



LESSON 28

Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit

ACTS 4:32-5:11



The Holy Spirit unites and purifies the church.



“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? . . . You have not lied to man but to God’” (Acts 5:3–4).

Supporting Truths

1. The Holy Spirit is God.
2. The Holy Spirit unites.
3. The Holy Spirit produces love.
4. The Holy Spirit purifies and protects.
5. The Holy Spirit loves truth and hates hypocrisy.

Objectives

1. State that Peter called the Holy Spirit God.
2. Explain what happened before this passage.
3. Prove that the believers really were of one heart and mind.
4. Describe what happened to Ananias and Sapphira and how the church reacted.
5. Define hypocrisy.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

As the church grew rapidly, believers were filled with the Spirit and devoted to Jesus. This caused them to be united with a single passion and purpose in life. They were so united that they shared everything, even selling houses and fields to provide for poor believers. But Ananias and Sapphira lied about what they were giving in order to look good. The Holy Spirit exposed their lie and took their lives to guard the purity of the church.

Spotlight on the Gospel

By His death and resurrection, Jesus rescues sinners and turns them into the people of God. They become united with Him, like a body is united to its head. Because they are united with Him, they are also united with each other. But because they are united with Him, they are also to be holy, since He is holy. Jesus provides the Holy Spirit to make holy living possible, but He also warns us of the seriousness of sin.

LAST WEEK



Peter and John preach the gospel
Acts 3:1–26

THIS WEEK



Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit
Acts 4:32–5:11

NEXT WEEK



The Jews resist the Holy Spirit
Acts 6:1–7:60

Lesson Commentary

The Holy Spirit unites and purifies the church.

After Peter's first sermon, the Holy Spirit performed miracles through the apostles and united the believers in love (Acts 2:43–45). Last week, we saw an example of a miracle (Acts 3), and now this week, we will see how believers were united in love (4:32–37). Together, both miracles and unity show that the Holy Spirit was doing His job: He was giving believers the power to glorify Jesus in their words, attitudes, and actions. But Satan tries to stop this. He first used enemies to persecute the church from the outside (4:1–21), but the Holy Spirit gave His people boldness to keep proclaiming Jesus (4:29–30). So now Satan tried to ruin the church with sin on the inside. How would the Holy Spirit protect God's people and guard the honor of Jesus this time?

The believers shared everything (4:32–37)

But first, notice the **unity** of the believers (4:32). It was unity among the “full number of those who believed,” which by now was about 5,000 men—not even including women and children—from many different parts of the world (2:5; 4:4). As a result there were many different people joined as one, like a person's body has many parts but is still one body (1 Cor 12:12). It was as if their hearts were beating together and their minds were thinking the same thoughts. This inner unity produced outward unity. Since they were like one body, each believer treated the things he owned as if they belonged to the others, too.

What produced such unity? First, the Holy Spirit did. They had just finished praying for boldness in the face of persecution (Acts 4:29), and in response to their prayer, they were **filled by the Spirit** (4:31). They were deeply controlled and empowered by the Spirit as a result of dependence on God and obedience to His word (Eph 5:18; Col 3:16). People who are filled by the Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is summed up by love (Gal 5:22). A person **loves** when

he cares more about others than about himself (Phil 2:3). He delights to give up what he wants in order to do good to others (Eph 5:2). These new believers were so united because the Spirit was filling them with love.

Second, they were “of one heart and soul” because they had the same purpose and the same passion: to honor and rejoice in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:33). Even though the Jewish leaders had ordered the apostles to stop talking about Jesus, they could not. What they had seen and heard with their own eyes and ears was so amazing that they just could not stop talking about it (4:20). They especially kept talking about Christ's resurrection, since that is the clearest proof that He is the living Lord and God, able to give life to those who trust Him. This is what all the believers had in common. They were united in Jesus like a body connected to its head (Col 2:19), just as Jesus had prayed for them (John 17:21). As the believers treasured Jesus, they were blessed with grace, the gift of God's undeserved favor.

