

An Interactive Life Application Bible Study of the Acts of the Apostles for Small Groups

Key: Blue = New Testament Red = Words of Jesus

Green = Old Testament Quotes

Lesson 6

1. Ananias and Sapphira. ^{Acts 5:1-11} But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. ² He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. ⁴ The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

⁵ As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. ⁶ Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?"

"Yes," she replied, "that was the price."

⁹ And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too."

¹⁰ Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.

2. Discussion: (a) What was the most serious sin that Ananias committed? (b) What do you think God's purpose was, in causing Ananias to be struck down? (c) Why did God hold Sapphira to be equally responsible? (d) How was

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the early Church changed by this event? (e) Should this story have an effect on the Church today? Explain.

3. The Apostles Heal Many. Acts 5:12-16 The apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers were meeting regularly at the Temple in the area known as Solomon's Colonnade.*¹³ But no one else dared to join them, even though all the people had high regard for them.¹⁴ Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women.¹⁵ As a result of the apostles' work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall across some of them as he went by.¹⁶ Crowds came from the villages around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those possessed by evil spirits, and they were all healed.

* Under a roof supported by rows of tall pillars on the East side of the Temple.

4. Discussion: (a) What do you imagine the believers were doing as they met regularly at Solomon's Colonnade? (b) Explain the possible connection between the way Ananias and Sapphira died and the fact that no newcomers dared join the believers in Solomon's Colonnade? (c) What impresses you most about the unusual events that accompanied the growth of the early Church? Give your reasons. (d) Why do you think we so rarely witness the miraculous atmosphere of the early Church in today's Church?

5. The Apostles Meet Opposition. Acts 5:17-26 The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.¹⁹ But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them,²⁰ "Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!"

²¹ So at daybreak the apostles entered the Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching.

When the high priest and his officials arrived, they convened the high council -- the full assembly of the elders of Israel.

they returned to the council and reported,²³ "The jail was securely locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!"

²⁴ When the captain of the Temple guard and the leading priests heard this, they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end.²⁵ Then someone arrived with startling news: "The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, teaching the people!"

²⁶ The captain went with his Temple guards and arrested the apostles, but without violence, for they were afraid the people would stone them.

6. Background Information: The High Priest, along with the Levitic Temple assistants and materialistic Sadducees were driven to jealousy by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles. Common folks were attracted more and more toward those who had faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. They saw God's power working through the Church, ministering miraculous compassion toward ordinary people faced with all kinds of needs.

7. Discussion: (a) Why do you think the Holy Spirit was failing to work through the High Priest and his assistants to meet the needs of the people? (b) What do you think would have happened if the High Priest and his assistants had finally repented of their rejection of Jesus and placed their faith in him as Messiah and Savior? (c) Considering the list of unusual events following the arrest of the apostles, why do you think the Temple guards were afraid of the people when they went to arrest the apostles? (d) Tell the story of what happened, as if you were one of the apostles who was arrested. (c) Tell the same story as one of the Temple guards might tell it. (d) Imagine the conversation of the High Priest and Sadducees while the guards were searching for the apostles.