



“Dishonoring the Holy Spirit”

Acts 5:1-11

based on the sermon preached on 8-10-23 available on the [church app](#) or at <https://lwac.org.au/sermons>]

CONTEXT AND KEY IDEAS

1. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2, an important shift has taken place, from God’s Spirit residing in the physical temple made of stone, to the Holy Spirit now residing in the hearts of true believers and followers of Jesus Christ.
2. Luke provides a summary statement of the economic unity and equality within the early church in Acts at the end of chapter 4
3. Chapter 5:1-11, containing the account of Ananias and Sapphira, is an example of this economic unity ideal corrupted; a couple trying to deceive the church and its leaders by misrepresenting their selling of a piece of property in order to keep some of the sale proceeds for themselves but still appear super-spiritual.

CONNECT

- Occasionally we hear of people/entities who deceive others and ultimately pay a price for that deception, especially public persons/entities like politicians, corporations, and sometimes even church leaders. What is the most egregious case of deception you can think of and what price did those involved pay for their deception?

STUDY

Read Acts 4:32-37

- Describe the situation in the early church according to Luke’s summary in this passage.
- Why do you think it was important to them that there be no needy person among them? Was the motivation internal, external or both?

- How do you think this practice of economic unity and equality was viewed by the larger community, those outside the church? What did this unity say about the church? Do you think this unity and how it was viewed contributed to the amazing growth of the early church?
- Sharing everything they had must not have been easy. How do you think they were able to do this? Why do you think this worked for them?
- Could you do this? Could you be a part of a Christian community which valued economic unity such that those with possessions sometimes sold them to give to those in need? Why or why not?
- Look up Matthew 6:3. What does Jesus say here about the way we should give? How easy (or difficult) is it to give anonymously so that no one knows what you are doing?
- Do you know of anyone who has shared their money or possessions in a radical way like this? Share about this as you are able.

Read Acts 5:1-2

- What do you think inspired Ananias to conspire to sell his property but keep some of the money back for himself without telling anyone else about this? What motivated him to do it? What were Ananias (and Sapphira) after? What were they seeking and who were they seeking it from?

Read Acts 5:3-6

- How do you think Peter knew what Ananias had done? What possible explanations are there for this? Which is the best explanation?
- What is the significance of Peter declaring in v. 3 that Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit, and then in v 4 of declaring that he has lied to God? What does this tell us about the Holy Spirit?
- Peter also declares Satan played a role. What was that role? How does Satan factor into this?
- How and why do we lie to God when we lie to other human beings? What is the connection between them?
- Do you think that every time a Christian (or even a non-Christian) lies today that they are also lying to the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

Read Acts 5:7-11

- Was it fair for God to judge Sapphira just as harshly as Ananias, when it wasn't her idea to deceive the church and its leaders in this way? After all, she just went along with it, it was his idea. If her deception was worthy of the same punishment, what does this indicate about those who knowingly tolerate and/or conspire with the deception of others? Is there a difference between conspiring with someone to deceive and tolerating someone else's deception? If so, what is that difference? If not, why not?
- V. 11 says that in response to this, great fear seized the whole church. Was this a 'run for your life' kind of fear, or a 'reverential awe' kind of fear? Was this fear a good thing or bad?

Read Leviticus 10:1-3

- What similarities exist between these verses in Leviticus 10 and our passage in Acts 5? Differences?
- Under the Old Covenant in Leviticus, God's presence and Spirit was external to the people, in the tabernacle/temple. Offending the Spirit's presence by offering unauthorized fire brought death to Nadab and Abihu. Given that since Pentecost the Holy Spirit now dwells within all believers, does this help explain the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira? How did they offend the Spirit of God? How was this offense similar to that of Nadab and Abihu?

APPLY

- Deception often operates at three levels: when we deceive others we also deceive ourselves and somehow think we are deceiving God, too. But we can also deceive ourselves by thinking that God doesn't care about a certain aspect or a certain part of my life. But he does. He cares about all of it, every area of your life.
- Take some time to reflect on potential areas in your life where you have allowed some deception to persist, whether that be deception of others, or self-deception, or even the belief that you are deceiving God.
- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?
- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.
 - 1.
 - 2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.