Since they received a generous and undeserved gift through Jesus, it is no wonder that they gave generously to one another. And they were extremely generous, even selling their houses and land to provide for those who were in need (Acts 4:34). Their generosity proved that their faith and love were genuine (Jas 2:15–16; 1 John 3:17). One man, Joseph from Cyprus (Acts 4:36–37), is an example of what many believers were doing, but this man stands out for two reasons. First, he was known for being an encourager, which is why people

THINK ABOUT IT

Love sums up and fulfills the whole law (Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9), and love is the mark of a true follower of Jesus (John 13:35).



THINK ABOUT IT

“We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).



THINK ABOUT IT

What do you love most—your possessions, or Jesus and the people who belong to Him?



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called him Barnabas. Second, he is an important figure in the life of the early church (Acts 9:26–27; 11:22–26, 30; 13–15). So through the generosity of Barnabas and the other believers, the Holy Spirit continued to do His job—bringing honor and glory to Jesus Christ.

Ananias and Sapphira pretended to share everything (5:1–11)

Ananias and Sapphira copied Barnabas, sort of. Perhaps they saw the way people respected Barnabas. Perhaps they thought, “We want people to say what good Christians we are, like they say about Barnabas.” Therefore they pretended to do the same thing Barnabas did (5:1–2). In reality, they were the opposite of Barnabas. He gave truthfully, but they gave deceitfully. He gave selflessly, but they gave selfishly. He gave for the good of others, but they gave to make themselves look good. He encouraged others, but they sought praise from others. He, in his humility, was filled and used by the Holy Spirit, but they, in their pride, were filled and used by Satan (5:3; Jas 4:6–8). So while they looked the same on the outside, Ananias and Sapphira were **hypocrites**, people who pretend to be something they are not (Matt 23:27–28).

Hypocrites do not fool God. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), so He knows the truth, and He exposed the truth to Peter (Acts 5:3). The sin was not about how much Ananias and Sapphira gave (5:4), for then as now, each person is free to give voluntarily, “as he has decided in his heart” (2 Cor 9:7). Rather, the sin was the lie. And the lie was worse than Ananias thought.

By lying to Peter, an apostle filled with the Spirit to lead the church of Christ, Ananias had actually lied to the Holy Spirit. And by lying to the Holy Spirit, Ananias had lied to God, for the Holy Spirit is God.

What happens next seems shocking. Lying is bad, but does it really deserve instant death (Acts 5:5–6)? And not just one death, but two (5:7–10)? This swift and severe punishment shows how serious this sin was. First, it was the sin of hypocrisy, and Jesus reserved His harshest words for hypocrites (Matt 23:13–36). Other sins dishonor God, but hypocrisy dishonors God while at the same time pretending to honor Him. In other words, a hypocrite tries to use God’s own honor to honor himself. No wonder God hates hypocrisy. Second, it was a sin in the church and against the church. This is a deadly sin because the church is the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 12:12). If allowed to fester, this sin pollutes the church and dishonors the name of Christ. Thus God promises to destroy anyone who destroys His church (3:17); He even takes the lives of believers to keep the church pure (1 Cor 11:30–32; Eph 5:27).

When Ananias and Sapphira died, the whole church feared (Acts 5:11). This is a healthy, God-honoring fear that understands how dangerous sin is. Since we are all sinners, this warning is for all of us; everyone who claims to belong to Jesus must depart from a sinful way of life (2 Tim 2:19). The warning is also for every church, since every church is full of sinful people. Church leaders must treat sin seriously to keep it from corrupting the whole church (1 Tim 5:20). Later, perhaps Peter was remembering Ananias and Sapphira when he warned that judgment begins with the household of God (1 Pet 4:17), or when he urged that the way to life was by speaking the truth (3:10). So replace hypocrisy with sincerity. Take sin seriously and repent before it is too late. It is better to face the shame of admitting sin and weakness than the pain of God’s wrath against sin.



THINK ABOUT IT

Ananias and Sapphira lied to the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3), whom Peter also refers to as “God” (5:4).

