

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Sermon: “Lying to the Holy Spirit” The Chilling Story of Ananias & Sapphira** Series: “Lessons from the First Church”

**Dave Sattler NSAC February 25, 2024 Text: Acts 4:32-5:11**

Sub-texts: Psalm 23:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 8:16, Hebrews 4:13, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 5:8, 2 Peter 3:9

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### **I. Introduction Questions:**

- So where are we at in the story of Acts? Do a brief talk through Acts 1-4.
- (Optional) Run Pastor Dave’s Straw-Poll (minus Taylor Swift!):
  - 1) What plot-line do you think makes for a better drama?
    - A) Dark conspiracies and hidden secrets exposed or ...
    - B) A rags to riches underdog story.
  - 2) Which vision do you prefer?
    - A) A utopian (idealistic) vision of Church or a ...
    - B) A realistic (somewhat messy) vision of Church.
  - 3) When trying to make a favourable impression, do you tend to?
    - A) Talk yourself up (embellish) or ...
    - B) Talk yourself down (underplay).

### **II. Read: Acts 4:32-5:11**

### **III. Biblical Teaching Questions:**

1. Describe the community and practices of the early church (4:32-35). How does this sharing of possessions sit with you? Discuss.

Note: Pastor Dave said, “God was moving in and among the early church community freeing people both from their *attachment to things* and from *material need*.”
2. Contrast the actions of Barnabas (Exhibit A) with the actions of Ananias & Sapphira (Exhibit B).
3. What is the real sin of Ananias & Sapphira? (5:3-4)

The real sin is that Ananias & Sapphira believe in *their own sovereignty*, above God.
4. What drives our actions: pleasing others, or, pleasing God?
5. Describe the response to the deaths of Ananias & Sapphira. How might this story impact us today? Do you think we have lost some of this holy sense of reverence for God today? Why/Why not?
6. Discuss three (of many) questions Pastor Dave raised from this story:

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### 1) *Why are Ananias & Sapphira given no opportunity to repent?*

Read 2 Peter 3:9. This *not* how God typically works. Still, we *do* know that lying, or, deceit violates trust at the deepest level—and must always be treated as *serious business* by the people of God.

### 2) *How come God's judgment here is so harsh?*

While this verdict is the exception rather than the norm, this story depicts a 'distant' world in which sin is taken very seriously. "Ananias and Sapphira were severely dealt with," one scholars says, "because the way [they] attempted to reach their goals was so diametrically opposed to the whole thrust of the gospel that to allow it to go unchallenged would have set the entire mission of the church off course." —Longenecker, p314

### 3) *What happened to the beautiful church?*

To camp only on the *beauty* does a disservice to history *and* sets a bar that's easily dismissible when it comes to any takeaways for Christ-followers today. To expose the *messiness* of church life simply makes it *real*—and more *relatable* to us.

## IV. Life Application Questions:

### A. ***We mustn't be led astray by Satan's half-truths.***

- Read and discuss 1 Peter 5:8. Remembering though he still trash-talks us, Satan is a defeated enemy, how do we stay "alert" to Satan's tactics?
- Name some "half-truths" Satan might try and sell us on.
- Discuss God's full and beautiful truth that we are all sinners in need of a Saviour and God loves us more than we could ever imagine.

### B. ***We must see the wider scope of God's character.***

- How might this story, taken in isolation, give us a skewed picture of God?
- Read Psalm 23:6 and 1 Peter 1:3-4 and discuss God's steadfast love that endures forever.
- What are your ingrained ideas about who God is? Read Romans 8:16.

### C. ***Be certain and grateful we know the Judge.***

- Why are we tempted to write judgment out of the biblical script?
- Read and discuss Hebrews 4:13.
- What's mean to know Jesus, our loving Saviour and Judge?

In his book "Along the Road," Jack Beck writes: "To be sure, Jesus is the Judge who will determine where we spend eternity. To be sure, we are guilty as charged. But this Jesus, the one who is my Judge, is also my defence attorney. Even more than that, He is my Saviour who suffered and died in my place, absorbing the punishment for my sin." —p131