

BARNABAS – GENEROUS; ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA – DECEPTIVE

Acts 4:32 - 5:11

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Peter, Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira

Key-location: Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Selling property and turning the money over to the apostles: people who owned houses or lands (Ac 4:34); Barnabas (Ac 4:37); Ananias and Sapphira (Ac 5:1-2).
- Peter questioned: Ananias (Ac 5:3-4); Sapphira (Ac 5:7-9).
- Death as punishment: Ananias (Ac 5:5); Sapphira (Ac 5:10).

Key-attitudes:

- Believers' harmony among themselves.
- Believers' concern for the needy.
- Barnabas' generosity.
- Ananias and Sapphira's greed.
- Fear of all who heard the facts of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira.

Initial-situation:

After the day of Pentecost, Peter and John went to the temple and healed a forty year old crippled beggar. The Jewish religious leaders ordered Peter and John not to speak in the name of Jesus. The two asked if they should obey men or God. After threats, the religious leaders let Peter and John go.

Initial-problem:

All in the group acted as though their private property belonged to everyone in the group. Many sold their properties and turned the money over to the apostles.

Final-situation:

Fear seized the whole church and others who heard about what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

BIBLE STORY

Barnabas

All the believers lived in harmony. All believers acted as though their private property belonged to everyone in the group. In fact, they shared everything and no believer had need of anything.

From time to time, believers who owned properties sold their houses or land, brought the money from the sales, and turned it over to the apostles. Then the money was distributed to each one who needed it (Ac 4:32-35).

Joseph was born on the island of Cyprus. The apostles called Joseph “Barnabas.” The name means “a person who encourages.” Barnabas sold a field he owned and turned the money over to the apostles (Ac 4:36-37).

Ananias and Sapphira

Ananias and his wife Sapphira also sold some of their property. Ananias and Sapphira decided to hold back part of the money for themselves, but to pretend they were giving the apostles all the money. Ananias only turned over part of the money to the apostles.

Peter asked, “Ananias, why did you let Satan rule your heart and cause you to lie to the Holy Spirit? You kept some of the money you received for the land. The land belonged to you before it was sold. The money belonged to you after the land was sold. You didn’t lie to people; you lied to God!”

Ananias dropped dead. Young men wrapped Ananias’ body in a sheet, carried his body out, and buried him (Ac 5:1-6).

About three hours later, Sapphira, Ananias’ wife, entered. Sapphira didn’t know what had happened. Peter asked Sapphira, “Tell me, was this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

Sapphira answered, “Yes, that was the price.”

Peter told Sapphira, “How could you and your husband agree to test the Lord’s Spirit? The young men who buried your husband will also carry you out for burial.”

Sapphira dropped dead. Then the young men buried Sapphira beside her husband (Ac 5:7-10).

Fear seized the whole church and all others who heard about these events (Ac 5:11).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35. What characterized the Jerusalem church?
2. How did Jerusalem believers view personal property?

3. What was the difference between Barnabas' offering and that of Ananias and Sapphira?
4. How can you give in such a way as to be blessed by God?
5. What did Ananias and Sapphira hope to gain by lying to the church?
6. Do we, like Ananias and Sapphira, reluctantly practice religious acts only because others are doing so?
7. What was Ananias and Sapphira's sin?
8. How do professed Christians today immitate Ananias and Sapphira and try to deceive God and his church?
9. How can the fear of God be useful to God's purpose?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Offerings given to the church bring blessings when they are the fruit of the love of God; however, they bring curses when given for selfish reasons.** Barnabas' offering was exemplary (Ac 4:36-37). The offering of Ananias and Sapphira brought disaster to them, because they gave in order to receive recognition from the church (Ac 5:1-11).
2. **Temptation comes from Satan, but each person is responsible for his decision to either act upon or to reject suggestions from Satan.** Ananias allowed Satan to rule his heart and Satan caused him to lie to the Holy Spirit (Ac 5:3, 9).
3. **Satan, people's worst enemy, throws his temptations against Jesus' followers; however, Satan can only dominate believers who allow him to do so.** Ananias allowed Satan to dominate his heart (Ac 5:3). The believer can have victory over the enemy. (See 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 4:27, 6:11, and James 4:7).
4. **The church is inhabited by the Holy Spirit; therefore, an offense against the church is a sin against God.** Ananias and Sapphira wanted to deceive the church with their hypocrisy; however, they lied to the Holy Spirit and sinned against God (Ac 5:3, 9). The sin of Ananias and Sapphira consisted in lying to deceive the church, not in keeping a portion of the money from the sale of their property.
5. **God is both Savior and Punisher.** The punishing power of God manifested against Ananias and Sapphira is in harmony with his saving power that heals, resurrects the dead, and grants eternal life (Ac 5:1-11).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Interactive Sharing:

Invite listeners to share how they have experienced the fear of the Lord and how it influenced them.