the leftovers.

The helper should confront you lovingly about where you got the leftover cookie fragments and then remind you about how you wanted the cookies for the children. Use this as a lead into the Ananias and Sapphira story.

(Be sure to distribute the unbroken cookies to the class after the object lesson.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Joseph's Generosity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of Joseph placing the money from the sale of his field at the apostles' feet.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Looking at the Fear of Man

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

After reading about Ananias and Sapphira, talk a little about the motives behind their actions. Read together 1Thessalonians 2:3–7 where Paul defends his ministry saying that neither greed nor the approval of man motivated his behavior.

Pass out paper and pencils and write the following question on the whiteboard: how could this passage help us to avoid the sins of Ananias and Sapphira?

Have the children put their answers in writing and then discuss what they wrote. Give them hints along the way to help them know what to write.

It is likely that Ananias and Sapphira tried to look good by pretending to give up all the money from the sale of their field. They faked generosity to cover up their greed in keeping part of the money.