Lesson Outline

The Holy Spirit unites and purifies the church.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The Holy Spirit unites God's people (4:32–37).
2. The Holy Spirit is God (5:1–4).
3. The Holy Spirit purifies God's people (5:5–11).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The believers shared everything (4:32–37).
 - They shared because they were united in the Spirit (4:31–32).
 - They shared because they had received grace from Jesus (4:33).
 - They shared so much that no one was in need (4:34–35).
 - Barnabas encouraged others by sharing sacrificially (4:36–37).
2. Ananias and Sapphira pretended to share everything (5:1–11).
 - They pretended to copy Barnabas (5:1–2).
 - The Holy Spirit exposed their lie (5:3–4).
 - They died (5:5–10).
 - The whole church feared (5:11).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **How did the Christians show they loved each other?**
They shared everything they had.
2. **What person is an example of a good giver?**
Barnabas.
3. **Who lied to the Holy Spirit?**
Ananias and Sapphira.
4. **Who is the Holy Spirit?**
The Holy Spirit is God.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What did Jesus send the Holy Spirit to do?**
To show how great Jesus is. Today we see He accomplishes this by causing unity and guarding purity in the church.
2. **Why were the believers united?**
They were filled with the Spirit and worshiping Jesus.
3. **What kind of fruit did the Holy Spirit produce in them?**
Love for one another—unity.
4. **Why did people call Joseph “Barnabas”?**
Because he was an encourager.
5. **How did Ananias and Sapphira pretend to be like Barnabas?**
They pretended to sell land and give all the money too.
6. **What do you call someone who pretends to be something they are not?**
A hypocrite.
7. **What happened to them when they lied?**
They died.
8. **How did their deaths affect the church?**
It removed their sin from the church and gave everyone else a healthy fear of sin.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

HOW MUCH?

Give a penny to each child as they enter the classroom. Tell them to save it for later, but to keep the amount secret from the other children. Before the lesson, pass an offering plate around to each child. Tell them to give their offering at this time. After everyone has given their offering, ask each child individually how much he put in the offering (one penny). Now, imagine if someone had put in one penny but told the rest of the class that they put in a whole dollar (show class a dollar). What would the Bible call this? Lying. In today's lesson, we are going to meet two people—Ananias and Sapphira—who lied about the amount they gave.

ALL THINGS IN COMMON

This snack time idea teaches what it was like to live in the time of the early church. Give separate children different parts of the snack: give one the whole bottle of juice, another the whole bag of crackers, another all the cups and plates, another all the napkins, etc. In today's lesson, we will learn how all the different people came together and shared what they had so that no one was in need.



ILLUSTRATE

AESOP'S FABLES: THE DONKEY IN THE LION'S SKIN

A donkey once found a lion's skin which hunters had left out in the sun to dry. He put it on and went towards his native village. Everyone fled at his approach, both men and animals, and he was a proud donkey that day. In his delight, he lifted up his voice and brayed, but then everyone knew him, and his owner came up and punished him for the fright he had caused. Shortly afterwards a fox came up to him and said: "Ah, I knew you by your voice." Just like the fox recognized the donkey's voice, the Holy Spirit knows our hearts: He knows when we are pretending to be something we are not.

EMPTY ON THE INSIDE

Make a jar of jelly beans that has cotton stuffed in its center. The jar should give the appearance of being full of jellybeans, but actually contain very few. After asking several children to guess the number of jellybeans, reveal the hidden substance of the jar. Explain that this is what hypocrites are like: they look good, but they are only pretending.



APPLY

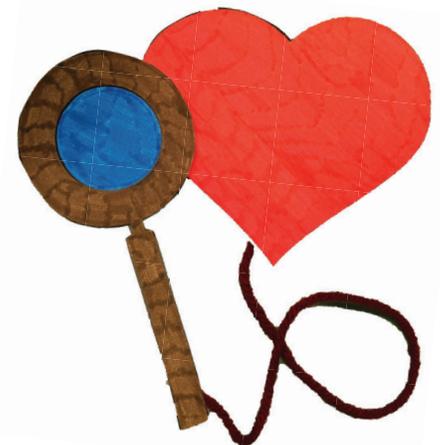
GOD SEARCHES THE HEART

See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2*.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, scissor, yarn, tape.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on card stock. Color the image. Cut the images. Unite the two images with a yarn taped in the back.

