

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

Christianity In The Making: From Jerusalem To South Bay

Acts 5

Questions for Life Group Study

(Note: you can use both reflection questions from the bulletin and also questions from the personal study. These are ideas to lead your discussion. Treat them as you would a salad bar; you might put some on your tray and leave others. Don't feel you have to work through every question.)

1. Share one exciting thing from your world this week? (Work, family, recreation, church)
2. Have someone read out loud Acts 5:1-11 (check out some modern translations like the Message or New Living Translation for example and read from one of them)
3. Were Ananias and Sapphira required to sell their land and lay all the money at the Apostle's feet? Why or why not?
4. Peter clearly points out in v. 4 that withholding a portion of the proceeds for themselves was not a sin. What was their sin?
5. Who did Peter say had tempted Ananias' to lie? To whom did he lie? In your opinion, why would someone lie to God?
6. What would they gain by lying about the money they received?
7. Given we all do bad things, why do you think God punished Ananias and Sapphira so severely?
8. How might "great fear" be useful to God at this point?
9. Do you believe that there is a "fear" of God in the church today?
10. How do you account for the increasing numbers and vitality of the early church?
11. Close by sharing requests for prayer and then praying.

For Personal Study

Each time you come to study God's word, begin with a word of prayer. Come to your time of study expectant to receive something from the Lord.

As Acts 5 opens, the spirit of giving continues with the believers experiencing a time of great power and great grace. Thousands of Jews that had come to celebrate Pentecost had received the message of the gospel and were converted to Christ. The needs of the many who had lingered in Jerusalem to become



instructed and grounded in God's Word were met by those Christians that had sold their belongings and pooled their resources. Each gave of what they had to see that no one lacked. It was a time for great rejoicing, with all who believed being of one heart and one soul and having all things in common such as had never been before.

Into this time of growth as a church family, Luke introduces the first instance of hypocrisy and betrayal of unity. The startling outcome may at first seem shocking to us, but in the end it is a reminder of God's holiness and His high standard for His church.

Verse 3 states that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and verse 4 says that he lied to God. This is a confirmation of the deity of the Holy Spirit...He is One with God. It also affirms the fact that the Holy Spirit is not merely a force or influence...He is a Person who can be sinned against.

What lesson did you derive from this event and do you have personal application?

The complete narrative of this story seems to indicate that both Ananias and Sapphira were indeed Christians and a part of the church family. It is important to point out that Luke does not make mention that they were condemned to eternal punishment for their sin. Most commentators seem to agree that they were saved, and their death was their judgment for their sin but that they will inherit eternal life. Look up 1 John 5:16-17. What do you think?

God's desire is for a pure church. Look up James 4:8,10. What steps, if any, do you need to take to draw near to God?

What word of warning is there for believers in 1 Peter 4:17? What does this mean to you right now?

Your effectiveness as a witness is closely linked to being a vessel that is clean and set apart for Him. Keep short accounts with God, daily confessing your sin and receiving His forgiveness. What hope do you find in 1 John 1:7-10?

We saw the critical mistake Ananias and Sapphira made when they tried to impress everyone with their generosity. Obviously, it's not a mistake any of us would want to make, especially knowing what happened to the two of them! Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 and Matthew 6:25-34 and then jot down what they tell us about the desire to impress people and the pursuit of recognition.

How would the incident with Ananias and Sapphira lead people to the response in Acts 5:13-14? What words might outsiders use to describe the church?

Generosity is a natural outflow of the Holy Spirit. Yet, when we talk about generosity, at times there can be confusion about the appropriate motivation behind it and God's view of it. As you read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, what insights do you gain about generosity, especially its motivation and purpose?

What are some ways you can be generous besides financially? Is there any area you might sense the Holy Spirit motivating you to be more generous?

What guidance does 2 Peter 1:3-9 give us about focusing on developing godly character as a top priority? Is there anything in these verses that you'd like to work on "adding to your faith"?