God Searches the Heart
See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2*



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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Do any of the children play sports? What is their favorite sport? Do they like to play a certain position? Explain that a sports team may have many members with many different responsibilities, but they all have the same goal: they all work together to win. If they do not have the same goal, then they will not be able to compete or function very well as a team. Much of the early church was unified just like a sports team. Because of the Spirit's working in their hearts, all the members of the church had the same goal: honoring the Lord by caring for those in need and loving each other.

BLUE MAN

Introduce the concept of hypocrisy by declaring your love for the color blue (or another color). However, make sure that you're not wearing any blue. You might say: "Oh how I love the color blue! I wear it every day! I never wear any other color. Everything I own is blue! I never leave the house without something blue! I only buy blue clothing!" Explain that this is how a hypocrite acts: he says one thing but does another. Today's lesson is about two hypocrites.



ILLUSTRATE

YUCK!

Offer the children a tasty treat—chocolate chips—but give them pure cocoa chips instead (they shouldn't be able to recognize the difference simply by their appearance). These cocoa chips are a bitter example of hypocrisy! They look just like sweetened chocolate chips, but they taste quite different.

LIFE WITHOUT A HEAD?

A cockroach can reportedly live for over a week without its head. However, most creatures cannot live without a head. The head is what unites all the different parts of the body, giving life and direction. The church cannot live without its head, Jesus (Col 1:18). He gives life to the church and His Spirit unites all the different members (people).



APPLY

INSIDE YOUR HEART

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, cardstock, crayons, yarn, scissors, hole puncher.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on card stock. Color the image. Leave one with the "truth" rectangle and color in black the "lie" rectangle. Cut the images. Punch-hole the two hearts where indicated. Unite the two sides with a yarn passing through the holes. Put the two rectangles inside the heart, and close it.



Inside Your Heart
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2

AGES 9–11 

INTRODUCE

A HYPOCRITE

It has been said that a hypocrite is a person who is not themselves on Sunday. Share this definition of hypocrisy with the children and ask them to explain what it means. Today's lesson is about two hypocrites: two people who pretend to be one thing but are really another.

HUMAN KNOT ICEBREAKER

The goal of the game is the untangle the human knot (return to circle) without ever letting go of any hands. This team activity demonstrates the importance of unity, a key component in today's lesson. To begin the activity, have the children stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle facing each other. Have everyone raise their left hand and grab the left hand of someone else (not the person next to them). Do the same with the right (another person, not the one next to them). Now working together as a group, form the shape of the original circle without letting go.



ILLUSTRATE

BIG DEAL?

Today's lesson reveals the seriousness of sin (Acts 5:5–11). Yet we often treat sin lightly, like a hangnail. After a while we might notice it, but we feel (most of us) no real urgency to do anything about it. Compare that to the way we respond to cancer. We address it immediately, doing whatever it takes to remove it. Which way pictures how you respond to the presence of sin in your life?

HAMMER TIME

Bring a hammer to class and ask the children if they have ever smashed their thumb while hammering in a nail. They probably didn't feel any pain, right? I mean, the thumb is a long way from the head...Yeah right! The thumb is part of the whole body: when it hurts, we hurt! This shows that the body is all connected, just like all believers are connected together as the body of Christ.



APPLY

SINCERE: WITHOUT WAX

The Romans liked to make statues out of stone (bring in small statue if possible). But sometimes the stone would have a small crack. The people who sold the stone statues did not want to lose money, so they would take wax and smooth over the crack to make it look solid again. The Latin word for wax is *cera* (write it on the whiteboard). Statue sellers that wanted people to know that they had statues that were not cracked would put a sign over their shops that said "without wax." The Latin for without is *sine* (write it on the whiteboard). Put it together: *sine* + *cera* = sincere. Sincere means without wax: no cracks are being covered up. As sinful humans, we all have a lot of cracks. You can either try to cover it up like a hypocrite, or you can be sincere and come to Jesus to make you truly whole.